

IMT School for Advanced Studies, Lucca

Lucca, Italy

Think tanks and international affairs during the interwar period: Ispi (Institute for Studies in International Politics) between foreign policy and public opinion (1919-1943).

PhD Program in Political History

XXIII Cycle

By

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2016

Reviewers's Page

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Acknowledgements

Vita and publications

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F.Giona, L'Ispi tra storia e politica, «Nuova Antologia», 2015, vol.614, fasc.2273.

Review

F.Giona, G.Simone, S.Madotto, 1943. *L'anno della svolta [Convegno tenuto a Padova dal 20 al 22 novembre 2013 - In: 1943, 1944: settant'anni dopo]*, «Italia contemporanea», n.276, 2014

Monograph

F.Giona, Ispi, primo think tank italiano di politica internazionale, «Quaderni della Fondazione Salvatorelli», Aracne, n.15, Gennaio 2014

Presentations

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Abstract

The object of analysis of this dissertation is the historical analysis of the Institute for Studies in International Politics (Ispi), from its founding in Milan in 1933 until it was compulsory mothballed after September 8th 1943. In confronting Ispi, the attempt is to approach Italy's international involvements during the interwar period from an unusual but meaningful standpoint. As a matter of fact, Ispi turns out to be a challenging as well as controversial subject of study. In fact, even if at first sight the Institute seemed to be nothing more than a propagandistic machine, to gain both domestic and external consensus to the policies of the fascist regime, a thorough analysis of Ispi highlights a more complex story to tell, which is deeply linked with the way in which the international environment was thought and structured in the aftermath of the First World War. The Institute is considered as a meeting point of two separate wider historical phenomena: the interwar European and Transatlantic debate on international relations, animated by a number of national institutions that were born in the 1920s and 1930s, Ispi among them; the intellectual history of Italy in the fascist period, in particular as regards conceptions related to politics, international relations and historiography. In this way, the dissertation tries to handle two different historiographies and methodologies: that of transnational history, necessary to map the debate on International Relations that took place in the interwar period both in its cultural and organizational features, and that of intellectual history. The two layers can't be divided: the international background that "prepared" the birth of Ispi have to be seen together with the peculiar relationship between the Institute and the Fascist foreign policy. In other words, the main purpose of the research is to achieve a meaningful historical account more able to identify transfers and exchanges of ideas, without overlooking the national context: the attempt to define what is Ispi and why it was founded has to be accompanied with an in-depth understanding of the political environment in which it developed its activities. Ispi was founded in 1933 when fascism's international position was reaching its peak: after all the fascist regime appeared to be a system of government able not only to stabilize a complex society after the First World War, but it also managed to shrug off the impact of the financial crisis from 1929 and the increase in unemployment of the early 1930s that market economies across the West experienced. For these reasons, Italy's fascism was perceived as a viable solution and it seemed to promise answers to questions liberal democracies were still facing. Against this backdrop, the Institute was performing a twofold task: while it was supporting a solid and pregnant document-based scientific research on international affairs, it also pursued the precise pedagogical aim of forming a strong national conscience of foreign affairs, in accordance with the fundamental directives of Fascist foreign policy, in short «an Institute which marries science with propaganda». Pierfranco Gaslini, the first director of Ispi, strongly believed that Italy needed a body able to shape a new political culture which was the result of interests and political patterns linked to the liberal period, as well as with new aspirations and watchwords which saw the fascist regime as a reliable answer to satisfy them. The director was able to understand the qualitative changes which characterized the sphere of international relations after the first world war and, to some degree, he recognized the necessity of placing a filter between political decisions and the masses. Against this background, the creation and development of Institutes of International Affairs, nation-based think tanks with the twofold aim of providing national and international elites with qualitative works on international affairs as well as creating an "informed" public opinion, provided Gaslini with the push he needed to found a similar body in Italy. In short, on one hand the consensus created by Ispi in favor of the regime was clear; on the other hand it tried to manage a factual situation in which the realm of foreign policy was linked with a series of aspirations and forces which were more influential than in the past. Indeed, the latter represented a new and lively field of action shared by the various European nations: in this perspective the astonishing growth of the Institute of International Affairs' movement in the 20s and 30s can be seen as an absolute necessity of various national establishments to guide or impose a top-down mechanism with the aim

of controlling the flow of information to the general public, rather than the expression of a new internationalism. The majority of the members of Ispi and its collaborators shared a common political and ideological background with Mussolini's aspirations, and it was equally clear that fascism was conceived as the driving force of Italian foreign policy. Against this background, it is clear, as I showed with the analysis of some articles drawn by the two journals of the Institute, that if on one hand it is plausible to place the start of an Italian tradition of foreign policy studies during the interwar period, on the other hand it is equally clear the intimate connection between the sphere of research and political aims. The fact that Ispi was thought as a centre of research which was dealing with international problems, in general, allowed to mix different perspectives and attitudes. This constitutes a crucial reason in order to understand why very different intellectual personalities and political figures met together in Ispi. Nevertheless, the fact that the Institute aimed at collecting all the most important specialists with an interest in international relations, it didn't mean that Gaslini was able to impose a coherent and logical cultural project to his collaborators. As a matter of fact, there was a continuous compromise between the directives of the "centre" and the effective work of the scholars involved in this activity, as if this preliminary freedom guaranteed by the Institute had as a consequence a dispersion of forces and an inability to constitute a solid amalgam. Eventually, this work reveals how Italian specialists conceived public opinion, which was a new and important weapon to use in the field of international politics against other governments: a top-down construction which had the duty to control in every step the exchange of information and meanings from the realm of political decisions and events to an "informed" public. This doesn't mean that Ispi, and the scholars who were working in it, was a passive instrument with a mere function of control and selection. The Institute, especially with the collaboration of the Roman School directed by Volpe, produced a series of historical works embracing various themes but basically focused on a new reflection of the Italian past functional to the political aspirations of their time. In this perspective, it can be said that there was a connection between this new wave of historical studies and the stimulus derived from the political environment.

Members of Ispi as "cultural mediators" were trying to improve the sector of cultural international relations, supporting a specific idea of Italy which contributed to the formation of those cultural assumptions behind Italian foreign policy during the interwar period. In this perspective, Ispi constitutes an institutional framework from which to investigate some of the most important specialists in international relations and their attempts to develop their works and analysis in constant relationship with the Institute and the political context. Given all this astonishing variety of studies, actors and themes that one can find in the history of Ispi during the 30s and early 40s, I argue that the Institute represents a meaningful vantage point from which to comprehend on one hand the weaknesses, the limits and ingenuity of a particular class of intellectuals and experts in international relations and their degree of support for the foreign policy of the fascist regime; on the other hand the effort to help the Italian nation to overcome structural defects and deficiencies which the Italian state had not been able to remove is undeniable. In accomplishing this "mission", indeed with different accents and motivations, all members of Ispi shared the belief that Italy had to become a great power and, in their Eurocentric view, they considered the world of international relations as a hierarchical environment in which the strongest nations had to come to terms with each other in order to create a harmonic system with different hegemonic spheres of influence.

In this perspective what was the relationship between the effective policies of the fascist regime and the reflections made by the members of Ispi? First of all, it is necessary to identify a fault line that sits above the Italian military action against Ethiopia in 1935-36. The Ethiopian war represented a "before and after" for the activities of the Institute: if before the invasion of the North African state Ispi, as I reported through the examination of the journals «Rassegna di Politica Internazionale» and «Relazioni Internazionali», was trying to act as a real transnational think tank, involving a wide range of different non-state actors, once Italy had its own empire the ever-increasing activities of the Institute suffered a loss of dynamicity and maneuvering space. As a matter of fact, in the first phase of the Institute (1933-1935), Ispi tried to pursue a multidirectional cultural diplomacy,

hosting key personalities from the political and cultural world. It tried to create contacts especially with the British conservative establishment (through the figures of Muriel Currey, Luigi Villari, Charles Petrie) and the Hungarian revisionist front as well as weaving links with analogous foreign institutions. After the Ethiopian war, the activism which characterized Italy in the former period in almost every international fora as well as its willingness to see its “rights” recognized within the international system built in Versailles, gave way to an increasingly imperialistic conception of the international environment, as though the colonial enterprise had rekindled the aspirations and latent desires of the Italian nation. The Ethiopian war had resulted in the political and cultural isolation of Italy, making scorched earth of that prestige internationally reached till then. These factors heavily affected Ispi’s activities and the previous attempts to create transnational diplomatic channels with foreign intellectual and political figures. Consequently, there was a transformation of Ispi which followed the changes of the international situation after the Ethiopian war, from a “transnational think tank” to an institute more concerned with research and divulgation of works related to foreign/international politics, with the desire of developing a political culture on foreign affairs within the national boundaries. On the other hand Gaslini tried to keep alive the Study Office and a peculiar way of doing research which gave priority to a vast use of documents and a taste for inter-disciplinarity.

Ispi was trying to produce an innovative cultural project capable of linking historiography and politics, a study of an “imagined” national past with an in-depth analysis of the international context. The aim was to provide Italy with a more solid political culture in order to help the government both meet the requirements of being a Great Power, and fulfilling what was thought to be an Italian imperial mission. The ambiguous position occupied by Ispi during the fascist regime as well as the contradiction that was revealed at the beginning of this research, which was a claim for the unity of scientific research and propaganda made by Gaslini, can be understood in the relationship that the Milanese Institute established with the liberal Italian past. Ispi didn’t want to make a decisive break with the past, in fact it presented itself as an instrument to achieve that national unity which couldn’t be reached in Italy before the First World War: a sort of sacred mission which could have been reached walking arm in arm with the fascist regime. On the other hand there was a break to the extent that parliamentarism was considered as a bad disease, and a new sense of hierarchy and order emerged which couldn’t be challenged by “individualism” and more in general by all those “vicious” principles which were considered as an attack against the State and the Nation. Against this backdrop Ispi developed a *sui generis* political and historiographical laboratory that saw the collaboration of a large number of scholars, who differed from each other as regards political and cultural interests, but they participated in the initiatives of the Institute specifically because its cultural projects were able to rely upon a broader basis in respect of the most pressing political aims of the fascist regime. This is why, at least until a certain point, the members of Ispi and its collaborators didn’t feel that particular contradiction between a serious and autonomous study of international/foreign politics and a dictatorial environment which, at the beginning, was not so assertive in shaping a coherent and unidirectional foreign policy.

Indeed, its history was heavily affected by the fascist regime, and in a broader perspective it assumed a specific physiognomy as well as a peculiar position at the crossroad of political, cultural and propagandistic national concerns. Nevertheless, these specific features didn’t confine Ispi to an isolated environment with no contacts or exchanges with foreign institutes or personalities. Suffice it is to say that the very idea of founding a series of Institutes of International Affairs capable of studying and disseminating a more scientific knowledge regarding foreign matters was born out of the Peace Conference of Versailles by some Anglo-American representatives; that almost all the members of Ispi went abroad to complete their education; that Ispi was one of the Institutes which participated at the annual International Studies Conference, whose original name was International Conference of *Institutions for Scientific Study of Politics*¹.

¹ Emphasis added.

This is why I think that this research has made it possible both to find new materials in order to better understand the relationship between culture and politics during the fascist regime, and more specifically to investigate what were the themes, aspirations and interests of Ispi's members and the political directives of the dictatorship, as well as to start a reflection about the development of the Institutes of International Affairs. Investigating both how they treated and exploited international information and what kind of relationship they had with their governments allows to better understand the nexus between international politics, foreign policy and public opinion and how it was changing during the interwar period.

Abbreviations

Introduction

Pierfranco Gaslini, the first director of Ispi, during the inauguration of the cultural year of the Institute for Studies in International Politics, pointed out the underlying aspiration of the Institute:

an Institute in which scientific information should have been linked with the precise pedagogical aim to form a strong national conscience of international problems, in accordance with the fundamental directives of Fascist foreign policy: in short, *an Institute which marries science with propaganda*².

The Institute for Studies in International Politics (Ispi) is a challenging as well as controversial subject of study. In fact, even if at first sight the Institute seemed to be nothing more than a propagandistic machine, to gain both domestic and external consensus to the policies of the fascist regime, a thorough analysis of Ispi highlights a more complex story to tell, which is deeply linked with the way in which the international environment was thought and created in the aftermath of the First World War. The reassessment of the role played by the Institute, both in the national and international environment, coupled with the attempt to reconceptualise the interwar period with a set of new methodologies provided by a transnational approach.

The history of interwar period has known a renewed interest during the last decades. According to the Benedetto Croce's most celebrated dictum "every true history is contemporary history", connoisseurs since the end of the Cold War started to exhume the period between the two World Wars, convinced that it would have disclosed precious insights in order to better understand the new international situation. Even if there was a "general consensus" among political scientists and historians in acknowledging the re-acquired relevance of the period that goes from the Peace Treaty of Versailles to the outbreak of the Second World War, an even broader disagreement arose when it came to explain what kind of role it played in the historical process. There are more "conservative" approaches who tend to look at the period from 1914 to 1945 as a long civil war, so that they describe the Great War, with its degree of violence and radicalization, as the key factor able to deeply shaped the following period since the "inevitability" of the Second World War. On the other hand, there are new interdisciplinary approaches which are trying to explore the 20s and the 30s mixing traditional ideas with more up to date methodologies derived from other disciplines. Particularly, thanks to a transnational outlook, the traditional categories of diplomatic, institutional and international history has been rethought, opening up fresh paths of historical research³. In this perspective, the re-assessment of neglected actors and instances (such as the activities of the League of Nations and the network it created as well as the emergence of a new internationalism) coupled with the disclosure of new kind of actors, networks and entanglements, highlighting a recent preoccupation of the field with the cultural aspects of international diplomacy⁴.

On the other hand, also the scholarships which directly focused on the nature and history of the fascist regime have experienced a new need to analyze and contextualize this political and cultural movement by employing new questions and methodologies. In particular, the understanding of the fascist regime in Italy as a phenomenon that has to be framed in the light of an international

² *Vita dell'Istituto*, Rassegna di politica internazionale, 1934, p. 613.

³ Schulz-Forberg, Hagen (ed.), *Zero Hours. Conceptual Insecurities and New Beginnings in the Interwar Period*, Europe plurielle/Multiple Europes-Volume 53, 2013.

⁴ As illustrative examples: *Internationalism reconfigured. Transnational ideas and movements between the World Wars*, edited by Daniel Laqua, London 2011; Riemens, Michael, *International academic cooperation on international relations in the interwar period: the International Studies Conference*, «Review of International Studies», Volume 37, Issue 2, Page 911 – 928; Laqua, Daniel, *Transnational intellectual cooperation, the League of Nations, and the problem of order*, «Journal of Global History», Volume 6, Issue 2, Page 223 – 247; Rietzler, Katharina, *Before the Cultural Cold Wars: American philanthropy and cultural diplomacy in the inter-war years*, «Historical Research», Volume 84, Issue 223, Page 148 – 164; Patricia Clavin and Jens-Wilhelm Wessels, 'Transnationalism and the League of Nations: understanding the work of its economic and financial organisation', «Contemporary European History», 14.4 (2005), 465–92.

environment which both affected and was affected by the dictatorship, could help to prevent the artificial isolation of the Italian foreign policy during the interwar period and, as a consequence, to highlight contacts, exchanges, initiatives and meetings that the personalities of the regime established with the “foreigners”. Even in this case, the tendency to look at the fascist regime as something more complicated than a mere reactionary phenomenon imposed by Mussolini with the sole instruments of violence and repression, and the recognition of new actors (which operated in parallel with the duce and his government) who considered the sphere of foreign policy as a concrete strategy of promoting Italy’s interests rather than an instrument of propaganda to gain internal consensus, triggered new perspectives.

All in all, these new historiographical paths suggest a broader tendency to pinpoint a history able to establish a meaningful dialogue between micro and macro, local and global environments through the search for reciprocities, entanglements and networks⁵.

Having said that, I am confident to demonstrate that the peculiar nature of ISPI and its development during the 30s can contribute to add new materials to both, the transnational history of the interwar period (through an examination of the networks and activities created by the Institute) and the multi-layered nature of the fascist foreign policy which was deeply connected with the Italian “nation-formation” as well as with the new perspectives created by the international scenario.

Finally, this work certainly underlines the idea that it is time both to lay to rest the old distinction between diplomatic and international history and to connect the way in which Italian foreign policy was thought and performed to the wider world. By stressing the importance of the Institutes of International Affairs with their effort in institutionalizing a new knowledge in the field of international relations, highlighting the role of Ispi in drawing up answers for a stable world order, as well as examining the role played by some Italian experts in international meetings (such as the International Studies Conferences promoted by the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation), allows to «cut into the past at a different angle»⁶, going beyond traditional investigations, and questioning old patterns.

As a consequence, the attempt to reconstruct the history of Ispi is not an end in itself, but has to be seen as a further attempt to shed light on two different topics even if intertwined. Firstly, I want to examine what the origins of think tanks in international politics were and what their role was; secondly, by focusing my attention on the first part of its history (1933-1943), my aim is to say something new about the fascist foreign policy, offering a new standpoint of the hotly debated historiographical question about the continuity/discontinuity of Mussolini’s foreign policy.

The two layers can’t be divided: the think tank’s topic and the international background that “prepared” the birth of Ispi have to be seen together with the problematic relationship between the Institute and the Fascist foreign policy. In other words, the main purpose of the research is to achieve a meaningful historical account more able to identify transfers and exchanges of ideas, without overlooking the national context: the attempt to define what is Ispi and why it was founded has to be accompanied with an in-depth understanding of the political environment in which it developed its activities.

The attempt to understand the development of Ispi from a long-term perspective makes it possible to stress what I suggest to be the underlying continuity of its history, that is to be an original think tank in international politics. Considering Ispi as the first Italian think tank in international politics is not a neutral statement: first of all it goes against what it is called “American exceptionalism” which perceives the origins of such bodies closely related with a particular political as well as institutional environment. As I hope to demonstrate with this research, the proliferation of these think tanks in international politics is a world-wide phenomenon and it can be explained by a variety of factors in which external elements (the growing interdependence of international relations after the First World War) mixed with domestic aspects such as the development of a domestically

⁵ *Zero Hours*, cit., Introduction, p.15-49.

⁶ Geoffrey Barraclough, *An introduction to contemporary history*, Pelican Books 1967.

based intellectual elite. Therefore, even if there are significant differences in the themes and purposes put in place by each Institute of International Affairs, the specific political environment they inhabit, whether autocratic or democratic, is unlikely to prevent these Institutes from emerging. Once established the physiognomy of the movement and its global seize, it still remains to better understand what was an Institute of International Affairs and if it is possible to pinpoint it with a satisfactory definition. In this attempt to search for a theoretical framework of this phenomenon it is useful to take as starting point the book *Think tank traditions. Policy research and the politics of ideas*. Provided the fact that there is not a broader consensus among scholars about what is a think tank, Diane Stone elaborated a definition of think tank as a body capable of connecting the world of power (politics) with the world of ideas (knowledge), whilst playing a role in both policing and mediating their boundaries. Namely, «far from standing between knowledge and power, think tanks are a manifestation of the knowledge/power nexus. In short, knowledge and policy are symbiotic and interdependent»⁷. As a consequence, claiming that think tanks are independent bodies that produce neutral knowledge is naive; on the contrary, as my research assumes, there are no clear cut boundaries between research and ideology, acknowledging the inherently dynamic political nature of research. Seen within this framework, the role played by think tanks becomes more ambiguous: if on one hand think tanks need to have some kind of engagement with government if they are to succeed in influencing policy, on the other hand they make an effort to preserve intellectual autonomy, trying to strike a delicate balance between dependence on governments and total isolation from them. Given that, «the precise nature of think tank independence is to be treated with flexibility»⁸.

Regarding the second topic linked with the history of Ispi, that is the relationship between the Institute and the fascist foreign policy, I argue that in their preoccupation with coherence and continuity historians have ignored many of the key questions in fascist foreign policy, among which the role of various groups in the formation of that policy⁹. Ispi offers an opportunity of approaching an interesting, although still little studied, aspect of Italy's international involvements during the interwar period. More precisely it allows me to dig deeper into the decisive decade of fascist intervention from the early 1930s to the early 1940s, although the process began in the previous period, embedding its roots in the political processes of Liberal Italy¹⁰. Indeed, the fascist regime can't be regarded as a period of rule without much inner differentiation, and a series of various periodizations were offered by a number of historical studies, according to the specific historiographical outlook they were applying. In this perspective, if on one hand my work deals with a consistent period of time, roughly the so called interwar period, on the other hand it focuses on some of those political/cultural figures who were involved in representing Italian interests in international fora since the constitution of the Italian National Committee in 1928 and it follows the changes of Italian action in the international context during the 1930s until the early 1940s through the political, cultural and institutional history of the Institute for Studies in International Politics. From the First World War, Italy emerged as one of the four great powers in spite of the disappointment represented by the myth of the mutilated victory. While Italy was claiming to be a powerful nation with specific interests in the Mediterranean area, the Italian nation agreed to be part of the Versailles system, a position which would last for most of the fascist period. As a matter of fact, until the mid-30s, the revisionist aspirations of the regime were aiming to satisfy domestic rhetoric rather than elements for a real foreign policy strategy. A situation which was driven by the interest of Mussolini's government to immerse Italy into international organizations, not simply to

⁷ Diane Stone (2007) *Recycling bins, garbage cans or think tanks? Three myths regarding policy analysis institutes*, Public Administration, Vol.85, No.2. p.276.

⁸ Diane Stone, *Introduction, police advice and governance*, in Stone, Diane and Denham, Andrew. eds. (2004) *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

⁹ Stephen Corrado, Azzi (1993). *The Historiography of Fascist Foreign Policy*, The Historical Journal, Vol. 36, No. 1. pp. 187-203.

¹⁰ See, B.Vigazzi, *L'Italia di fronte alla prima guerra mondiale*, vol.1, *L'Italia neutrale*, (Milan-Naples, 1966), E. Gentile, *The struggle for modernity*, Foreword by S.G. Payne, Westport CT: Praeger, 2003.

be accepted among other countries, but to influence the very nature of international collaboration. Only from the mid-1930s did Mussolini embrace really power politics, willing to conquer by force a *posto al sole* for the Italian nation. Indeed, although the Ethiopian invasion can be seen as a point of no return for the foreign policy strategy of the regime, it is still debatable if the colonial war started by Italy represented the final phase of an evolution that from the liberal patriotism of Risorgimento moved towards radical nationalism; or, on the contrary, the imperial policy of the regime constituted a break with the role played by the Italian nation in the former period. This is a sphere of reflection directly connected with the issue of a broader definition of fascist foreign policy, including the political, cultural and propagandistic aspects of the regime¹¹. The historiography of fascist foreign policy tended to be polarized around some interpretative positions: there were different evaluations about the degree of continuity/discontinuity between the fascist period and the former liberal Italy as well as regarding instruments and cultural references used by the regime.

Undoubtedly, the book of Gaetano Salvemini *Mussolini il diplomatico*, published in 1932 during his political exile in the United States constituted the beginning of a historical research into Italian foreign policy which was born in the fiery atmosphere of that period. The book recalls arguments and writings of Salvemini's former period, linking the text with the Italian economic-juridical school as well as with a broader movement of studies which went hand in hand with the establishment of a series of Faculties of Political Science in Italy. In short, while the book testifies Salvemini's greatness as a historian, who was trying to understand those elements of success which allowed the seizure of power of fascism in Italy and to discover those who supported the dictatorship and promoted the guidelines of its foreign policy, it attempted to offer general analytical categories in order to better understand how the fascist regime gained consensus and general enthusiasm from Italian society¹². In that book the Italian historian showed how to weave documentary sources with the press of the time in order to investigate the relationship between foreign policy events and the great myths of the postwar period. In this way, he was able to offer a methodological platform, fusing social history and the history of mentalities. The result was an evocative image in which the ideological thought shared by fascist and nationalistic leaders was stressed, namely the constant ostentation of their realism which led them to believe they were superior to the situation, to master ideas, peoples, events. According to Salvemini, ideology was the glue that bound the fascist government with a series of demagogic campaigns, a continuous deformation of reality which affected not only the masses but also the élites, leaving no space for reflection and criticism. Namely, Mussolini had a rough and coarse ideology but he was the expression of effective trends present in the Italian society. In this perspective, the duce was very skilled in relying on both the diplomatic class and the masses, depending on the circumstances and needs. This new way of perceiving the relationship between the government's actions and the masses would constitute a peculiar political background in which propaganda was the «inseparable companion¹³» of the foreign policy of the fascist regime. Salvemini fully developed these arguments, considering Mussolini as a master of propaganda who was able to manipulate situations, attitudes, public opinion to his political goals. Thanks to this, he achieved a greater freedom of maneuver in which his abilities as an improviser resulted more important rather than the creation of a set plan from which to develop his own policy. This would be the general approach of Salvemini's historical understanding of Mussolini, which will kick off the endless discussion about whether or not there was a fascist foreign policy program. Nevertheless, those "improvisations" were the

¹¹ See F. Cavarocchi, *Avanguardie dello spirito. Il fascismo e la propaganda culturale all'estero*, Carocci, Roma 2010 and B. Garzarelli, «Parleremo al mondo intero». *La propaganda del fascismo all'estero*, Edizioni dell'Orso, Alessandria 2004.

¹² See B. Vigezzi, *Politica estera e opinione pubblica in Italia dal 1919 al 1940. Orientamenti di studio e prospettive di ricerca in Opinione publique et politique extérieure en Europe 1915-1940*, Rome: École Française de Rome, 1984, pp.81-136, G. Salvemini, *Preludio alla seconda guerra mondiale*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1967, J. Petersen, *La politica estera del fascismo come problema storiografico* in De Felice R. (ed.), *L'Italia tra tedeschi e alleati. La politica estera fascista e la seconda guerra mondiale*, Bologna 1973, pp.11-56.

¹³ Vigezzi, *Politica estera e opinione pubblica in Italia*, cit. p.89.

expression of an expansionist policy, intimately aggressive, which was clearly recognizable in the fascist foreign policy initiatives, from the episode of Corfù until the final stage when the regime would give more space to the Nazi revisionism. More precisely the search for an empire, a harsh and systematic repression of minorities along the borders as well as the swing between France Great Britain and Germany might suggest a link between events and longer-term structures providing historical analysis as way to better investigate the Italian society during the fascist regime, its institutions and ideology as well as the role played by propaganda and public opinion. The latter is quite a problematic term to use: as a matter of fact if on one hand fascist foreign policy, through the party, its ideology and propaganda gained a broad “consensus”, on the other hand is it possible to talk about public opinion which is formed by free discussion, criticism and opposition?

No doubt, the issue of consensus for the regime poses a number of difficult questions to answer, and the ever-continuing debate on this subject if on one hand has contributed to better clarify some aspects on the other hand it has had the effect of overloading with different meanings and nuances the key elements at stake. For this reason, it is useful to better define in what sense my work deals with public opinion during the fascist regime and what are the main goals of this investigation. First of all, my project shows how Ispi devoted its efforts to construct a well-informed public opinion, in the sense that both the journals of the Institute, «Rassegna di politica internazionale» and «Relazioni Internazionali», had a section in which the most important documents of international politics were reported. Secondly, it shows how that public opinion was instrumentalized for political aims. The documents as well as the articles that I studied demonstrate how the pedagogical aim to create a national conscience on foreign matters and the propagandistic effort to push the readers to assume a given position were deeply intertwined, feeding each other. In this perspective, whilst books and articles published by the Institute were reflecting a serious investigation, developing the study of international relations in Italy, they were also intimately connected with the political discourse of the fascist regime. This is why I decided to start from my sources in order to better appreciate the way in which these specialists in international relations represented their objects of study, in relation to public opinion, propaganda and scientific research. In the end, Salvemini’s assessment of a fascist foreign policy completely linked with the improvised and incoherent approach of Mussolini was re-thought in favor of a more precise periodization of the internal phases of the regime as well as stressing the progressive development of deeper tendencies in fascist foreign policy¹⁴. Even in this case, there was a clear division between those studies such as the work of Rosaria Quartararo¹⁵ who tended to stress Mussolini’s realism and the Italian “peso determinante” until the outbreak of the war in 1939, and other interpretations such as Knox’s book *Common destiny: Dictatorship, foreign policy, and war in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*¹⁶ in which the ideological affinities between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy fully explained their alliance. According to Knox, Mussolini meant war from the beginning and in 1926-27 his program was «fixed in all essential details¹⁷».

The debate about fascist foreign policy has reached a high degree of analytical interpretation, even if the majority of studies focused on the political-diplomatic aspects, emphasizing the way in which the fascist government, and especially Mussolini, engaged with the international dynamics of the interwar periods. On the other hand the establishment of cultures,

¹⁴ See, E.Di Nolfo, *Mussolini e la politica estera italiana (1919-1933)*, CEDAM, Padova 1960; G.Carocci, *La politica estera dell’Italia fascista, 1925-1928*, Laterza, Bari 1969; G.Rumi, *L’imperialismo fascista*, Mursia, Milano 1974. It is important to mention also De Felice’s volumes on Mussolini, in particular *Mussolini il duce. Gli anni del consenso 1929-1936*, Einaudi, Torino 1996 (I ed. 1974) and *Mussolini il duce. Lo stato totalitario, 1936-1940*, Einaudi Torino 1996 (I ed. 1981); R.J.B. Bosworth, *The Italian dictatorship*, Oxford University Press, New York 1998; E. Di Nolfo, R.H.Rainero, B.Vigazzi (edited by), *L’Italia e la politica di potenza in Europa 1938-40*, Marzorati Milano 1986. E.Collotti, *Fascismo e politica di potenza. Politica estera 1922-1939*, La Nuova Italia, Milano 2000.

¹⁵ R.Quartararo, *Roma tra Londra e Berlino. La politica estera fascista dal 1930 al 1940*, Bonacci, Roma 1980.

¹⁶ M.G.Knox, *Common destiny: Dictatorship, foreign policy, and war in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p.66.

movements and decision-making processes which substantiated a varied fascist initiative for the entire Ventennio were investigated less. From this standpoint, a perspective which is able to mix together the diplomatic, cultural and political level might be useful to dig deeper into the strategies put in place by the regime. Recent historiographical works converged in considering the European dimension and the international character of fascism during the interwar period, with the subsequent invitation to focus on its capacity of providing a model to be imitated by other countries. In doing this, it is necessary to study fascist foreign policy through a closer integration between the history of foreign relations and the ideological/political history of the regime. In dealing with Ispi, I considered the Institute as a meeting point of two separate wider historical phenomena: the interwar European and Transatlantic debate on international relations, animated by a number of national institutions that were born in the 1920s and 1930s, Ispi among them; and the intellectual history of Italy in the fascist period, in particular as regards conceptions related to politics, international relations, and historiography, which was clearly way more nuanced than the ideologically totalitarian character of the regime would suggest. It is clear that the regime tried to reach a new and more influential place in the field of international relations during the interwar period, and that the development of a fascist cultural diplomacy represented a further sphere where to implement the expansionist aspirations of Mussolini's government. Ennio Di Nolfo demonstrated how Mussolini, from the very beginning of his foreign policy, maintained a greater interest in domestic policy, showing a «clear and early awareness of his objectives¹⁸». The elaboration of arguments with the function of strengthening consensus and the development of offensive projections characterized the activities of a broad range of public opinion already in the decade prior to the seizure of power by Mussolini. It is mainly due to the work of Emilio Gentile, a painstaking interpretation on the construction of fascist ideology, which was understood as the original synthesis of the political and cultural instances produced by all those forces which accepted a merger with the Mussolinian project¹⁹. This effort was essential to better decipher all those cultural references which contributed to guide the formation and the concrete practice of the various actors of fascist foreign policy, from members of the government to the diplomatic staff and the large number of publicists, intellectuals and activists²⁰.

In this perspective, the reconstruction of the network produced by Ispi during the 30s and early 40s might add a new piece to better understand those forces which were not part of the official bodies of the regime, nevertheless they played an important role in developing a well-defined political culture in the field of international politics. Moreover, the work stresses the fault line represented by the Ethiopian war, from which the ideological connotations of the Institute would be more pronounced.

In this regard, it is essential to see how Ispi analysed and commented the gradual movement of Italy to Nazi Germany, the Italian conquest of Ethiopia and the subsequent declaration of the Italian Empire, the Spanish Civil War, the Anschluss, the outbreak of the Second World War and last but not least the ways and the motivation with which Italy came into the war alongside Germany on 10 June 1940. Focusing on articles, books, conferences and other initiatives promoted by the Institute is one of the most fruitful way of assessing its role within the political/cultural context of the fascist regime, allowing me to shape a more in-depth understanding of the view formulated by the Study Office of Ispi. Analysing the relationship between Ispi and the fascist regime, we have the opportunity to investigate a thorny issue: what was foreign policy for the fascist government? And above all, was there a clear foreign policy programme put in place by the regime? My research is built upon these questions and the attempt is to appreciate whether or not there was a sort of “freedom” during the fascist dictatorship to theorize on a general political approach in the field of foreign policy. In order to do this we need to historicize fascist foreign

¹⁸ E. Di Nolfo, *Mussolini e la politica estera italiana (1919-1933)*, CEDAM, Padova 1960.

¹⁹ See, E. Gentile, *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista. 1918-1925*, Il Mulino Bologna 2001 (I ed. 1975) and from the same author *Il mito dello stato nuovo. Dal radicalismo nazionale al fascismo*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2002 (I ed. 1982).

²⁰ See the work of B. Bracco, *Storici italiani e politica estera. Tra Salvemini e Volpe. 1917-1925*, Angeli, Milano 1998.

policy, underlining what, at first sight, might be seen as a paradox: while fascism, especially during the '30, was imposing a totalitarian regime in the field of domestic policy, the government seemed to have a different approach in the field of foreign policy, in which we can find an unexpected variety of attitudes as well as a surprising degree of freedom, at least until the Ethiopian war. Of course, this statement seems to go against common sense, but if one tried to focus on different conceptions and approaches produced by scholars in international relations during the '30, then he would discover that behind the image of Mussolini as decision maker there was a more complex situation, in which specialists were trying to face the multiple and, to some extent, new challenges coming from the international environment. Given that, it's very difficult to take for granted that there was a clear political programme in fascist foreign policy. In short, the question is the follow: did Ispi reinterpret the line of the fascist foreign policy or it was *per sé* a demonstration of the variety of conceptions and attitudes existing in the field of foreign policy²¹?

Indeed, this question acquires an even more problematic understanding if one is aware of the fact that the Institute was moving in a new territory, in which the sphere of foreign policy was no longer considered as a secretive domain which kept its distance from public opinion. As a matter of fact, in the previous period (roughly liberal Italy) a solid theory was built, which separated in two different fields domestic policy and foreign policy, thinking that it would have been possible to expel every kind of particularism in the latter and that, at crucial points, the different political forces which were fighting against each other at home had been able to channel into a single and indivisible national interest, followed and sustained by a national public opinion.

In the post-war period things seemed to change: public opinion took the stage, pushing traditional politics into the background. On one hand the great myths of Leninism and Wilsonism and on the other hand radical nationalism and the protests of the defeated powers had the result to deepen the divide between different opinions. These changes brought about a different relationship between foreign policy and public opinion: if before the war one could see public opinion in a committed relationship with foreign policy, in the following period the borders between the two forces seemed more nuanced and a new democratic principle was emerging in the relationship between foreign policy and the masses. Nevertheless, a few years after the war what would have remained of this new attitude promoted by the Peace Conference and sustained by the newborn League of Nations? What was the faith of this new diplomacy? Indeed, if one looks at Italy, the seizure of power by Fascism didn't go to that direction, but on the other hand there is no doubt that it was a mass regime which places foreign policies' issues at the center of its political program. That is, foreign policy started to get out of the old thought patterns and new needs involved both political structures and civil societies. In this perspective, was there something in common between the appeals addressed to the public opinion made by democratic states and the ways in which dictatorships were trying to gain a vast consensus? Walter Lipmann when he wrote his *Public Opinion* in 1921 described this force both as essential and tremendous at the same time, destined to change the destiny of human life from one day to another. Certainly, the events which underpinned the interwar period didn't help in finding an appropriate balance between foreign policy and public opinion. Nevertheless, the opportunity to study an Institute like Ispi, which inherited all these controversial issues facing public opinion, foreign policy and international politics, could help in order to follow closely these ever-evolving changes. I think that this method can provide a fruitful and reasonable approach to issues which are really ambiguous and difficult to treat. This ambivalence is simply striking during the interwar period: any reference to foreign policy and public opinion contained hardcore contradictions and, at least at first sight, inextricable paradoxes. Ispi can be taken as an iconic example of this situation: a place in which scientific information should have been linked with the precise pedagogical aim of forming a strong national conscience of international problems, in accordance with the fundamental directives of Fascist foreign policy, in short «an Institute which marries science with propaganda²²». On the other side, stood Western

²¹ Brunello Vigezzi, *Politica estera e opinione pubblica in Italia dall'Unità ai giorni nostri*, Jaca Book, Milano 1991.

²² *Vita dell'Istituto*, *Rassegna di politica internazionale*, 1934, p. 613.

democracies with their acknowledged inability to transform their foreign policy into a real movement of public opinion. The matter is thus significant: what was propaganda, scientific research, open diplomacy and public opinion for the members of Ispi? How can we assess the transformation and the frequent contacts between foreign policy and public opinion and the creation of Institutes which were trying to channel and address this new form of communication? Was it the public forum created by these Institute a further opportunity to democratize foreign policies choices or a maneuver made by demagogues to construct and gain consensus?

Within this effort there is a specific will to integrate more classical account for the two decades between the World Wars, in which national categories often serve as the lens through which we view this period, with a point of view that focus on non-state actors and their connections with both national and international context. Most studies on the interwar period either are dedicated to individual countries or concentrate on the actions of the governments, often losing sight of bodies that maybe were not directly involved in the decision-making process, but nevertheless contributed significantly to characterize a specific environment. To be clear, the present study is built upon the assumption that non-state actors matter in the study of both domestic and international politics, and that taking for granted their existence as irrelevant elements of the historical process doesn't help to grasp a better understanding of the social, economic, cultural and political context. This need has become even more urgent nowadays as new studies have demonstrated the remarkable complexity of the interwar period, in which, alongside with nation-states and their effort to perform a power politics, international organizations, think tanks, private associations steadily growth in number and in the scope²³. As a consequence, a focus on non-state actors and in particular on the roles played by think tanks in international politics provides a fresh perspective on the evolution of international relations and its relationship with foreign policy and public opinion. For instance, the collection of essays contained in the volume edited by Daniel Laqua, *Internationalism reconfigured. Transnational ideas and movements between the World Wars* is an iconic example of what kind of results can be achieved if we take into consideration the transnational network created by actors, who tried to act beyond the nation-state boundaries. Even if the volume has the specific objective to retrace the origins and the development of internationalism during the interwar period, it includes interesting aspects concerning the methodology they used to fulfill this goal. Firstly, they refuse a rise and fall narrative which seems to be too deterministic, «focusing on the seemingly ill-fated hopes vested in the League of Nations, or allude to the inherent limitations of accords such as the Locarno Treaties and the Kellogg-Briand Pact»²⁴. Instead, the volume opts for a slightly different approach: it investigates the efforts of individuals, groups and associations, and their interactions with the new international structures that had been created in the wake of the Great War.

Eventually, these new transnational histories demonstrate that borders are not so easily dissolved, and that nations remain an important concern. Fragmentation and conflict also formed important parts of the story, as the forces of attraction and repulsion often became deeply intertwined. Some transnational encounters tried to exploit or even reinforce national barriers. Piecing together all these elements helps us to better contextualize exchanges, movements and flows during the interwar period, observing how transnationalism is a force that takes life inside nation-states. Therefore, the nation does not stand in opposition to transnationalism as a border-crossing understanding of the latter term implies, but rather is an essential element in shaping the phenomenon. The histories of transnational encounters in the interwar period tell us as much about the national contexts as they do about the world they seek to reshape.

In particular, the research that I am carrying out shows how transnational structures and movements can be used for nationalistic purposes, to advertise and promote a particular vision of international relations and foreign policy. My attempt is to contextualize the history of Ispi into a

²³ Akira Iriye, *Global Community: the role of international organizations in the making of the contemporary world*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2002.

²⁴ *Internationalism reconfigured*, Laqua, cit., p.XII

wider appreciation of the international environment, looking at those elements which constituted both a challenge and a stimulus for the creation of the Institute.

The research project is basically divided into three parts. The first part aims at discovering the cultural and political background thanks to which Ispi was founded. In doing this, a first chapter will deal with the origins of the so called "Institutes of International Affairs' Movement", focusing on the features and ideas of the originators of this movement: the British (later Royal) Institute of International Affairs based in London and the Council on Foreign Relations based in New York. These Institutes were born in the aftermath of the First World War and represented an interesting novelty within the international environment. They were founded by specialists who participated in the negotiations of the Peace Treaty of Versailles and their goal was to educate, inform and advise future leaders about the causes and consequences of war. To fulfil this ambitious goal they tried to set up a network of analogous institutions in order to better comprehend the international life and to guarantee a mutual understanding between nations.

In the following years, Institutes imbued with analogous purposes were founded in the Commonwealth, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Norway, Romania, Spain and Sweden²⁵. Why did they proliferated around the world during the 20s and the 30s? And, above all, are there any connections between them? In order to answer to this question it is necessary to introduce another element which played a crucial role in the formation of this movement: the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC)²⁶. One of the main task of the Institute was to promote and sustain a methodical international cooperation in the field of political education. As a consequence, a first International Conference of Institutions for Scientific Study of Politics was called by the IIIC and held at the Deutsche Hochschule für Politik (Berlin) in 1928. This was the beginning of a series of International Conferences with the aim to promote a broader discussion on burning political issues such as the role of the state in economic life or collective security. As a result of these conferences, practical international cooperation has been made possible in a number of way: the exchange of professors and of students, facilitation of foreign study, information service and bibliographical work.

To address these new initiatives, a National Committee was formed in Italy with the aim to coordinate all those bodies which were committed with the study of international affairs. At that time in Italy few faculties of political science were developing, especially in Rome, Florence, Padua and Pavia. The latter will play a crucial role in the foundation of Ispi, therefore an entire paragraph will be dedicated on the formation and activities displayed by this faculty and its professors.

The second part of my project begins with the origins of the Institute and follows the development of its nature and characteristics until it was compulsorily mothballed after September 8th 1943. In this phase it took the form of a cultural and research centre *sui generis*, able to draw into its orbit a large number of personalities of high intellectual standing. They included (just to name a few): Luigi Salvatorelli, Filippo Sacchi, Enrico Bonomi, Antonio Basso, Pietro Silva, Giovanni Mira, Ernesto Sestan, Gioacchino Volpe and his School for Modern and Contemporary History (the so called "Roman school" with Federico Chabod, Walter Maturi and Carlo Morandi), and "Benedetto Croce's right-hand man" Adolfo Omodeo. One is naturally led to wonder why they were working for the Institute and what kind of role they were playing within it.

Furthermore, the names that made up the Ispi Study Office included many of the country's most able international affairs specialists: Rodolfo Mosca, Enrico Serra, Cesare Grassetti, Federico Curato, Bruno Pagani, Silvio Pozzani, Mario Toscano, Angelo Tamborra and Francesco Cataluccio. Is it possible to characterise them as representing the first organic nucleus of scholars of international politics in Italy? Attention will focus on the role and significance of the contributions

²⁵ *Institutes of International Affairs*, Carnegie Endowment of International Peace, New York 1953 , p.22-23.

²⁶ The institute was established with the aid of the French government in 1924 and located in Paris. It provided a permanent secretariat for the League of Nations International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation which aimed to promote international cultural/intellectual exchange between scientists, researchers, teachers, artists and other intellectuals.

made by the above-named figures, analysing the many publications produced by the Institute (journals, collections and books designed to cater for specialists and general readers alike) as well as conducting an accurate consultation of their personal archives.

Another aim of this research is to examine the roles and activity of the two main driving forces within Ispi: its director Pierfranco Gaslini, a singular figure as a scholar and cultural organiser, and its president Alberto Pirelli. The former was one of the most energetic personalities of the new generation educated under the Fascist regime, the latter was one of the most important economic-political figures both in the national and in the international arena.

In short, the second part of this research will attempt to answer the following questions: what was Ispi? Why was it founded? How did Ispi interpret and judge the broad lines of the Fascist government's foreign policy? What were the Institute's publishing initiatives and what aims did they have? Can Ispi be considered a major centre of historical and policy research, in terms of modern and contemporary history and the study of international relations? In a general sense, what degree of independence did Ispi have from the dictates of the regime?

The third part aims to analyse the Institute's outlook on international situation, in particular it will be examined how the Austrian issue and the Anschluss were treated by the two journals of Ispi, «Rassegna di politica internazionale» and «Relazioni Internazionali». In this perspective, it will be possible to analyse the collaborations of the Institute and the various standpoints hosted by the journals. Who were the authors who collaborated with the Institute and what were their attitudes towards the most thorny international issues which were happening in those years? How and to what degree did the journals change their views towards Anschluss? Did they align immediately with the regime or were there some discrepancies between authors' writings and the official view imposed by the regime?

The methodology that I intend to use will draw extensively upon primary sources (institutional archives as well as private archives) even if, in order to achieve a more complex account of the history of Ispi, I intend to analyse the many publications produced by the Institute (journals, collections and books designed to cater for specialists and general readers alike) in the context of specific case studies regarding some of the most salient historical events marking the development of international politics.

However the most important source for my research is the Historical Archive of Ispi: access to its historical archive now makes it possible to piece together its history and attempt to understand the development of such think tanks in international politics from a long-term perspective. As a matter of fact, the vast amount of material made available by the Ispi Historical Archive "gives the tangible impression of a task of digging and reflection, almost all of which still remains to be done"²⁷.

This research acquires particular interest in the light of the scarcity of historical study to which ISPI has been subjected. The only two examinations of its work, the essays by Angelo Montenegro and Enrico Decleva²⁸, both mention the same problem. Yet the Institute has a great deal to say. The papers in its Historical Archive reveal the importance of its role in Italian domestic affairs, both under the Fascist regime and later, after the establishment of the Republic. Furthermore, as my project is placed at the crossroads between the history of Italian foreign policy (especially fascist foreign policy), the history of think tanks in international politics and the analysis of the birth of a new elite of specialists in foreign affairs, it is difficult to find some specific reference points. As a matter of fact, though there are a lot of general accounts concerning the foreign policy of the Fascist regime as well as an ample bibliography regarding the function of think

²⁷ Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale, *Inventario dell'archivio storico 1934-1970*, edited by Maria M. Benzoni, Anna Ostinelli and Silvia M. Pizzetti, scientific direction Brunello Vigezzi, Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali direzione generale per gli archivi, Rome, 2007, p.XXI

²⁸ Angelo Montenegro, *Politica estera e organizzazione del consenso. Note sull'Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale. 1933-43*, «Studi Storici», anno XIX, 1978, n.4, p.777-817 and Enrico Decleva, *Politica estera, storia, propaganda: l'Ispi di Milano e la Francia (1934- 43)*, «Storia contemporanea», XIII, 1982, n.4-5, pp.697-757.

tanks, it appears to me that my research tackles an important topic which has not been seriously investigated. In particular the lack of specific case studies dedicated to the “Institutes of International Affairs’ movement”²⁹ (especially in the European context) is a real handicap for a better understanding of the historical backdrop which emerged from the First World War. In fact, although it is known that Institutes of International Affairs (IIA) have proliferated around the world since their modest beginnings during the early 20s, «their existence and persistence have, in the main, failed to inspire scholars to study their activities, to assess their influence, and to consider their significance in understanding how power works [...]»³⁰. After this period the next most significant was the late 1920s and 1930s, which saw such developments in the Commonwealth and in Europe, including the Italian Ispi. Inderjeet Parmar rightly acknowledged that the IIAs movement was a world-wide phenomenon: if on one hand the aims and objectives of the IIAs were identical to those of Chatham House (all these institutes claimed to be engaged in the objective, scientific study of foreign affairs), on the other hand they take a variety of forms due to the particular cultural as well as political environment of their respective countries. Focusing on the Anglo-American Institutes, Parmar states that, given the fact that their establishment derived from American foundation sources, the IIAs were part of a global knowledge network promoting liberal internationalism and attitudes sympathetic to the United States. This might be true, but it is only a part of the story, as the establishment of Ispi demonstrates. As an institute founded and developed under the Fascist regime Ispi was originally unconnected (culturally, politically, financially) with the Anglo-American think tanks, aiming at studying and spreading a specific view of international affairs that, needless to say, was strongly critical towards the new international order which emerged from the peace conference of Versailles. So, even if «[...] the archival research still needs to be conducted in order to adequately address the question of IIA policy influence in war, and, indeed, at any, time»³¹, I argue that, against this backdrop, Ispi represents a problematic as well as meaningful case study. So, what was Ispi and, above all, why was it founded?

Indeed, if on one hand the research has resisted the temptation to go for the easy way (that is, to write a parochial micro-history), considering the Institute as a meeting point between the interwar European and Transatlantic debate on international relations and the conceptions related to politics, international relations and historiography produced by a group of scholars and specialists who found in Ispi a place of research and divulgation; on the other hand the dissertation has tried to handle two different historiographies and methodologies: that of transnational history, necessary to map the debate on International Relations during the 20s and 30s both in its cultural and organizational features, and that of intellectual history of Italy in the fascist period. This approach has revealed both its potential as well as its weaknesses. As a consequence, while it has been possible to set a long-term project with a series of, I think, interesting questions capable of both problematizing the object of analysis in an original way and suggesting new paths of research that can hold together different level of analysis, the research has found some difficulties to follow all the suggestions pointed out at the beginning. I am fully aware of the fact that, sometimes, the research sketches out new themes without addressing the issues in more depth. For instance, having stated that it is important to recognize the peculiar international involvement of Ispi in order to better understand Italian foreign policy, considering the Institute as an original think tank in international relations, it would have been interesting to assess how fascism was perceived within the system of International Affairs Institutes and within the League of Nations. The fact is that a transnational approach, with its needs to connect different level of analysis with a historical research based on multi-archival and multi-lingual research, requires a quite long period of reflection in order to operationalize the sources taken into account as well as to develop a critical

²⁹ A definition that I take from Inderjeet Parmar, *Institutes of International Affairs: their roles in foreign policy-making, opinion mobilization and unofficial diplomacy* in Stone, Diane and Denham, Andrew. eds. *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*, Manchester, 2004.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p.19.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p.28.

and self-confident interpretation of the finding. Nevertheless, I argue that, taking account of these limitations, the research has achieved its main purpose: the attempt to define what was Ispi and why what is founded, linking its activities with an in-depth understanding of the national/international political environment in which it developed its activities. The result is a better understanding of both Italy's international involvements as well as a better appreciation of the role played by the Institutes of International Affairs during the interwar period.

Prologue

Ispi before Ispi: searching for the origins of the Institute for studies in international politics.

In 1953 the Carnegie Endowment of International Peace decided to publish a little book, titled *Institutes of International Affairs*, as a result of a conference held in Paris, in which the most important think tanks in the world were united to take stock of the situation about their activities and roles: «the institutes exist within national frameworks and are independent of each other in their formulation of policies and points of view. Yet consultation and exchange of opinion among institute leaders are advantageous. With this in mind, the Carnegie Endowment of International Peace took the initiative in sponsoring and organizing a conference of institute leaders held in Paris in October 1950»³². The aim of the book was twofold: the first part was an introduction «of the development of the institute movement» since they were born in the aftermath of the First World War in order to offer a historical perspective of «the rise of a group of institutes of world affairs, following the pattern set by the Royal Institute in London and the Council on Foreign Relations in New York in 1919, [considered as] a significant and constructive movement for those concerned with a just and lasting peace³³»; while the second part consisted of a detailed description of the institutes founded until then. From the introduction of the volume the most important element of novelty which characterized these institutes can be drawn, that was the will to study international questions with a scientific approach. According to the volume, this was the fault-line which divided the work of these bodies from the nineteenth century peace movement: the Institutes of International Affairs were considered as «products of the modern scientific temper and of a more experienced understanding of the dynamics of world politics».

As a consequence they were trying to keep international peace by studying the complex nature of international relations and by the dissemination of accurate information, rather than through moral propaganda which was the distinguishing feature of the early peace societies. The latter were accused of being naïve, without any definite political objectives and programs: they wanted a peaceful world but they didn't have specific proposals by which peace might have been achieved. According to them, even if organized peace movement improved over time, trying to connect their humanitarian and internationalist outlook with social, political and economic issues³⁴, two main factors prevented them from succeeding. The first factor had to be found in the change of international environment after 1870: it began a period of international anarchy in which every state tried to secure itself against its neighbors, and as a consequence a system of alliances took shape. The other factor was that the masses proved to be susceptible to jingoism: they were willing to follow their governments in battles against other nations, especially when they felt that their homeland was in danger. When war came in 1914, the nineteenth century peace societies were accused of misunderstanding both the forces that made for war and the nature of public opinion. After the catastrophe of the Great War, it was understood that conflicts would not be banished by resolution nor prevented solely by juridical machinery superimposed upon competing national units.

³² *Institutes of International Affairs*, Carnegie Endowment of International Peace, New York 1953, p.19.

³³ Ibidem, p.V. The “movement” grew out of a series of informal meetings organized among British and American experts during the Peace Conference at the Hotel Majestic in Paris, where the British delegation was located. That is why in my research I have tried to follow the development of what was considered the “precursor” of the Institutes of International Affairs that is the British (later Royal) Institute of International Affairs.

³⁴ For example when they found in Cobden's thought a valid instrument to connect peace with free trade and economic prosperity, or when the International Arbitration and Peace Association founded in 1880 recognized arbitration as a technique of peace, leaving aside the emphasis on the immorality of war.

The complex roots of the war required profound studies in order to provide statesmen with a constructive path to follow. But this was not enough: according to the volume, the other force to be domesticated was the public opinion. The latter was considered an unreliable ally for peace societies: at the first real or imagined threat to national security it could have become a powerful and unreasoning force for war.

These new acknowledgements encouraged a set of new initiatives and organized efforts in the field of foreign affairs: the formation of a new academic discipline of international relations, the implementation of international cultural relations, the emphasis given to the conditions of civilized existence as a bulwark against war, and the establishment of Institutes of International Affairs as a vehicle for a new internationalism. From the volume we can draw some conclusions: the first is that from its point of view was clear that the origins of these Institutes of International Affairs had to be found in the light of the history of the 19th century peace movement, so that they aimed, during the interwar period, at developing a humanitarian and internationalist view without being biased by national affiliations and interests. Secondly, they saw these institutes as representatives of a new modernity after the First World War: the possibility to set up an enquiry on international issues with a scientific approach was the right step towards a better understanding between nations and the cornerstone for endless peace. The third conclusion is that they recognized the public opinion as a new and important force in the field of international relations. Indeed, they conceived public opinions as volatile forces, which in most of the cases could have assumed negative positions towards the maintenance of peace. This was why these institutes had the chiefly duty to “domesticate” them. Finally, there was a willingness to comprehend all the Institutes from the same perspective, which emphasized the features described above.

What is striking about the list of think tanks is that among the institutes involved at the conference it was reported the Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (Institute for Studies in International Politics) founded in Milan in 1933 «modeled after Chatham House by a group of students who wanted a center for the objective study of international affairs³⁵». Ispi was neither the only Italian organization present at the conference³⁶ nor was Italy the only defeated nation in the Second World War represented at the international meeting in Paris, nevertheless the Institute for Studies in International politics was the only organization of that vanquished group of countries which managed to survive from the interwar period and at the same time to be able to regain an international legitimation after the fascist period. As a matter of fact, being invited to that conference meant that the Institute was considered to meet the basic requirements to be a “credible” Institute of International Affairs, namely to be

characterized by certain qualities: [...] capable of independent judgment and scholarly determination of their programs [...] concerned with basic research in international relations [...] engaged in dissemination of information by conference and publication, but are not primarily instructional centers [...] and precluded from partisan political programs³⁷.

At first sight this question could be dismissed as a formality or, at most, as a curious detail: it could have been that after the war the Institute maintained its original name but on the other hand it radically changed its organizational plan and the most important members of its staff. Except that this didn't happen: as my research confirms, there was a glaring continuity of activities and members of Ispi between the interwar period and the post-war years. Just to give an idea of such continuity it suffices to say that the president of the Institute, Alberto Pirelli, would remain the same as well as the members of the Study Office of the Institute. In this perspective, the only change was

³⁵ Ibidem, p.22.

³⁶ There was also the Istituto di Economia Internazionale (Institute of International Economy) founded in Genoa in 1945, and the Società Italiana per l'Organizzazione Internazionale (Italian Society for the International Organization) founded in Rome in 1944, after the liberation of the Italian capital.

³⁷ Ibidem, p.30

about the direction of the Institute where the former director Pierfranco Gaslini was replaced by his vice-director Gerolamo Bassani. In general, the defections of some of the most important members of Ispi after the Second World War were not guided by “political” considerations, rather by the fact that some specialists decided to found other institutes³⁸, or embarking on other career paths³⁹. Why was it the case? How did Ispi manage to regain not only national but also international legitimation, allowing it to participate to international meetings and to be accepted within the Institute of International Affairs’ group?

First of all, the birth of the Institutes of International Affairs in the aftermath of the First World War pointed out that something had changed in the way national governments were making their foreign policies: the need of scientific knowledge as well as the necessity of placing a filter between political decisions and the masses to create an “informed” public opinion represented a new challenge for every single nation-state or Empire. On the other hand, as the origins of both the Royal Institute of International Affairs and the Council on Foreign Relations demonstrated, a new surge of nationalism sank the original plan to create a single Institute of International Affairs with national branches all over the world⁴⁰. Given that, a thorough analysis of the development of these Institutes cannot be separate from an in depth understanding of the relationship between these bodies and their respective national environments. What did it mean for an expert in foreign affairs to carry out a scientific approach and at the same time to be loyal to his own country? Was it possible «to think nationally as well as internationally⁴¹» as Sir Edward Grey stated during the inaugural meeting of the British Institute of International Affairs? How did they conduct their own research and how did they draw their conclusions? How did they perceive themselves and how were they perceived by their “colleagues” who were working in rather similar structures but in a different national environment? Finally, what degree of influence did they try to obtain from their public opinions, with which instruments and for what purposes?

Secondly, it is important to better qualify what is meant by Institutes of International Affairs movement. In fact, from a careful recon, it can be said that the proliferation of a series of bodies engaged in the study of international problems was a more heterogeneous phenomenon than one might expected. I argue that the Institutes of International Affairs movement implied some specific features which cannot be seen in other bodies which were dealing with the same issues: first of all they were nation-based institutes and one of their tasks was to deal with problems arisen from the foreign policy of their own respective governments. In this respect, if on one hand they were really close to the political sphere and they could hope to influence the decision-making process thanks to their expertise and publications on the other hand they were affected by national loyalties and interests. For them, striking a balance between a scientific study of international affairs and the aspirations of the foreign policies of their own countries was a difficult task, and this resulted in being a crucial factor both in the way they were perceived by other similar institutes and in their credibility when they were trying to improve an internationalist atmosphere among different countries. Paradoxically, it was exactly this latent ambiguity between internationalist aspirations and national loyalties which allowed the development of this movement. In fact, if at the beginning it was thought, in a series of informal meetings promoted by some members of American and British delegations during the Peace Conference in Paris, to create an Institute of International Affairs with national branches, then it was decided that every nation would have had the responsibility of founding its own Institute and, only in a later stage, to set up a network with the other institutes. The British Institute of International Affairs was the first to be created, followed

³⁸ See the case of Bruno Pagani who founded the Economic Institute and the journal «Mondo Economico».

³⁹ See the case of Enrico Serra who decided to leave Ispi after that Pirelli regained the presidency in 1949 in order to open the Italian National Agency of Associated Press (ANSA) both in London and in Paris.

⁴⁰ As a matter of fact, the creation of nation-based think tanks in international affairs was a partial withdrawal from a plan which should have been much more transnational at the beginning, *Chatham House Annual Reports 1919-1925*, Archives of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London,

⁴¹ *Chatham House Annual Reports 1919-1925*, p.15.

closely by the American Council on Foreign Relations. The subsequent IIAs movement was strongly influenced by the British Institute and it became a model for other similar bodies which were born in the 20s and in the 30s. A different situation characterized the Foreign Policy Association or the Carnegie Endowment of International Peace which were less involved in the governmental sphere and with a tendency to favor an internationalist approach to international issues. On the whole, all of them represented a novelty in the national and international environment, opening a new way of studying and disseminating international political problems. Their role was that of connecting the world of power with the world of knowledge, with the aim of constructing a specific narrative by involving national and international facts, aspirations and purposes. It is within this “think tank’s phenomenon” that it is possible to recognize a specific movement constituted by nation-based Institutes, aiming to study and disseminate a more comprehensive knowledge about international affairs, with the specificity of being closely connected with their respective governments, namely Institutes of International Affairs.

In order to better understand the Institutes of International Affairs’ movement, it seems to me crucial to follow the lines of development of these bodies from the beginning, that is to say from the informal meetings organized among British and American experts during the Peace Conference at the Hotel Majestic in Paris, where the British delegation was located. Then I will follow the development of what was considered the “precursor” of the Institutes of International Affairs that is the Royal Institute of International Affairs, trying to highlight the most important features and the role it played in the national and international scenario. Moreover the RIIA maintained a close relationship with the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation IIIC which, by the establishment of a series of International Studies Conferences, contributed towards the creation of an international forum in which these new Institutes were able to come into contact. As a consequence a detailed analysis of the Institute will help to better contextualize these International Conferences organized with the aim of discussing about the most important international issues and to stimulate a mutual understanding between intellectuals, experts and politicians from different countries. Examining these conferences is important to realize how intellectual cooperation was conducted during the interwar period and what was the role of the Institutes of International Affairs in pushing for an international understanding. In line with the interests of my research, it was also interesting to analyze the Italian contribution to these conferences, especially during the first international study conference held in Milan in 1932. The aim is to see how Italian speakers approached a theme of international importance, the degree of exchange they had with foreign intellectuals, how they represented their nation and their government in a transnational platform and on the other hand how they were perceived by other foreign speakers. Following the example of other European states, an Italian National Committee was organized by the Italian government in order to participate in these international meetings. The Italian National Committee was founded in 1928 and acted as part of an International Committee established in 1922 in Geneva under the chairmanship of Henri Bergson. From the beginning it was asked by the League of Nations to find a viable way «to improve international cooperation in scientific research, to understand how scientific documentation was internationally organized and how to increase a cooperation between universities⁴²». At the beginning the International Committees were thought of as an instrument to survey the condition of intellectual life in Europe and to assist those in which «intellectual life was in danger»: this is why the first National Committees were formed in nations considered “at risk”: Estonia was the first one created on December 1922, then came Hungary, Poland (under the suggestion of Mary Curie), Latvia, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. National Committees had the duty of carrying out effective work with a view to promoting a better mutual understanding between peoples; «they were constituted quite

⁴² *National Committees on Intellectual Cooperation*, Geneva 1937, preface by MG de Reynold, Rapporteur of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, Chairman on the Swiss national Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, Archives of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IICI) 1925-1946, Unesco Archives, Paris.

spontaneously, in order to furnish replies to the enquiry and to forward the most urgent requests made by scientific institutions and men of science to the International Committee». The first general assembly of representatives of National Committees was held in Paris in 1923. During that international meeting an international office of bibliographical information was created, which promoted exchanges of publications, students and young teachers. This would have been the first step in overcoming the difficult period after the war and a powerful instrument to boost common effort between different countries. In this perspective, new national committees were founded in what they called “most favored countries” such as Belgium, Brazil, France and Switzerland. In 1924 the French government made an offer to the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation to found and institute in Paris in order to provide it with a place suitable for its purposes, and in 1925 the International Institute on Intellectual Cooperation came into being. The Institute should have made use of the National Committees on Intellectual Cooperation which were in communication with each other, «as its agents». From 1925 National Committees became more numerous, not only in Europe, but also in Asia and America and in countries that were not members of the League. In the following years the International Committee made some rules: every nation could have only one National Committee; each Committee would have been free to organize itself as it thought fit. It was also desirable that each National Committee should be «such as to represent all the important intellectual activities of the country concerned». Finally, it was suggested to send a delegate for each Committee to general meetings in order to secure a better coordination of effort. Nevertheless, given the fact that National Committees were free to organize themselves, there were a quite high heterogeneity: some were official, other were private organizations, associations of institutions or of leading personalities. It was thought to create a federalist movement in which all forms of national life and all form of civilization should be represented, in this way the League was trying «to go beyond political society, to guarantee a future of peace and order. Federalism which guarantees diversity is the condition of universality, the aim and object of international cooperation».

In 1931 the National Committee reached the number of 39, and at the same time their work was increasingly associated with the initiatives of intellectual cooperation, as they represented «the national aspects of intellectual cooperation». As a matter of fact, National Committees were considered by the International Committee as indispensable intermediaries between its headquarters in Geneva and intellectual life in each country. In the same year they were recognized by the League of Nations as official bodies placed in the International Organization of Intellectual Cooperation which considered itself as «representative of civilization in general». The central role conquered by this movement and its progressive development lead to the adoption of a National Committee also in those nations in which the study of foreign and international politics was already in practice. Among these nations Italy choose to establish its own National Committee in 1928. According to its constitution, the Committee consisted of a Chairman in the shape of Giuliano Balbino⁴³, two Vice Chairman and fifty members. The latter were chosen in an individual capacity, even if the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Education, Press and Propaganda and Interior were members of the Committee in their official capacity. Among the

⁴³ Giuliano Balbino at the beginning of his political career was a follower of the *L'Unità* founded by Salvemini, he was an ardent interventionist and he defended the principle of nationality close to the position stated by Mazzini, «the “shining star of the democratic revolution of 1848 [who] argued for a reshaping of the European political order on the basis of two seminal principles: *democracy* and *self-determination*», edited and with an introduction by Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati, *A cosmopolitanism of nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's writings on Democracy, Nation Building and International Relations*, Princeton 2009. As happened to many of his “colleagues”, the consequences of the war deeply affected the progressive nationalism of Giuliano, leading him to a new radicalism in which, arguing with Salvemini, he was emphasizing the conception of Patria, by deleting its connection with democratic practices. Giuliano Balbino had a peculiar position in the fascist regime being senator, dean of the faculty of letters and philosophy at the Royal University of Rome and member of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation.

members of the Committee there was Arrigo Solmi, one of the founders of International Relations as an academic subject in Italy as well as of the most important figures for the establishment of the Faculty of Political Science of Pavia. Solmi performed important studies in the history of Italian law, becoming one of its great masters of the Twentieth century. In his historiography the key element was the interconnection between legal, social and political reality. In 1917 he obtained the Chair in the history of Italian law in Pavia. Here, he was able to create a vital and original school thanks to his interests on contemporary history. Even Solmi was completely sized by a political passion directed towards the future of the Italian society, by making him an active politician. He played an influential role in those interventionist groups which pushed for Italy's entry into the First World War, alongside with intellectuals such as Gioacchino Volpe, Giovanni Amendola and Antonio Anzillotti. The themes stressed by Solmi during this period would have been meaningful also during the fascist regime, representing the long-standing issues of Italian political and cultural conformation: the nature of democracy and liberalism, the role of élites, the choice between protectionism and liberism, the nationalization of the masses and the figure of the intellectual-politician. Even if interventionism was a really complex phenomenon, including different political souls and ways of thinking, there was an *idem sentire* in the glorification of the role of nation and in considering the war as an instrumental step towards Italy's moral renewal. His articles during this period owned a clear polemical tone, but the whole thing was outlined by a rigorous study and a deep knowledge on the matter in question: «since the outbreak of the first world war, Solmi was profoundly involved in the international political issues and in the diplomatic history, a passion which led him, as many of the brightest historians at that time, to continue over the following decades the study of such problems⁴⁴». According to Solmi the war had to fulfill the aim of ensuring the successful completion of the national unity as well as to reach a solid strategic and military security. There was in his thought the idea that a whole generation had to sacrifice itself to free future generations in a truly independent Italy. This is why, as he perceived what he thought to be the failure of the liberal political class to translate the Italian military victory in political and territorial advantages, he sleight towards a full support of the fascist regime: «the definitive passage of the modenese historian from liberal-nationalist positions to a view closer to Rocco or Federzoni's nationalism occurred in the years 1919-1920, when there was a political and diplomatic crisis caused by the Adriatic issue⁴⁵». He joined fascism also because he saw in that movement a lifeline against those (members of the Parliament and parties) who wanted to undermine the Italian State. Even for a representative of the liberal culture it was time to give up liberal political institutions in favor of a dictatorial regime able to turn Italy in a great power. This is why for figures like Solmi, Volpe, Gentile, who thought themselves as sons of the liberal tradition, was felt the necessity of an evolution able to introduce new elements into the political game. As a whole, they preferred to join the fascist regime instead of going back to an Italy ruled by Giolitti or Nitti. Solmi's carrier was favored by Mussolini himself: he became Under Secretary of National Education in 1932 and from 1935 to 1939 he was Minister of Justice. Mussolini used Solmi as an expert in the legal field, a serious and skilled figure who was loyal enforcer of duce's directives. On the other hand, Solmi was really fascinated by the personality of Mussolini and he strongly believed in his political skills. Arrigo Solmi was more and more involved in studying and explaining international politics with the publication of a series of articles and essays. In his writings there was a strong political and

⁴⁴ Luciano Monzali, *Arrigo Solmi storico delle relazioni internazionali*, «Il Politico», Vol. 59, No. 3 (170) (Luglio-Settembre 1994), pp. 439-467.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p.448.

propagandistic component, and his aim was to defend and glorify the actions of Mussolini's diplomacy. Nevertheless, given the fact that these articles were the product of a skilled jurist and historian they were well-thought and structured with solid arguments, so much that he became one of the best experts of international politics during those years. Solmi's account for some of the crucial themes of Mussolini's foreign policy took for granted the fact that Italy awarded the status of a great power and the right to be autonomous in its foreign policy. In this perspective, the fascist government wanted to revise international treaties not to rewrite a new European equilibrium different from that one came out from the war, rather to try to obtain something more for Italy. This position reflected the official position of Mussolini in those years who wanted to govern the European space through his Four-Power Pact: a new political order against Germanic imperialism and in coherence with the position of the winning Italy at the end of the war.

A systematic study of the origins and development of International Relations in Italy has never been done. This notable lacuna prevents the scholars from being able to reconstruct the disciplinary history of academic international relations and this is unfortunate given that «the capacity to examine the contemporary nature of an intellectual discipline is inseparable from an understanding of the intellectual roots from which it evolved⁴⁶». Indeed, the attempt to reconstruct the history of Ispi can be seen as an opportunity to open fresh paths to write a disciplinary history of international relations in Italy. A history which is meant to set aside idealized versions of the past, thus investigating the actual lineage of scholars who self-consciously and institutionally understood themselves to be participating in the academic discourse of international relations. Ispi was one of the largest and important Institutes of International Affairs created in the interwar period, but no articles on it have so far been published in any international academic journals. Given the controversial nature of its birth, the study of Ispi as well as the origins of Italian thought in International Relations were considered a sort of taboo and only in recent years has there been a willingness to start a critical reflection on it. Two different views have emerged: the whole experience of Ispi and in general of International Relations can be dismissed as a form of fascist rhetoric which did not bring new ideas within Italian International Relations thought. As a consequence, the study of International Relations and Italian foreign policy is seen as an important weapon of fascist propaganda and as an attempt to use specialists and intellectuals as mouthpieces of the regime. In contrast to these interpretations other studies were more oriented to understanding the historical context in which Fascist foreign policy was produced. All these studies are well documented and have helped us to better understand interests and strategies from which the fascist foreign policy was conducted. Yet, overall there has been the tendency to focus only on some specific aspects of this policy, looking either at Mussolini's actions or at the fascist government's directives. As a result, a rather fragmented picture has emerged which has prevented a full assessment of Italian foreign policy and its thought which emerged in the 20s and 30s, and found one of its largest expressions in the activities of Ispi. It is the aim of the present work to offer a more comprehensive analysis of the development of this thought in its socio-economic, political and intellectual context. My argument is that the production of Ispi represented the involvement of many Italian experts and intellectuals in the fascist blueprint for a great Italy which at the beginning, until the Ethiopian war, had to be constructed within the steps of a traditional diplomacy, and then, at a later stage, took the form of a colonial and imperial Italy, by imposing its vision on the international environment. Moreover the historical experience of Ispi represented a genuine attempt to transform International Relations into both an applied science and a synthesizing discipline open to the contribution of other knowledge. I will first delineate the intellectual context and political context after World War I which motivated Italian scholars to tackle the new political and economic problems faced by the country. It is in this context that Italian International Relations

⁴⁶ Brian C. Schmidt, *the historiography of academic international relations*, *Review of International Studies* (1994), 20, 349-37.

thought arose as a formal discourse. I will then investigate the specificity of this International Relations thought, by offering a critical account of the journals of Ispi, «Rassegna di politica internazionale» and «Relazioni Internazionali», which represented one of the most important effort to give Italy its own voice in International Politics.

Through an analysis of the Italian National Committee and, above all, of the Faculty of Political Science of Pavia we can better appreciate the cultural milieu from which Ispi was born. Analyzing the discourses pronounced during the conferences as well as some articles from the journal of the Faculty, it will be possible to contextualize this “transnational experience” into the Italian national environment. In so doing, the insoluble contradiction between the need for scientific studies in international politics and the necessities of the fascist regime and its foreign policy will emerge. Nevertheless the Faculty turned out to be a stimulating place from which students had the opportunity of getting acquainted with international problems and the changes brought by the First World War. The need for a scientific studies in international politics, the awareness of public opinion as a new and influential force acting both in the national and international scenario and a determined political will to help Italy and the fascist regime to fulfill their aims in foreign policy, found in Pierfranco Gaslini, the first director of Ispi, a powerful synthesis. From the analysis of a corpus of new sources, Gaslini resulted in being the undisputed protagonist of the foundation of Ispi, so that an attempt to track down his experiences and his work up to the foundation of the Institute in 1933 will constitute the last section of the first chapter.

1 NEW INSTRUMENTS FOR NEW NEEDS: A MORE “SCIENTIFIC” UNDERSTANDING OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

From an International Institute of International Affairs to the nation-based think tanks: the case of the British Institute of International Affairs.

During the negotiations of the Peace Conference of Versailles, some members of the American and British delegations felt the need to meet together and to reflect on how to educate, inform and advise future leaders about the causes and consequences of the war as well as current international issues. They started to meet each other in informal meetings under the roof of Hotel Majestic, where the British delegation was placed. In there “diplomats, soldiers, sailors, airmen, civil administrators, jurists, financial and economic experts, captains of industry and spokesmen of labor, members of cabinets and parliaments, journalists and publicists of all sorts and kinds” congregated. They came from the American and British delegations, but also from the “various Dominions, India, Egypt or the Crown Colonies”⁴⁷. When they were off duty they were willing to debate with each other about all kinds of international issues discussed during the formal sessions of the Peace Conference: «in friendly informal intercourse they came to see how they differed, and also to appreciate the sincerity of views which were not their own. A respect for each other’s opinions grew which could scarcely have developed under other conditions». Relations developed between the two largest delegations because they had the advantage of a common language and political traditions: American and British specialists were constantly dining with one another in their respective hotels. This context helped men of theories and men of practice to meet together: people fresh from some distant scene of action were bombarded with questions, and the problems they had studied on the spot were discussed before them in all their bearings. They thought they had found a new way to meet and discuss international problems, and that in this way they were establishing new grounds for a better understanding between nations. Their mission was to eradicate that sort of ignorance born of isolation: «The passions which embroil nations against each other, wreck civilization and destroy freedom, all have their roots in the ignorance born of isolation»⁴⁸. An isolation which concerned not only the relationship between nations but among schools of thought within the same nation. In Paris, these «leaders of thought and action from the same country» were trying to find more effective agencies for creating an opinion on international affairs «at once charitable, sane and well-informed». The members of these gatherings thought that aggressive nationalisms could have been defeated only by fighting against ignorance and isolation. Actually the latter was recognized as the real negative factor in foreign relations as well as the incapacity to manage the mood and the outlook of the masses. This was felt as a necessity given the fact that the masses were becoming more and more important in the political life of both domestic and international environments. During those informal meetings held at the Hotel Majestic it was decided to prepare a scheme for the creation of an Institute of International Affairs. This Institute had to reflect the change in which these intellectuals and specialists were looking at the realm of international relations and the way in which foreign policies should have been informed. With the constitution of the League of Nations, they were convinced that each nation had to make an effort to frame its foreign policy with an eye to the welfare of society at large. This is why they wanted to promote the foundation of an «organization for studying the relation of this principle to practical questions as they arise». That is, Institutes which had to study international affairs in order to understand how foreign policies could have been harmonized in order to develop a peaceful

⁴⁷ *Chatham House Annual Reports 1919-1925*, Archives of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, p.1

⁴⁸ Ivi, p.2.

international environment. They resolved to form an Institute entitled “The Institute of International Affairs”, consisted of two branches, one in the United Kingdom and one in the United States. The purpose of this Institute should have been to keep its members in touch with the international situation, enabling them to study the relation between national policies and the interests of society as a whole. It was also decided to make a register of International Affairs be issued yearly by the institute, and the publication of monographs on special subjects issued at the discretion, and under the control, of each branch of the Institute. A provisional committee of six composed of prof. Archibald Coolidge⁴⁹, dr. James Brown Scott⁵⁰, prof. James T. Shotwell⁵¹ for the American part, Cecil Hurst⁵², Captain Clement Jones and Harold Temperley⁵³ for the British delegation, was appointed with the power of taking whatever steps were necessary to make these resolutions effective.

The first volumes published by the Institute would have dealt with the Congress of Paris, constituting the basis upon which the future policy of the world would develop. The British members were the more able to envisage what the Institute should have been: the London branch should have been housed on a site convenient of access to “public men”, in buildings separated into two wings, corresponding to the dual purpose of the Institute.

One of the wings should have been used for research. At that time there wasn't in London a place where a writer on foreign affairs could find easily the public papers of the various governments, updated maps, and the books he required. The founders of the Institute thought that a specialist needed a place adapted for quiet study, where all the documents he may have wanted to consult would be gathered under one roof. It was also useful to have a place where many skills were combined so that if a writer on foreign affairs wished to consult documents in a language unknown to him, he could have relied upon another member who knew that language. Wings of the building should have contained the theatre, where papers were read and discussed and the discussion should have been private, in order to guarantee the required freedom. The main aim was to offer the best information to the members, and to provide an extremely attractive environment where information and thought on international affairs were to be exchanged. It had to act as a university created for the study of international affairs.

Students would have had a first-hand knowledge of the various communities to which their studies related, so that he could have used the best possible facilities for personal intercourse with those who have enjoyed recent opportunities for observation on the spot, «and in foreign affairs, more than in any other branch of knowledge, thought is developed in the process of private conversation» as those one produced during the Peace Delegations housed in the various hotels of the French capital. During lunches they could have met together, developing a personal exchange of facts and thoughts. This should have been the other wing of the Institute: a place where facilities,

⁴⁹ He was professor of history at Harvard College and a scholar in international affairs. He became editor-in-chief of the Council on Foreign Relations' journal «Foreign Affairs» until his death in 1928.

⁵⁰ He was a well-known specialist in international law, serving on the United States delegation at the Second Hague Peace Conference and as advisor for the Expatriation Act of 1907. He was as well secretary of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP).

⁵¹ He was an American history professor at the Columbia University who played an instrumental role in the creation of the International Labor Organization in 1919. He acted also as director of research at the CEIP, as well as director of planning and research in international relations. Shotwell attended the Paris Peace Conference as a member of The Inquiry (a study group established by Woodrow Wilson to prepare materials for the peace negotiations) and historian of the American delegation. He was also an anti-US isolationism and a promoter for the US entry into the League of Nations. In this perspective, he can be understood as a representative of those Scientific Progressives who understood the idea of a science of international politics as the rational management of international society, see C. DeBenedetti, *James T. Shotwell and the Science of International Politics*, «Political Science Quarterly», volume 89, n.2, 1974.

⁵² He studied jurisprudence at Trinity College in Cambridge and he became Assistant Legal Adviser for the British Foreign Office. In 1929 he became a member of the Permanent Court of International Justice in The Hague and remained a member up to its dissolution in 1945.

⁵³ He was a British diplomatic historian, professor of modern history at the university of Cambridge. He worked as advisor for the League of Nations and he attended the Paris Peace Conference, writing an official history of it.

the same facilities for social intercourse as existed in the Hotel Crillon and Hotel Majestic, should have been provided as if the Institute was a social club. Common rooms where members could congregate at any time, having their meals together and converse in quiet and comfort, were essential as students at work in the library would have saved their time by finding their meals in the same building. On the other hand, the papers read and the discussions which followed them in the theatre of the Institute, would have been far better attended if members could have dined there before the meetings: «there should be also bedrooms for the use of members from the country or abroad, and where visitors from the Branches in America or in the other parts of the world can be lodged». The experience of Paris had created the nucleus of this organization, but the main obstacles to be overcome were those of ways and means. And the necessary funds couldn't be entirely drawn by subscriptions because «no person who can make a real contribution by way of information or thought to a better knowledge of international questions ought to be excluded by reason of poverty»⁵⁴. It was thought not to be a close corporation, rather a place where informed people could have exchanged facts and ideas, seeking to include everyone who could offer information or thought on foreign affairs of a certain value: «in order to realize its full utility as a public institution, we must, therefore, look to private munificence for the necessary endowment»⁵⁵.

They believed that the effort in creating an Institute of International Affairs was needed to fulfill the profound necessities of the international environment which emerged from the Great War, so it was not a problem «if its full realization should take years to accomplish». The task of the original members was to demonstrate the public utility of such an institution, and «prove that its fuller development is indispensable to the peace and well-being of the world at large».

The Reports of the British Institute of International Affairs show quite clearly that the movement grew in Paris between the British and American delegations, «by reason of their common language and political tradition», but the Institute was supposed to develop its branches in the other capitals of the world. The problem was that France, having the Congress in its capital, didn't feel the need to gather French officials and publicists together in one building. The intention of the promoters was to make known this movement to other delegations, so that they could have joined afterwards, like the Italian and Japanese delegations. Moreover it was not intended to be a movement limited to the victorious allies: the promoters «felt that increased community of thought on international questions was in the long run most needed between the nations opposed in the late war». Nevertheless, at the end of the Peace Congress the only two nations which saw the development of this initiative were Great Britain and the United States. The idea was to develop these two Branches and then await the development of others in the various capitals of the world. Every nation would have had the responsibility of forming a national branch of its own, looking to the British and American branches as the example to follow: «We look with hope to the development in years to come of similar institutions in all the principal states of the world, each so constituted that all the others will be able to reciprocate on lines arranged between themselves». From the beginning it can be seen how difficult it was to strike a balance between an internationalist approach which was trying to set up a network of analogous bodies in order to facilitate the integration of different foreign policies and a movement which was thought to be nation-based with the belief that «each must be the master in its own house-hold», so that it was a responsibility of every single nation to constitute a branch which would resemble the others: «We are thus looking to a time when, in each important country, all representative sections of thought will have formed themselves a common center, where all can meet for study, and so attain to a better understanding of their several states of mind and points of view»⁵⁶. According to this plan, in each community a national center of international thought there should have been created, and all these centers should

⁵⁴ *Chatham House Annual Reports 1919-1925*, p.10.

⁵⁵ Ivi, p.11

⁵⁶ Ivi, p.12

have been brought into closer collaboration with each other⁵⁷. It was highlighted that the movement had to be developed by men acting in their private capacity, even if the movement was thought of being the natural correlative of the enterprise initiated by Governments in the League of Nations «and until some such steps are taken to organize the development of international thought and feeling, we do not believe that that enterprise will justify the hopes of mankind⁵⁸».

Following the origins of the British Institute of International Affairs, from the report of the executive committee it is showed how the Institute should follow the lines of similar institutions like the Royal Geographical Society, the Statistical Society, the Royal Society of Arts or the Royal Colonial Institute. That is, an institute formed by members who were well informed on most aspects of foreign affairs, papers had to be read and discussed by them at meetings which were usually public, and the results were afterwards published in the journal of the society.

Nevertheless, the first aim of the Institute remained to provide greatest facilities in order to favor exchanges of information between experts as well as to provide members with a certain degree of privacy so that they could have felt freer to express themselves. A rule was that visitors could only be admitted by special invitation given their special expertise, this was thought to preserve freedom among members.

At the beginning the Institute didn't have a suitable and permanent headquarters and they had monthly gatherings at Lord Astor's house. The aim was to bring relevant and fresh information from those scenes of action which were available to some members and to spreading it to other associates. Once a member returned to England with information bearing on some aspect of foreign affairs recently acquired on the spot, were asked to communicate at once with the secretary whose business was to arrange a dinner with no more than six other members specially interested in the country in question. Indeed, this program of work presumed an active cooperation on the part of members themselves, and a rapid exchange of information.

What about the composition of the Institute? The constitution showed how they choose to include only those people who had some valuable contribution in the shape of information or thought on international problems to put into the common stock of the Institute. Lord Meston⁵⁹ was chosen as chairman of the Institute, while Lionel Curtis⁶⁰ was appointed joint honorary secretary.

The inaugural meeting of the British Institute of International Affairs was held at the Royal Society of Arts. Sir Edward Grey, former foreign secretary, ambassador to the United States between 1919 and 1920 and leader of the liberal party in the house of Lords, claimed the necessity to have an Institute for the study of international questions. The Institute should not have been created for the purpose of formulating foreign policies or engaging in propaganda of particular school of thought. «I think the Institute ought to try and do for the present something like what history does for the past. What does history do for the past? It shows us the relation of those facts to each other, and more than that, it shows us some sense of the respective importance and value of

⁵⁷ As we have seen the founders of the Institute of International Affairs belonged to the American and British delegation. They highlighted that the decision not to include other nations was thought to be more pragmatic given the fact that these two delegations had a common language and similar political views, but at the same time they encouraged other countries to do the same. For another interpretation about why think tanks were developed in Washington and London and not in other nations see Andrew Williams (2008). *Why don't the French do Think Tanks?: France faces up to the Anglo-Saxon superpowers, 1918-1921*, «Review of International Studies», 34, pp.53-68. He argues that alongside with French bureaucratic and intellectual disposition there was also, from Paris, a growing revulsion against its Allies which seemed to ignore the legitimate concerns and needs of the French people.

⁵⁸ *Chatham House Annual Reports 1919-1925*, p.13.

⁵⁹ James Meston was a prominent British civil servant, financial expert and businessman. He played an important role in the Imperial administration of India and he served as chairman of the Institute from 1920 to 1926, becoming also part of the editorial board of the journal «International Affairs».

⁶⁰ He was considered as a real *deus ex machina* in the formation of the Institute: «... Nicknamed the Prophet, [Curtis] was one of the most energetic activists of his generation, a fixer working behind the scenes, the mobiliser of men and money» Inderjeet Parmar, *Think tanks and power in foreign policy. A comparative study of the role and influence of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1939-1945*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2004.

particular facts in history. It gives us the facts, which is knowledge ... it shows the relation of those facts to each other, which is comprehension; and it shows us the respective importance and value of different facts and events in history, which I suppose may be called perspective⁶¹». To sum up according to Sir Grey the Institute should have fulfilled three necessities: the necessity of knowledge, of comprehension and of perspective. This is why for him was quite important to develop the annual register which had to be a work in order to better understand the facts, the relation to each other, and to provide politicians, statesmen and journalists with an idea about the value of the respective political situations.

Moreover, the Institute was thought to create a suitable environment for informal conversations. Its establishment was an attempt to make permanent an organization in which men can meet together in informal meetings such as those organized during the Peace Conference at the hotel Majestic. Actually it was in Paris that people for the first time met together and developed a collective wisdom «they came away wiser, but they also came away sadder, because they were conscious, while gaining so much in developing thought, the results that were obtained in Paris seemed to them more and more inadequate». What was the first impediment in achievement better political solutions? According to Grey the various representatives at the Peace Conference were «limited in what they could do by the state of public opinion in the different communities they represented. Then what we want is, that this institute should develop into an organization which will provide the material from which those who are most influential and who have the greatest amount of knowledge, comprehension and perspective in foreign affairs can *form public opinion*⁶²». The Institute could have done a great deal to disseminate knowledge and remove that ignorance.

Along with this, the key element to be removed in order to develop a peaceful international environment was isolation. For him there were three aims that the institute had to deal with: «the work of making history out of the present ... the second is to bring together people, experts and specialists, to discuss with each other ... the third is by removing isolation ... promoting international intercourse between those men in the different countries of the world, who have most knowledge of foreign affairs and who are most active in forming the thought of their own countries. We have got, if we are to keep the peace of the world in the future, not only to think nationally, but to think internationally as well ... one of the great lesson of the War is in my mind, that to think nationally without thinking internationally leads to disaster. Before the war it seems to me that Germany was thinking more intensely nationally and less internationally than any other country in the world, and it led to disaster ... we must continue to think nationally as well as internationally, and that the Institute can help people to do⁶³».

His hope was that similar institutes could be born in other countries and that their members could discuss their points of view with each other in order to reach a better understanding:

it is immensely to our interest that other nations should understand our difficulties and points of view. If you want to be understood by someone else what is the first step? The first step ... is not to explain your own case, but to make him feel that you have tried to understand his and get his point of view. That is what I hope institutes of this kind may do. They may help the leading and thinking minds of the great countries of the world to understand each other's point of view, to promote mutual understanding, and that is really the only solid ground on which future peace can be based. I believe this Institute may be the beginning of a development not only in this country but in other countries, if corresponding institutes are formed there, which may do much to promote mutual understanding between nations, which will affect public opinion of different nations as regards each other and affect it favorably; and in that way they will do a great deal to promote national stability and the peace of the world through mutual understanding⁶⁴.

⁶¹ *Chatham House Annual Reports 1919-1925*, p.12

⁶² My italics, Ivi, p.14.

⁶³ Ivi, p.15.

⁶⁴ Ivi, p.16.

To Mr. Balfour, a British conservative politician, prime minister and foreign secretary, the Institute had the first task to train men for the public service. This proposal followed «not from theoretical discussion, but from an insistent felt necessity. In Paris [...] I think the public had very little notion of the amount of hard work that was done not merely [...] by the leading delegates of the great nations, but by the body of trained experts whom they brought with them, and who in constant communication with each other helped to prepare the material which was afterwards worked up into the Treaty of Peace⁶⁵». According to the British politicians, even if some representatives left the Paris Conference with a feeling of disappointment, it was also to be considered the «complexity of the problems that had to be solved». In this perspective he tended to interpret the results brought about at the Peace Conference as «the most fruitful work of international cooperation which the world has ever seen⁶⁶», providing an international rearrangement and a machinery for settling future disputes.

From that, he said, had sprung the proposals to found an Institute like this

after all we are only carrying into contemporary international politics the same sort of machinery which has provided so useful in other departments of human knowledge and human research. There are historical societies, there are scientific societies, there are geographical societies, and there are other societies, the object of which is not in the least to propagate politically particular opinions upon subjects with which they deal, but the whole purpose and end of which is that those interested in the same studies should have an opportunity of meeting each other and conversing with each other, of gathering from each other the reciprocal experiences, of travelling over each other's minds, and of really through this means adding to their own stock of knowledge, information which no mere study of printed matter will ever enable a man to acquire⁶⁷.

All in all, he highlighted the importance of these institutions for the scientific knowledge of international relations, a task which could be accomplished only through an impartial study of the politics of foreign countries: «to study is not enough we have to do it in the right way in order to better understand foreign countries: the independent study which we hope to coordinate and to utilize by this Association will be carried on by ardent students. Sympathy must be the sympathy which leads to comprehension of all the side concerned, not a passionate desire to see one side succeed, and the other side fail⁶⁸». None of this required a suppression of a world arranged upon national basis: it was perfectly natural to deal with communities which had a central loyalty which made them privilege the point of view of their own nations. But there was a shared optimism for which they were able to combine that national feeling with a desire for international comprehension which ended up with a secure formula for lasting peace. Bodies like the British Institute of International Affairs were thought to help the machinery put in place by the League of Nations to create «the atmosphere, to create the public opinion, to provide the knowledge in which the machinery of the LoN [League of Nations] may really produce all that it is capable of producing. The spirit has to be made by the nations concerned: we don't have to destroy the feeling of nationality, but so to use the elements out of which that feeling of nationality is constructed, that one of the greatest duties that will be felt by every nation is to live at peace with its neighbor for their common good, instead of regarding themselves as isolated rivals of which the gain of one⁶⁹». This goal could have been achieved only if experts from different nations were able to meet together in order to study and understand the facts of international life.

The members present at the inauguration of the Institute included official members of the Foreign Office, Army, Navy and Colonial Offices, the Board of Trade, journalists, politicians,

⁶⁵ Ivi, p.16

⁶⁶ Ivi, p.17

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁸ Ivi, p.20

⁶⁹ Ivi, p.21.

experts in international affairs. In the end the elected presidents of the Institute were Lord Grey, Mr A. Balfour, Mr J.R. Clynes and Lord Robert Cecil.

In order to better grasp how the Institute was received by media and a larger part of the British population it can be useful to focus on the reviews written by the most popular newspaper at that time. «The Observer» highlighted the usefulness to have an Institute of foreign affairs in order to satisfy a new interest in international relations by the population. It was detected an important passage in the field of international relations from a sector which involved dynastic and imperialistic policies to a push for a democratic control of foreign affairs: «no country can afford [...] to be ignorant of foreign affairs». Indeed, in order to exercise democratic control popular knowledge was needed, so that the newspaper stressed the importance of an exchange of information developed by papers and discussion in order to spread and have a better knowledge in these matters. It was not an easy task but it was considered one of the war's most fruitful consequences and a powerful factor in a sound, instructed and alert public opinion.

According to «The Times» the institute had to be seen as the natural complement of the League of Nations, helping it to create a constructive atmosphere free of ignorance and isolation. In this regard, the Institute would be able to create trained observers which would help to educate public opinions. The Institute was seen as an educational agency, a true national center of international thought to find the way through disintegrating influences between nations.

«The Yorkshire Post» highlighted the fact that only an enlightened public opinion could have avoided another world wide conflagration and in this sense the British Institute of International Affairs could have play a key role in promoting the interchange of international information. Moreover it could have helped the leaders of public opinion to become more competent for their task. This is why the Institute should accept only the best and the brightest to be part of its membership. Furthermore, «to be more effective the movement must be spread beyond one country [...] with this Anglo American nucleus there is good reason for hoping that other countries may be influenced to follow the example». Institutes of International Affairs could have represented the most useful ally to the League of Nations, because they could contribute to better inform public opinion on the international problems.

The Morning Post claimed a way of thinking that was recognized by most of the delegates of the winning powers: «all wars may not be due to ignorance, but certainly the German adventure of 1914 would never have been launched if German people were not blinded by that contempt, based on lack of knowledge, which they entertained for all their neighbors⁷⁰».

The Institute was seen as an instrument to improve knowledge on other countries and the newspaper pointed out also the fact that this Institute could be a valid instrument to fight against the propagandist, the sentimentalist and the anarchist which tried to make this field as their own. The object of the Institute was to encourage the study of international action, and to keep its members in touch with each other and the problems they desire to investigate. It was a cooperative movement that enable men to find out what was happening in other countries, and to study the bearing of such events upon the interests of human society as a whole. The idea originated in the Peace Conference at Paris, establishing what might be called a clearing house of knowledge, facts, ideas and beneficial proposals in regard of foreign affairs. Moreover, informality and accidental meetings were essential to reach good results along with a clear impartial position: “abandon all thought of party or of politics, all ye who enter here”, according to the newspaper this writing should be written above the entrance of the institute.

It is interesting to dwell on this review: «the Institute must first of all be a place where members can smoke and drink tea or coffee during business hours, possibly from the great room there might be side chapels for maps and for books, but as a rule we would much rather see the walls of the great room lined with books which members could take down for themselves. We

⁷⁰ Ivi, p.34.

should add also a cloister, grass plot and fountain in the middle, in which men might walk and talk together quietly on a wet day. This would often be the best part of the Institute».

There was also a reflection about the sense of the past which is iconic to show how after the first world war the necessity to historicize, to contextualize current international events was felt as something urgent: even if the Conference at Paris had hardly passed, they needed a work which could explain what was done there and bringing out the specific value of the facts.

The Saturday Review remarked the fundamental tasks undertaken by the Institute: it hoped to educate the statesmen, the politicians, the journalists, and the public of Great Britain in international questions and it aimed at the unbiased discussion and study of international subjects as well as at the comprehension of the various problems which confront the several nations of the world.

There is also an interesting reflection about what kind of internationalism had to be pursued by the Institute: an internationalism which had no association with cosmopolitan trade and banking, which regarded frontiers as an inconvenience, rather it was a new internationalism which respected the principle of nationality, and tried to comprehend the various countries of the world in their national aims and activities. It was a fact that all classes would insist on knowing more about international affairs than in the past. They realized that international affairs could imply war, famine, and that no one could isolate himself from what was happening in the world. Education on international affairs was needed and the Institute was trying to fulfill this necessity: «Personally we welcome the Institute as a definite revolt of the Peacemakers against the Peace: the young men in Paris learned more than the old men who actually signed the Treaty of Versailles⁷¹»

(The report of the provisional committee appointed to prepare a constitution and select the original members of the British Branch of the Institute of International Affairs established that «those present undertake to form an Institute, entitled “The Institute of International Affairs, founded at Paris, 1919” composed at the outset of two Branches, one in the United Kingdom and one in the United States. That the purpose of this Institute should be to keep its members in touch with the international situation and enable them to study the relation between national policies and the interests of society as a whole⁷²»

It was decided that the Institute should have produced an Annual Register of International Affairs, beginning with a comprehensive account of the Congress of Paris. An Anglo-American Committee was appointed to develop the organization.

The report says that the London Branch should have been housed on a site convenient of access to public men, in building separable into two wings: in one of this wings provision should have been made for research. So that it was crucial to create a library, a map room and a writing room, where students could have worked day after day, with books and papers they were using around them. This wing should have included the theatre, where papers could have read and discussed. Here information and thought on international affairs had to be exchanged, something like a post-graduated training useful to the junior members of the Foreign Office. This was quite important as it was supposed that, especially in foreign affairs, constructive thought is largely conceived in places where men could have argued together. Facilities for this kind of intercourse were developed in the communal life of the Peace Delegations and the aim of the Institute must be to provide in each capital the same facilities for social intercourse as existed in Paris: «side by side with the wing dedicated to research, the building of the British Branch should provide common rooms where members can congregate at any time, and can dine and converse together in quiet and comfort⁷³».

The period of reconstruction after the Great War was a complex task to accomplish and there was a shared belief among most of the Anglo-American delegates that the success would depend on sound thought based on adequate knowledge. As a consequence, the Institute would

⁷¹ Ivi, p.40

⁷² Ivi, p.43

⁷³ Ivi, p.46

provide facilities as well as a place where people could be trained to better understand international life.

Nevertheless, even if on one hand they felt that the foundation of such an Institute was something crucial for the international understanding on the other hand they didn't do anything in practice to establish similar bodies around the world:

the criticism has been made that steps should have been taken to form Branches in the other capitals of the world. The answer is obvious. The movement grew up spontaneously in Paris between the British and American delegations, by reason of their common language and political tradition. In one respect France suffered by having the Congress in her capital, because no similar collection of French officials and publicists gathered in one establishment was imposed on them. There was thus no collection of French specialists, corresponding to the American and British delegations, with whom such spontaneous cooperation could develop. And had the British and American promoters tried to get into relations in this matter with the Italian and Japanese delegations ... the movement would have been initiated on a scale too large to handle in the heat of the Congress, and would have absorbed more time and attention than men deeply engaged in their official duties were justified in bestowing. The movement so initiated might have given the color to the idea that it was one intended to be limited to the victorious Allies in the late war. That was far from the intention of the promoters, who felt that increased community of thought on international questions was in the long run most needed between the nations opposed in the late war. The only practical course was for the promoters to confine their efforts to a modest beginning, by founding branches in the two Commonwealths which share a common origin, language, and political tradition. They also felt that the immediate creation of Branches on these two countries, which offered the greatest facilities, was the surest step they could take towards the realization of a truly catholic institution. Once established, these two Branches will eagerly await the development of others in the various capitals of the world, constituted on lines with which they can reciprocate⁷⁴

This was the justification why British or Americans didn't initiate such movements in foreign countries. They believed to have shown the example to follow, and they were hoping that such institutes would be developed around the world: «for it is a cardinal principle that each must be master in its own household, and therefore be the judge whether any other Branch is constituted on lines which admit of reciprocal arrangements with itself». So they encouraged the formation of such institutions in other countries, to constitute a center where all could meet for study: «in each community there will then be a national center of international thought, and all these centers will be brought into closer communion with each other than has ever been possible in the world before». During the second general meeting of the institute the executive committee recalled the importance of the Peace Conference in Paris and the formation of the League of Nations as the first instrument of this kind to deal with international affairs. The establishment of an institute specialized in studying this branch of human knowledge was also a novelty, and it was thought to continue the personal relations created in Paris and to establish a national school of international affairs).

During the first meeting was emphasized the fact that if the Institute could count on the quality of its members on the other hand its weak point was the finance aspect. It was also clear that the scheme assumed by the institute was somewhat different from that project in 1919 by its American and British originators in Paris. The conception there adopted was that of an International Institute with original branches in the United Kingdom and in the United States, which could form further branches in other countries as opportunity might offer. This initial effort was prevented by practical difficulties of providing any international management for such a body, and the alternative plan was that each country had to form by itself an Institute. Such institutes could, at their leisure, develop reciprocal relations with each other. American members followed this line and they founded in New York the Council on Foreign Relations. The report pointed out that also «some public men in France» have expressed a wish to constitute such a body for themselves, and the International Intermediary Institute in Holland had suggested reciprocal relations. There was a willingness as these various bodies developed to make arrangements for periodical discussions of international questions at joint meetings.

The chart of the Institute reported its objects:

⁷⁴ Ivi, p.49

the British Institute of International Affairs is established to encourage and facilitate the study of international questions, to promote the exchange of information and thought on international affairs, with a view to the creation of better-informed opinion and to publish or arrange for the publication of works with these objects.

The officers of the Institute consisted of the President, the Honorary Secretaries, the Treasurer, the Executive Committee, and other officers. The president should have been elected during general meetings, for five years.

On October 9th 1923 the General Meeting was held at 10 St. James's Square: Lord Meston's speech claimed that the Institute was founded to be a national center of international thought. It was to enable its members to study the relation between national policies and the interests of society as a whole. It was to produce an Annual register of International Affairs. It was to be housed in London with room for research and quiet documented study, with room also for meetings and discussions on current questions for mutual information and for the molding of a wise public opinion. The question of where to place the Institute were still problematic: the Institute wanted its own house, big enough to help the development of the institute. This is why Meston asked members to take into consideration the offer made by Colonel R.W. Leonard to hand over as a gift to the Institute his splendid building. Finally, the Executive Committee showed the willingness to incorporate the Institute under a Royal Charter as the most important recognition of what the BIIA wanted to become, that was a «central school of foreign affairs for the whole Commonwealth and not for the island of great Britain only». Again, there was a particular emphasis in the growing importance displayed by public opinion, which was considered to be «the determining factor in the sphere of foreign no less than in that of domestic affairs». As a consequence, the first object of the Institute was to enable those who influenced public opinion on international questions to write or speak with a better knowledge of the subjects they handle.

The fact of the matter was not to inform the public about «the secrets whispered in Chanceries», rather to collect and make available documents already published throughout the world in the buildings of the Institute. Then, specialists who worked for the Institute had to create a careful narratives with all the more important documents hitherto collected and distributed in printed form to libraries, newspapers and public men throughout the Empire. This is why the members considered one of the most important tasks of the Institute to produce an Annual Register of Foreign Affairs, «a purely factual narrative, supplemented with published documents».

The evolution of the Institute, from it was thought to be at the beginnings, that was a branch of an international body to what it was once the British representatives returned from Paris, namely a nation-based think tank with the first objective to inform and guide his public opinion, was completed. The BIIA was meant to be a further attempt in order to promote a wise understanding of British foreign relations and thus to help the British Empire in maintaining the peace of the world. In this perspective, if on one hand the novelty of such an organization, which didn't exist before the war, remained in its effort to understand “scientifically” international affairs, to offer both a sound information to politicians and to guide public opinion, on the other hand it changed its perspective from an international standpoint to a more traditional national point of view.

Again, during the inauguration of the Institute on July 5th 1920, it was stressed the atmosphere of ignorance and isolation from which the war broke out:

it was soon apparent that the issues of the Conference would be settled less by the views of the statesmen assembled at Paris than by public opinion in the countries from which they came. And it was clear that ... governments in their conduct of foreign affairs would come to rely more and more on the support of their nations. The creation of an informed public opinion on international affairs was thus one of the prime needs of the future. The authorities competent to help in forming such opinion are few ... here was an imperative call for a society or institution which would undertake the diffusion of knowledge on foreign relations⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Ivi, p.8

and in Paris, among the British delegation and its Dominions there was a unique occasion in which experts, politicians and people who had a first-hand knowledge of some phase in the conduct of foreign affairs could meet together: «by the constant interchange of knowledge and ideas they gained a wider insight ... of international studies». They felt that their cooperation should have continued and the Institute was founded. Its objects were defined as being to encourage and facilitate the study of international questions, to promote exchange of information and thought on international affairs, with a view to the creation of better informed opinion, and to publish or arrange for the publication of works with these objects. In selecting members, it was decided to accept only those people able to contribute to the knowledge or thought of the Institute in respect of international affairs.

After three years the Institute's membership was nearly a thousand, it arranged debates and discussions with the publication every two months of a journal containing a selection of the papers read at the meetings. Under its auspices had been published a History of the Peace Conference of Paris consisting in three volumes and it kept publishing authoritative information regarding matters of the highest importance to the whole world. These publications were felt instrumental as for the first time there was a twofold need to make sources available and to pose a qualitative filter between an enormous mass of materials and the public opinion.

As it was demonstrated from the analysis of the origins and the first development of the British Institute of International Affairs, it had to fulfill several purposes and often even the founders had different ideas about what this body should have been and what aspects it should have pursued. Indeed, the study of international relations and the dissemination of "right" knowledge in order to molding public opinion represented the north star of the Institute with the aim to improve mutual understanding between nations and removing at the same time the conditions which led countries to isolate themselves from an imagined "international community". Nevertheless, it is clear how the project changed over time: from a single institute of international affairs which should have included all the national branches, to the creation of a national based institute of international thought. Moreover, during the process of building the British Institute, the stress went from a willingness to better understand other foreign policies which was an attempt to promote a more accurate international thought to an intent to better understand and explain the foreign policy of its own country. Here we have a clear change of perspective: if at the beginning one of the founder was saying that only an attempt to understand the points of view of other nations could have assured the solid ground on which future peace could have been established, than it was stated that the main task of the Institute was «to promote a wise understanding of our foreign relations».

National interests and a peculiar internationalism were both present in the men who founded the British (later Royal) Institute of International Affairs in London as well as the Council on Foreign Relations in New York and they proved to be attractive models for other nations⁷⁶. Moreover, the attempt to establish an international network of these think tanks in foreign policy it was highlighted from the beginning by the founders of the RIIA: «as and when these various bodies develop, arrangements can be made for the periodical discussion at joint meetings on questions affecting the various countries to which they belong». The novelty of these institutions was that for the first time intellectuals, experts and opinion makers were put together with business men and politicians in order to study international problem as well as to influence public opinion: «the mutual benefit of this contact between men of theory and men of practice was immense ... in Paris, in the first eight months of 1919, was laid the foundation of a better understanding between the nations». Even if this episode can be considered the most eye-catching manifestation of this new interest on international questions, it is rooted in a broader ground from which other similar initiatives were growing up. Another United States organization founded in 1918 was the Foreign

⁷⁶ A recent article written by Christian Haase, *In search of a European Settlement: Chatham House and British-German Relations, 1920-55*, *European History Quarterly*, vol. 37 (3), p.371-397, claimed that also the origin of the Institut für Auswärtige Politik, founded in Hamburg in 1923, has to be located within this network as a reaction against the results achieved by the Paris Peace Conference.

Policy Association. Established originally as the League of Free Nations Association to promote the Wilson program of international organization, the new Association early concluded that «direct factual information about world affairs was more essential than propaganda for any particular policy». The Foreign Policy Association devoted itself to an extensive campaign of public education in the field of international relations and «it won wide appeal without sacrificing either objectivity and authority»⁷⁷. Also the origins of the Institute of Pacific Relations were related to this idea of developing a scientific understanding of international affairs: after the Washington Conference in 1921 a group of business and professional leaders in Honolulu, concerned about the increasingly menacing situation and over the inadequacy of official diplomatic procedures, revived an earlier idea for an international, non-official conference of persons from countries in the Pacific Area. The conference covered a wide range of problems, such as immigration and extraterritorial issues. The permanent accomplishment of the conference was the creation of the Institute of Pacific Relations. The Institute described itself as a body of men and women deeply interested in the Pacific area, with the scope of collecting and elucidating the facts of international significance. In this way, they hoped both to create an informed public opinion which could assist constructively the development of the countries concerned and to promote international friendship by personal association and by the study of economic, educational, social, political, moral and religious conditions.

While a number of studies can be found on the Royal Institute of International Affairs⁷⁸, the Council on Foreign Relations⁷⁹, and the Institute of Pacific Affairs⁸⁰, historians have refrained from writing a more detailed study about the Foreign Policy Association and its role in this “think tank’s movement”. In the following years, Institutes imbued with analogous purposes were founded in the Commonwealth, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Norway, Romania, Spain and Sweden. Why did they proliferate around the world during the 20s and the 30s? And, above all, are there any connections between them? It is undeniable that part of the explanation concerns the willingness to have a «more experienced understanding of the dynamics of world politics» in order to reach a more tenable peace «by enquiry into the complex

⁷⁷ *Institutes of International Affairs*, Carnegie Endowment of International Peace, New York 1953, p.19. This little book was published in 1953 as a result of a conference held in Paris, in which the most important think tanks in the world were united to take stock of the situation about their activities and roles: «the institutes exist within national frameworks and are independent of each other in their formulation of policies and points of view. Yet consultation and exchange of opinion among institute leaders are advantageous. With this in mind, the Carnegie Endowment of International Peace took the initiative in sponsoring and organizing a conference of institute leaders held in Paris in October 1950». I think that this conference testified the transnational characteristic of this movement, as we are in the presence of a number of non-state actors willing to create contacts, interconnections and networks that went beyond national boundaries.

⁷⁸ Due to its early founding and its ability to draw on the expertise of the financial and political elites of London, Chatham House assumed a position as *primus inter pares*. We can find numerous references to the RIIA in the biographies of its leading members such as Lionel Curtis (Deborah Lavin, *from empire to international Commonwealth: a biography of Lionel Curtis* (Oxford, 1995), Philip Kerr (J.R.M. Butler, *Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr) 1882-1940* (London 1960) and Arnold Toynbee (William McNeill, *Arnold Toynbee: A Life* (Oxford 1989). An edited volume has given us a better understanding of the activities of the RIIA during the interwar years (Andrea Bosco and Cornelia Navari, *Chatham House and British Foreign Policy 1919-1945* (London 1994); and recently Inderjeet Parmar has shed further light on the institute’s role in forming the Anglo-American relationship (Inderjeet Parmar, *Think tanks and power in foreign policy: a comparative study of the role and influence of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1939-1945* (London 2004)

⁷⁹ Michael Wala, *The Council on Foreign Relations and American Foreign Policy in the early Cold War* (Providence, RI 1994); Laurence H. Shoup and William Minter, *Imperial Brian Trust: the Council on Foreign Relations and United States Foreign Policy* (New York, 1977); Robert D. Schulzinger, *The wise men of Foreign Affairs* (New York, 1984); Peter Grose, *Continuing the Enquiry: the Council on Foreign Relations from 1921 to 1996* (New York, 1996).

⁸⁰ Hiroaki Shiozaki, Seeking international order: the lineage of the RIIA, CFR, and the IPR and their interconnections to the Two World Wars (Fukuoka 1998); Paul Hooper, *The Institute of Pacific Relations and Origins of Asian and Pacific Studies*, Pacific Affairs, vol.61, n.1 (1988), 98-121; John K. Fairbank, *William Holland and the IPR in historical perspective*, Pacific Affairs, vol.52, n.4 (1979), 587-90; William Holland, *Source materials on the Institute of Pacific Relations*, Pacific Affairs, Vol.58, n.1 (1985), 91-97.

nature of international relations and by the dissemination of accurate information»⁸¹. There was, however, another reason which was rooted in the willingness of nation-based elites to support the foreign policy of their respective nations by establishing a centre of research and dissemination able to influence government, media and public opinion. In short, think tanks in international politics were considered both as a qualitative leap from the moralist approach of 19th peace international movements into a scientific understanding of international issues as well as political and technical instruments very close to the interests of the foreign policies of their own respective nation-states. This acknowledgment should be taken into account, given the fact that these institutes played a crucial role in the formation and development of the International Studies Conferences (ISC). As has been pointed out above, peace and international affairs had clearly become a public matter, and the development of these international meetings was a further attempt to address these new needs. The International Studies Conference was created in 1928 and it can be considered as «the first institution of international academic cooperation on international relations»⁸², which included grouping of academics mainly from across Europe, but also from other parts of the world. Actually, «the immediate origins of the ISC were rooted in a search for suitable methods of organizing training in international politics, which engaged the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation for several years after its establishment in 1922»⁸³. The ICIC's examination of the problem led it, in July 1926, to instruct the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in Paris, to enquire into the possibility of bringing about the coordination of existing national and international organizations concerned with the teaching of international affairs. In March 1928 the IIC convened an international Meeting of Experts for the Coordination of Higher International Studies in Berlin which was attended by representatives of national institutions in six countries and representatives of a few international organizations.

According to the *Handbook of institutions for the scientific study of international relations*:

Political education without a personal knowledge of other countries and a thorough understanding of the political ideology, reasoning and methods of other peoples is inadequate equipment for dealing with present day political problems. With the increasing interdependence of the destinies of nations, political research needs more and more international cooperation and international distribution of work. The League of Nations' Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (university Relations Section), by reason of its international status, seemed especially qualified to develop a plan for the cooperation of institutions for the scientific study of politics in different countries, and to act as a center for carrying out this plan⁸⁴.

The Conference of Institutions for the Scientific Study of International Relations which eventually became the International Studies Conference, developed from this initiative from the IIC. This event was quite important as «before 1928, there was no international platform for the exchange of ideas between institutions for research in, or teaching of, IR (International Relations)⁸⁵». The ISC didn't have a central organization «but was rather a loose aggregate of

⁸¹ *Institutes of International Affairs*, p.1.

⁸² David Long, *Who killed the International Studies Conference*, «Review of international Studies» (2006), 32, 603-622.

The article revealed how the ISC preceded the existence of the present International Studies Association conference. Established in 1928 and continuing into the 1950s the ISC was one of the few League of Nations organizations to persist into the postwar era, surviving even its sponsoring organization, the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation which was superseded by UNESCO after the Second World War. Long posed a question which is worth it to report: «if the demise of the ISC comes well after the end of the Second World War, what is one to make of the common knowledge that the war had conclusively demonstrated the folly of the majority of earlier IR scholarship?» answer this question is important not only in terms of disciplinary history, but it also points out that the organization of the scholarly study of international relations is more related with political and social factors rather than logical one.

⁸³ Michael Riemens, *International academic cooperation on international relations in the interwar period: the International Studies Conference*, «Review of International Studies» (2011), 37, p.911-928.

⁸⁴ *Handbook of institutions for the scientific study of international relations*, compiled in the League of Nations Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, Paris, 1929 p.3

⁸⁵ *International academic cooperation*, p.917. The International Study Conference should have chosen a subject of topical research to be examined simultaneously by its members, first in written form and then jointly at round-table and

national coordinating committees [...] that used the IIIC's secretariat in Paris for its central administration». As mentioned above, National Committees were formed with the aim of coordinating all those bodies which were committed to the study of international affairs, and an Italian National Committee came to existence. At that time in Italy a few faculties of political science were developing, especially in Rome, Florence and Pavia. The latter would play a crucial role in the foundation of Ispi.

The first International Studies Conference, a new method of studying international problems?

The international meeting of experts for the Coordination of Higher International Studies held in Berlin in 1928 resulted instrumental for the development of the Conference of institutions for the scientific study of international relations' movement. The first International Study Conference organized by the Italian National Committee⁸⁶ in Milan in 1932, came at a crucial moment as it concerned international cooperation between representative thinkers of each country at a time when they believed themselves to be «in the midst of a change so great that it is almost impossible for us to conceive of its importance»⁸⁷. Through an analysis of reports and memoranda submitted by various national institutions in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Rumania, its aim was to study some of the international economic and political implications between the modern state and economic life. Moreover, the conference was conceived as the first experiment in a new method of studying international problems which aimed at promoting a mutual understanding between nations through the development in the study of international relations. This section will show how representatives of national institutions (with a particular stress on the Italian one) dealt with the topic "state and economic life", allowing a confrontation of different national interpretations which would shed new light upon the cultural and political practices put in place by each national committee. Examining the way in which the national representatives tried to present international economic and political issues, we can better understand the attempts put in place by some specialists and intellectuals in order to familiarize themselves with the discoveries and methods of their colleagues. In this way this section allows a deeper knowledge on the underlying meanings and practices which characterized international intellectual cooperation during the interwar period. Analyzing the discussions and the themes expressed by the participants at the International Study Conference it is crucial to better understand how Italian intellectuals, as cultural and political representatives of the fascist regime, conceived international cooperation, what was foreign policy for them and how they interpreted the role of

plenary study meetings. In this way the Conference tried to foresee the trend of events and prepare an analysis of a problem before it came into the light of the world's stage. Amongst the questions it dealt with in two-year study cycles were "The state and economic life 31-33", "collective security" 33-35 and "peaceful change" 35-37.

⁸⁶ The Italian National Committee were formed by senator Giovanni Gentile (but he was absent), professor Alberto de Stefani, former minister of finance and director of the institute of politics and financial legislation at Royal University of Rome, Professor Gaspare Ambrosini (Royal University of Palermo absent), Professor Luigi Amoroso, Royal University of Rome, Professor Francesco Coppola, Royal University of Perugia, Professor Donato Donati, University of Perugia, prof. Giannino Ferrari, University of Padua, dr. Carlo Emilio Ferri, University of Macerata; professor Giuseppe Gallavresi, Royal University of Milan, Monsignor Agostino Gemelli, rector of the catholic university of the sacred heart Milan, professor Pasquale jannacone Royal University of Turin, prof Giorgio Mortara, Royal University of Milan, the hon. Giuseppe Righetti, secretary-general of the Italian National Committee of Intellectual Cooperation, hon. Arrigo Somli, member of the Italian Chamber of deputies and prof at the University of Milan, prof. Renato Spaventa, university of Rome, Michele Giuliano secretary of the Italian group.

⁸⁷ A record of a first International study conference on the state and economic life, p. XXI

Italy in the international scenario. Trying to integrate the history of the Italian foreign policy, through the analysis of the actions put in place by its intellectuals and specialists in international relations, with the international environment allows us to better appreciate the mutual influences exercised by concepts formulated in different political and cultural contexts. Moreover, it is a confirmation of the complex series of policies and different attitudes put in place by the regime and its representatives, official and not, remarking the fact that at least until the Mussolini's attack against Ethiopia, the field of foreign affairs was characterized by a peculiar plurality of actors, approaches and choice of issues, a fluidity which definitely was missing in the field of domestic policy. Indeed, the themes chosen for the discussion were «a reflection of the interwar era [as well as] the understanding of international relations implicit in the discussion»⁸⁸.

First of all, the title of the Conference, "State and economic life", was thought to deal with one of the most thorny international issues. There was this awareness that decisions in the economic field were having important impact not only on international economic relations but also on international political relations. There was a wide range of participants at the conference: International Institutions such as the Academy of International Law (the Hague), the European center of the Carnegie Endowment of International Peace, the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, the Institute of Pacific Relations; national institutions, each of which represented the delegation of its own country. These national institutions were put in place either by a Coordinating Committee which included various representatives from faculties and institutes or by a single institution. France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Poland were represented by a Central Committee, Austria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Rumania, United States of America were represented by a single institution. The various national groups present at the conference had to prepare an account of measures taken in their own countries from the end of the First World War in regard to international trade and how the application of all the measures they decided to adopt influenced the domestic and the international environment. The program of study would have been drawn from memoranda which had arrived from different countries. These reports should have been done by a group of study rather than by individuals and each national group should have made a simultaneous study of the same problems, with a view to a cooperative study of national reports being made by an international gathering on the occasion of the Conference. Moreover, it has been decided to urge the institutions to appoint special experts to participate at the Conference and to nominate two General Rapporteurs⁸⁹. In this way the Conference aimed at improving contacts between representative thinkers of each country by personal contact with methods of study adopted by the various other national schools of thought. To sum up, the method consisted in the simultaneous and coordinated study of a selected problem in international affairs by various national groups of institutions in which both the academic mind as well as political figures were represented. The aim was to discover points of agreement and of difference with a view to arriving at a certain general consensus of opinion which could influence the decision making process, so that politicians could have modified their policies in accordance with the implications of the results of this «objective and disinterested work of research. It is the combination of these several elements which gives to this new method of studying international problems its unique and original character⁹⁰». The reports and memoranda submitted by national committees were examined by the members of the conference and they were material of discussion during the conference. Even if this procedure led to a strong heterogeneity in length, method and content in the reports, it was decided that the miscellaneous character of the discussion was suitable for the nature of the subject itself. Moreover the aim was exactly to understand the various national attitudes: the Conference wasn't supposed to force any unified conclusion, but it should have acted as an international stimulus and

⁸⁸ Ibidem, p.606.

⁸⁹ Rapporteurs acted as independent experts, like supranational commentators. They had the duty to create a sort of coherence through the examination of the different comments.

⁹⁰ A record of a first International study conference on the state and economic life, p.XXIII.

criticism for the national organizations. As professor James T. Shotwell⁹¹ emphasized, the real contribution to come from meetings of this kind would have been the opportunity to find a guidance which would have carried the world safely over crises welding the realm of intelligence with past experiences.

As I pointed out above, the participants at the Conference were fully aware of the difficulties involved in studying international economic issues at that particular time. «It is not only the material fate of Europe but her whole civilization which is at stake today, and every attention must be given to these problems»⁹², said prof. von Beckerath. As we can see, the Conference was felt as an opportunity to discuss and suggest some solutions to an international situation which was rapidly evolving. This was particularly true with regard to the economic field following the dramatic consequences of the Wall Street Crash of 1929. The early 30s represented a first attempt to cope with the fact that liberal economic thought and its main conceptual ingredients were under political and intellectual pressure. Capitalism and free market were not attractive systems anymore and the speeches made by intellectuals at the Milanese conference represented one of the most iconic event in this dismantling process of liberal economy. Indeed, it is quite interesting to notice how Italian speakers, which were committed to describe and to propagate the corporative economic system, gained the curiosity of other foreign speakers. In doing this, they engaged other participants in a broader discussion which went beyond the economic field. According to professor Robert Kerschagl, even if the conference had to deal with a specific economic issue, in fact« we are touching social, moral and constitutional problems ... we cannot hope to convince one another. But we may expect to arrive at much better mutual understanding. Even this result would be a very great success.»⁹³

In his opening speech Alfredo Rocco, Italian minister of Justice and president of the Italian Committee of Intellectual Cooperation emphasized what he called

one of the most striking contradictions in history [that is] even if in those days there had been so much talk about the fraternity of nations, about the necessity of international understanding and collaboration with the aim of establishing an enduring foundation for peaceful relations between nations as well as with a view to coordinating and unifying the efforts directed towards the progress of world civilization, never, however, has intellectual cooperation on an international plane been so difficult as in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It must not be forgotten that the contemporary period is the period of nationalities, that is, not only of political but also of cultural particularism⁹⁴

He detected that the process of the nationalization of culture and the fact that political frontiers had the effect to limit intellectual life is counterbalanced by an effective effort of intellectuals to unify the nations from a cultural point of view. The fascist Minister was able to show a real line of tension which characterized the Conference: national feeling and interests were heavily influencing institutions studying international relations in the various countries. This was due to the fact that the nature of these studies were closely bound up with national feeling and interests and that institutions were conducting isolated lives in each country. This is why in 1928 the IIC took up the problem of collaboration between these institutions and a preliminary conference was held in Berlin, followed by others in London, Paris, and Copenhagen. As a consequence national centers for the study of international relations were created in various countries to act as centers of liaison between the national institutions and the Geneva organization:

the first time that the representatives of these institutions, so different in their language, mentality, methods, but all dealing with similar problems, met around a table, they realized that

⁹¹ He participated at the Conference as the representative of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁹² Ibidem, p.52.

⁹³ Ibidem, p.57.

⁹⁴ Ibidem, p.3

from this community of study resulted a community of interests which drew them together ... they asked to meet again this year⁹⁵.

According to Rocco, this «world organization» gathered in Milan was facing an even harder task: that of discussing with absolute freedom, and on a purely objective and scientific basis, certain questions of fundamental importance to the political and economic life of the world. The theme chosen for the conference was the burning question of State intervention in economic life, particularly from the point of view of its international, political and economic consequences.

The first study meeting was introduced by the first general Rapporteur, Moritz Julius Bonn⁹⁶ who emphasized the role of government action in economics. From his point of view, because of the war every government had to intervene in economics on a scale which nobody ever dreamt of in days gone by. So the intervention was seen by him as outcome of practical and very unpleasant necessities. There was also a political problem: nations were terrified about their security and they tended to privilege a protectionist policy, but only few nations could have achieved a solid self-sufficiency. As a consequence, government intervention was a necessity rather than the result of free decision, it had to be considered as the right strategy given the political situation. Against this backdrop, professor Bonn presented two possibilities: it could be chosen to go back to international independence with a regular flow of foreign commerce or it could be chosen to cut all connections and live on what every national community could have produced. The problem is that the latter solution could have been reached only by few nations. He claimed the necessity to promote a comparative study about how nations are dealing with similar problems. In this way they could have better understood the change, in every country, in the relations of government to economics, and explain the causes of these changes. Eventually, he was confident to come out with an explanation about how political relations changed between business and Government. In the words of the second General rapporteur, dr.Hugh Dalton⁹⁷, it was highlighted another paradox: on one hand the world come out of the Great War was able to produce wealth and a vastly mass of scientific knowledge, on the other hand there was a failure to turn these resources to good account:

We resemble a group of doctors gathered around the bedside of a sick civilization ... We are aiming here at a new technique of joint international study. This is the first conference of this kind which is concerned with the discussion of real substantial questions, in respect of which we are all here to learn from one another, to exchange ideas and to make friends⁹⁸

He supported the idea expressed in the Italian paper to deal with some larger and complex questions of a planned economy. He mentioned as examples the Corporative State in Italy and the socialist state in Soviet Russia:

the rest of us, who are citizens neither of Fascist Italy nor Soviet Russia, are not making so conspicuous a success of the economic life of our respective countries that we can afford to ignore such exceedingly interesting experiment as these ... We are met here in difficult hour in the political and economic history of the world... but we are still able to come here, in Italy, and meet representative thinkers from other countries, to meet and exchange views upon a subject of vital concern to the future of the world. Can we transform Intellectual Cooperation from a vague phrase into a living and fruitful reality?⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Ibidem, p.6.

⁹⁶ professor of International Finance and Economics, at the Berlin Handelshochschule. He was a man of considerable national and international renown. He fled Berlin in April 1933. He was employed as an economist, historian, teacher, government adviser and as a propagandist during both the First and the Second world war. His multifaceted carrier helps to explain why his work was neglected by mainstream accounts, but also because he failed to make a lasting intellectual impact in his most public career, that of political economist. (Patricia Clavin in Refugees from the Third Reich in Britain by Anthony Grenville). He was also visiting lecturer to the Bureau of International Studies in Geneva.

⁹⁷ Reader in Economics at the London School of Economics and Political Science

⁹⁸ A record of a first International study conference on the state and economic life, p.18

⁹⁹ Ibidem, p.23.

During the second study meeting prof. Alberto de Stefani stressed the fact that the Italian memorandum didn't have statistical data but that they have presented a series of general conclusions based upon scientific and political experience:

the proposition which we submit to you are based on the assumption that the transformations in the structure of the present economic system which are being effected before our very eyes under the pressure of exceptional events are well known.

He claimed that it would have been idealistic to think that decisions adopted during these kind of conferences could have had an appreciable influence in political spheres. According to him, the reality is that leading representatives who helped to set up these international meetings are those who supported an economic policy which all agreed in deploring. According to him, this happened because in these conferences

there has sprung up no idea-force, no idea capable of carrying men away with the compelling force of a faith like the great ideas which have been conceived in the past, no irresistible idea capable of forcing itself upon any who endeavored to resist it by sheltering behind some particular policy¹⁰⁰.

De Stefani said that demo-liberalism had lost his power of reaction and adjustment: in order to answer to this crisis it is necessary to admit liberal economic actors had failed.

we hold the view that ... it is necessary to pass from the objective and unsubstantial causal method to a subjective, concrete and personal method, taking into account at the same time the behavior of the different classes of society. As a method, we prefer to study the pathology of the actor rather than the pathology of action.

According to him, the binomial expression "the state and economic life", implying as it did an antithesis, or, at any rate, a correlation between the two subjects which are more or less foreign to each other, was in fact drifting more and more towards a real unity with a consequent diminution in its dual significance. If the adoption of a liberal economic system proved to favor the interests of the big industrial and banking organizations, then the economic crisis could have been seen as an opportunity to shift from a system of liberal economic self-adjustment to a new order in which the distribution of labor and of capital, as well as the system of production, would have been planned in advanced. «That is what we are striving for in the Corporative System», understood as a body of elastic institutions capable of being adapted to every phase in this process. According to De Stefani every nation was realizing the necessity to make a unitary planning in the more essential branches of production. Fascist Italy was implementing this economic system, as for them concentration of power and integration of private enterprise under the protection of the State was not a menace to freedom of thought and imagination or to scientific progress. The key point in De Stefani's speech was the consideration that the existing transformation had not to be seen as a pathological alteration of the economic system «which we should have to form it if we measured events by the abstract standards of economic liberalism». The belief was that economic laws would have continued to work well even alongside with a system of unitary and centralized control with the aim of controlling the entire process in favor of "the community". As a matter of fact, «the state and economic life are two interconnected facts. Antithesis is giving place to identity. The binomial expression is losing its element of duality¹⁰¹». The propositions contained in the Italian memorandum highlighted exactly the fact that within the self-adjusting liberal economic system itself, forces have sprung up which are destroying the realistic content of the liberal principle.

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem, p.27

¹⁰¹ Ibidem, p.31

Leaders of the liberal economy were unable of preserving the equilibrium of their enterprises without the intervention of the State: they asked respective governments to obtain that security for their enterprises. And such inadequacies are not due to the World War: the concentration of industrial enterprises and banks as well as the crystallization of trade unions caused a monopolistic evolution and the impossibility to adjust the system by the liberal economic system. All these flaws caused a development of economic planning which, in turn, caused this state intervention. This is why for the fascist Minister it was useless to repeat facts and data, instead of explaining this revolutionary process to governments, bankers, industrialists and public opinion. The corporative system «is designed to implement this process of development, [checking] the activities of the industrial plutocracy which acts often against the interest of the nation». De Stefani considered the advent of this “new economic order” as the most pragmatic way for governments to reassess their economic criteria, without «losing those spiritual forces upon which the progress of their civilization depends». The subsequent intervention of professor Amoroso provided an explanation about how the corporative system had to be intended: «the corporative system represents the effort of contemporary society to give [...] a new economic and legal setting. That is why corporatism is not a vague ideology but a living force». If the roots of the international economic disorder was found in the monopolistic and financial integration the State had the right to intervene and realign «all the wills in the general interest». The analysis of Amoroso is particularly interesting because at the end of his discourse he identified the real causes of the world disorder in a lack of morality: the expression of a pagan joie de vivre which led to an exasperated individual selfishness «which has destroyed, through freedom of judgment, the unity of European moral consciousness». Corporation had to be seen as an idea of moderation: «under the corporative system the employer and the worker have the chance to work in a cooperative way». Even if the motive of individual profit will remain the mainspring of productive activities, it must be enlightened by a ray of idealism. In this perspective, custom tariffs were considered as an aberration to be fought because they were ruining material and spiritual world.

Also the French representative, professor Célestin Bouglè¹⁰², undertook a pessimistic view of the current international situation. He said that the crisis was not due to post-war fact but that it had to be seen as a general crisis of capitalism and overproduction. In a world in which «capitalism was not yet dead and socialism was not yet born», the economic crisis was a product of the anarchical practices in the international economic environment. The lack of planning was an element that unified the speeches of most of the participants. Another common element was the willingness, from foreign speakers, to know better the corporative system. Prof . Herbert von Beckerath¹⁰³ claimed that the corporative system aimed at restoring the missing link between legal, moral and economic conceptions, by means of synthesis of private and collective interests. So he took a positive view of corporatism, but he wasn't so convinced that corporatism could have imitated by other countries. According to him, Italy was a rural country, and Mussolini was «a genius» who couldn't be replicated. His solution was to set up international agreement, but he asked: «how can we reach this agreement if the fundamental ideas of business and political leaders vary from country to country?».

The speech of prof. Giorgio Mortara¹⁰⁴ was meaningful to clarify that Italy didn't want to isolate herself economically and, above all, to make the participants fully aware of the fact that the

¹⁰² He was deputy-director of the Ecol Normale Superieure and professor of the Faculty of Letters at the University of Paris

¹⁰³ ¹⁰³ Herbert von Beckerath was a cousin of the economist Erwin von Beckerath. In 1920 he became a full professor of political science in Karlsruhe. After 1922 he taught political economy in Tübingen. In 1925 he was called for a professor of political science and director of the institute for social science of the city of Bonn.

As an opponent of the Nazi-regime he emigrated to the USA.

¹⁰⁴ He was one of the most well-known Italian economist, demographer and statistician. Forced to leave Italy in 1939 for racial reasons, he moved to Brazil. In 1954 he was nominated president of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. In 1956 he returned to teach to the University of Rome of which he was appointed professor emeritus in 1961.

Corporative State, in the international field, was in much the same position as a liberal State. Italy's tariff policy had been determined by natural conditions and not by political aims. The corporative state claimed to favor the most useful branches of production from the national standpoint, for the rest it left international trade entirely to private initiative. The corporative state has the same means of action at home as those employed by the liberal state. This was a natural consequence of the Italian environment: Italy lacked of raw materials and foodstuffs and in order to pay for its importation it had to export its national products. This is why Italy wanted foreign markets to remain open to its products and this is why it was against an excessive protectionism. According to Mortara, fascist Italy was placed in continuity with Liberal Italy to work for the removal of obstacles standing in the way of international relations, so that Italian economic policy was characterized by a defensive, rather than an aggressive, character.

The view of a fascist regime which wanted to implement international trade in order to help the international community to find the right way to exit the crisis was supported by Dr Arnold Wolfers¹⁰⁵: «we agree with Italian specialists, corporative state doesn't want the creation of a self-contained economic system». But he recognized a fundamental change in economic international relations: if the corporate system aimed at being a kind of economic planning, the international field was taking a really different path and the intervention of the individual states in international trade is far from being planned; it was more like anarchy.

In this field we are not debating the relative advantages of free trade and protection; we are almost all persuaded that protection has come to stay. The discussion here is, therefore, between interventionists of different shades¹⁰⁶

According to him both protectionists and interventionists could have reached some agreement of those fundamental principles of the international capitalist system: in this perspective corporative state wasn't seen as a danger for the international trade, as it wasn't perceived as a synonym of self-contained system.

Also Virigile Madgearu¹⁰⁷, representative of the Romanian delegation, agreed to see that State intervention in economic life was very widespread. Hence the need to tie tariffs with a clear political plan: if economic nationalism as well as neomercantilism would have led to instability, the solution for a stable international trade was placed in the creation of an economic plan capable of ensuring an international division of labor. The emphasis in the rationality of this economic plan led him to appreciate publicly «the method of the Italians» with the purpose of restoring the international economic system, and at the same time to criticize the economic model of the Soviet Union which represented an economically self-sufficient unit. In this perspective, corporative system was seen not only an efficient model to guarantee a domestic economic development, rather a valuable model to rationalize the economic sphere at international level, in a context where the interests of a community were considered stronger than the individual.

Prof Alfred Zimmern¹⁰⁸ was the only one who tried to offer a completely different point of view, intimately linked with the aspirations of the League of Nations. Nevertheless, when it came to propose a solution for the international economic crisis, he highlighted the possibility of harmonizing the various economic systems, whether they represented the corporatist system, the English system or a mixed system. Furthermore, even Zimmern claimed the conciliatory nature of the Corporatist system, stressing the fact that in its external relations was not so very different from the system of more liberal countries. The crux of the problem for the internationalist scholar was not represented by the presence and the development of Corporatist beliefs, rather the creation of a

¹⁰⁵ He was the director of the Deutsche Hochschule für Politik in Berlin and professor of political science.

¹⁰⁶ A record of a first International study conference on the state and economic life, p.73-74.

¹⁰⁷ Former prime Minister of finance, industry and commerce, agriculture and lands; professor of economics at the academy of higher commercial and industrial studies, Bucharest.

¹⁰⁸ Here in the form of representative of Geneva School of International Studies. He was professor of international relations in the University of Oxford.

superior authority able to give a discipline to the international economic system. This is why he ended up proposing the establishment of a series of permanent institutions of wider authority for the solution of these problems.

Prof Rocco then provided the public with an explanation about how the corporative state was working: in the Italian Corporative System the employers and the workers were grouped in separate syndicates. The syndicates are then united in a Corporation for each branch of production; the Corporation deals with the big problems of production and distribution arising in the given branch of production. The value of such an organization lies in the fact that it unites in itself, for each branch of production, capital and labor, and consequently succeeds in bringing about an integrated organization of the factors of production. Such an integral organization can be utilized both for production and for distribution. In the field of production the problems are more delicate «until now only two main system for the organization of production had been proposed: the liberal system of private enterprise and the socialist system of production organized by the communities and for them by the State¹⁰⁹».

The Corporative System, he said, is a system in which production and distribution were organized by the producers themselves, both employers and workers, united in the Corporations, under the ultimate control of the State, in such a way that the risk devolved on the producers and not on the State. The latter only intervenes to protect the general welfare, particularly when the question is of a political nature. Here it was highlighted that the Corporate state had to be seen as a third way between capitalism and socialism.

Prof. Bouglè confirmed his interest by what he saw and heard from Italy but

we must be better informed as to the advantages and perhaps disadvantages of the Corporative system. The Chairman sees in it a system half way between liberalism and socialism; we should like to know exactly what part the public authorities take in it. Before making up our minds we should have to go into the question in greater detail. But I do not want us to give our adhesion to the Corporative system or any other, as the result of a letter which comes as a conclusion to our discussions... it must not be said in the Press that, after three days of discussion, the only practical and positive conclusion reached by the conference was an apologia for a system the exact results of which we do not know.¹¹⁰

To conclude, Dr. Dalton confirmed that the great value of the Conference derived from

an exchange of individual ideas, and from the laying down of a programme for future cooperative research within the limits indicated by our terms of reference, and through many forms of individual contact, we are promoting in a most important way, the object for which this Institution was created¹¹¹.

In conclusion it was decided to push the Italian delegates to present a precise study of the working of the Corporative institutions for the next conference. As a matter of fact, if on one hand Corporatism was seen with curiosity as a possible solution to exit the economic crisis, on the other hand there was a general skepticism when the discussion shifted from the realm of theory to the hard soil of practice. Hence the admonition to Italian speakers not to talk only in general about Corporatism but to go into detail about how this system worked in concrete.

Even if the Conference didn't reach clear and precise conclusions, it allowed the participants to lay a foundation from which to build a new way of discussing international issues. As a matter of fact, the Milanese Conference would represent the forerunner of other International Studies Conferences which would have been attended by a largely increased number of national organizations. A series of international meetings which would gradually be focused on the results of scientific discussion on international economic and political problems, «enabling us to do what the scientific man is failing in his duty if he does not do, namely, to influence in the last resort the

¹⁰⁹ A record of a first International study conference on the state and economic life, p.97-98.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, p.99.

¹¹¹ Ibidem, p.99-100.

general opinion of mankind upon these essential questions, and thereby the policies pursued both by Governments and by important institutions within the State¹¹²».

As I highlighted above, the Conference seemed to be a success for the Italian delegation and words of appreciation were expressed even by international participants: «it is fitting to pay a special tribute here to the Italian National Committee of Intellectual Cooperation through whose generosity the Conference was enabled to meet this year in Italy and who have contributed towards the cost of this publication». As a matter of fact the Italian representatives gave the conference with all the necessary care, choosing the fascinating location of Castello Sforzesco as the place where to hold all the meetings. M. Giuseppe Righetti, secretary general of the Italian National Committee and his colleagues were cited for offering every possible facility to the delegates, «nor will the social side of the Conference be easily forgotten by the foreign guests of Milan¹¹³».

All in all, what is recognizable from the Italian participation on the conference was a specific view of corporatism within the fascist regime attributable to Rocco's nationalistic view. As a matter of fact, the Italian National Committee displayed a conception of the state as the highest authority and the only one legitimated to loan liberties and freedom to individuals. According to this view very new organization had to be incorporated by the State in order to use it as an instrument of social management. Rocco, de Stefani, Amoroso and the others shared the idea according to which history was a Darwinian struggle for survival between societies. As a consequence, the Italian ruling class had the duty to strengthening the State and to set out a program of national aims, such as to orchestrate the economic efforts of the masses and facilitate the monopolistic trend in capitalism, as well as to wrestle its place in the colonial sun from nations in decline. Beyond technical and legislative aspects, these elements represented an appealing vision for the more traditionally conservative elements of Italian society which linked fascism with the establishment and the world of Italian finance. In this perspective, it is important to recognize that the vitalist strand of fascist ideology was cast aside, in favor of Rocco's blend of political authoritarianism, technocratic dirigisme, economic productivity, and social organicism. All these elements were essential to synthesize the Italian bourgeoisie's response to the advent of mass society.

In particular, Carlo Emilio Ferri, Arrigo Solmi, Giuseppe Gallavresi and Giorgio Mortara played a different but important role for the birth and the development of Ispi, affecting with their conceptions and views the initial work of the young founders of Ispi, in which this balance between a more conservative nationalistic idea would merge with the palingenetic and exuberant fascist ideology. The first two would play a crucial role in developing the faculty of political science of Pavia and in affecting the education of Pierfranco Gaslini, the first director of Ispi and one of the students at that faculty at the beginning of the 30s.

The faculty of political science of Pavia and the formation of the founding members of Ispi

The January 7th 1926, with Royal Decree n.181, was formed the Faculty of Political Science of Pavia with the aim to «promote the high culture in the political disciplines and to provide young students with a scientific preparation for civil service»¹¹⁴. The project saw its implementation thanks to two university professors, Arrigo Solmi and Pietro Vaccari, with the unexpected help of

¹¹² Ibidem, p.105.

¹¹³ Ibidem, p.XVIII.

¹¹⁴ R.D. 7 gennaio 1926 n. 181, Gazzetta Ufficiale, 15 febbraio 1926, n. 37, p. 444-445 in D.Bolech Cecchi, *La Facoltà di Scienze Politiche dalla costituzione alla riforma (1926- 1968)*, «Annali di storia delle Università Italiane», VII, 2003, n.7, p.227.

Mussolini. The two were animated by an early-growing interest for the social and political affairs of the country.

They had been *interventisti*, involved in the National Association Combatants, and placed in that liberal-nationalist current that found, whilst maintaining its own physiognomy, a significant elements of affinity with the new political phase begun with the first Mussolini's government: culture and intelligence, flexibility and ambition, determination and sense of initiative, but also the ability of developing networks which bring them to act as a bridge between the old liberal establishment and that of the new rulers¹¹⁵.

Actually, they were more than academics: Solmi, former Provost of the University of Pavia, would become an eminent political figure of the fascist regime; Vaccari on the other hand would become Podest of Pavia. A close relationship between the regime and the Faculty therefore was an important factor in building the new area of study, even if this link would never assume the features of an uncritical acceptance in respect of the ever more stringent directives of the fascist government¹¹⁶. As a matter of fact, this relationship would have been characterized by a complex dialectic which would lead in a series of atypical behaviors by the Faculty itself¹¹⁷.

Indeed, Gentile's law of 1923 had the effect to erode the historical autonomy of universities in respect of the governmental policy, to the extent that from the academic year 1923-24 deans and provosts were no longer chosen by the university world but by royal designation. The first provost to inaugurate this turn was Arrigo Solmi. A choice that would prove to be poor for the regime, so much to induce Starace to exclude his re-nomination «not only because he is incompetent, but also because he is considered a non-authentic fascist».¹¹⁸ The following period would have been characterized by a heavy chasm among the academic body between who would sign the «Manifesto degli intellettuali antifascisti»¹¹⁹ and who would decide to sustain, at least formally, the choices and the directives of the regime. At the beginning of the 30s this fascist attempt to subjugate the university world was shared by «quite a few members of the party and famous intellectuals»¹²⁰, a centralized action which would affect the way in which the University of Pavia was managed then onwards.

If the institutional framework was modified in an authoritarian way, with a subsequent intensification of the hierarchical relationship between the regime and the Pavese University, it has to be highlighted some elements which made the link more complex and nuanced. First of all the newborn Faculty saw internally the formation of a skillful teaching staff, pushed by an inborn passion for scientific research¹²¹, in part derived from the necessity to study and problematize international issues and events, and capable of making a peculiar environment particularly suitable for scholars and students in political science. As it has been highlighted before, the international environment came out from the First World War led governments to encourage an unparalleled process of understanding and institutionalization of knowledge in international affairs. This is why

¹¹⁵ M. Tesoro, *Com'è nata la Facoltà*, «Il Politico», LXII, 1997, n.2, p.195.

¹¹⁶ Bolech Cecchi, *La Facoltà di Scienze Politiche dalla costituzione alla riforma (1926- 1968)*, cit., p.229.

¹¹⁷ An assessment which finds a confirmation both in the words of Firpo: «A mere chronological coincidence between the birth of a series of Faculty of Political Science and the strengthening of the fascist dictatorship led us to think about the existence of a cause and effect relationship which seems to be ill-founded» Luigi Firpo, *La facoltà di scienze politiche*, «Il Politico», XXXII, 1967, n.4, p.668, and Marina Tesoro: «It is not that we can deny, in absolute terms, relationships and connections. The point is to avoid Manichean judgments, which result to be excessively simplistic [...] the mere chronological coincidence it is not for itself a valid and exclusive analytical criteria for interpretation», Tesoro, *Com'è nata la Facoltà*, cit., p.191-192.

¹¹⁸ Letter of Achille Starace to S.E. l'on. Pietro Fedele, Roma, 18 ottobre 1927, in E. Signori, *Minerva a Pavia. L'ateneo e la città tra guerre e fascismo*, Cisalpino, Milano 2002, p.119.

¹¹⁹ Manifest of anti-fascist intellectuals

¹²⁰ Ivi, p.118.

¹²¹ Bolech Cecchi, *La Facoltà di Scienze Politiche dalla costituzione alla riforma (1926- 1968)*, cit, p.232. See also Tesoro's assessment: «the quality of the research as well as of the teaching were placed immediately at high levels. It was a fact recognized in the academic world and confirmed by the publication of the Faculty», Tesoro, *Com'è nata la Facoltà*, cit., p.209.

the Faculty of Political Science of Pavia represented a new environment from which professors, scholars and students tried to implement a new body of knowledge, trying to reach a compromise between the needs of the research, which required a certain degree of emancipation, and the ever more stringent directives of the fascist regime¹²². The establishment of the newborn faculty of political science was also an answer to the tough competition imposed by the University of Milan: it was thought to create a new attractive place with in addition the establishment of scholarships and prizes for students, with the opportunity for them to go abroad and to gain a first-touch experience of the functioning of international bodies, such as the League of Nations, or to meet with foreign students and professors¹²³. In this way the Faculty allowed students to tailor the training available to their needs, implementing the curiosity and the willingness to specialize in some aspects of political science¹²⁴.

The growth of the faculty was also stimulated by its proximity to the two prestigious colleges of Borromeo and Ghisleri¹²⁵. As regards the quality of the material ceded by Borromeo to the Faculty is meaningful the remark of Pietro Vaccari: «it collects the best it has been written in Italy and in other countries in the field of politics in the last few years»¹²⁶.

All these elements pushed «the new Faculty [to assume] its own physiognomy not only in the Pavese context, but also compared to other analogous faculties, showing a peculiar interest for the international environment as well as for the foreign policy»¹²⁷.

Pietro Vaccari, nominated dean of the Faculty¹²⁸, listed in the first issue of «Annuario di politica estera» the reasons for which it was born:

We are living in a historical phase, full of great events [...] And, as often has happened in the aftermath of the great historical movements, States and peoples are searching for a form of government and of discipline that imposing its authority on the single entities prevent the resumption of the conflict and to facilitate the settlement of unresolved problems ... [we have to study] these complex phenomena adopting an international perspective»¹²⁹.

This necessity to better understand the international environment was intimately connected with a willingness to improve the way in which the Italian foreign policy was conducted¹³⁰.

Writing the introduction to the first issue of the journal Carlo Emilio Ferri¹³¹ stated the aims of the «Annuario»:

¹²² Ibidem; vedi anche Luigi Firpo, *La Facoltà di scienze politiche*, cit., p.667-688.

¹²³ Pierfranco Gaslini and Mario Toscano went to the University of Geneva, Annibale Carena went to the University of Vienna, Bolech Cecchi, *La Facoltà di Scienze Politiche dalla costituzione alla riforma (1926- 1968)*, cit., p.234.

¹²⁴ It is worth it to notice that the Faculty required a good command of at least two foreign languages: : « the student is required to follow two language courses and at least one of them has to be French, English or German», Archivio deposito dell'Università di Pavia (henceforth ASUPv), Scienze Politiche, Corrispondenza, cart 2375, fascicolo 1. Again, the student could have chosen according to his preferences.

¹²⁵ For an analysis of the two institutes see M.F.Roncalli, *Il Borromeo nella prima metà del secolo XIX. Diario di vita collegiale*, «Annali di storia delle Università Italiane», VII, 2003, n.7, p.127- 146, e A.A.Rota, *Il Collegio Ghisleri della Restaurazione (1818- 1848): fermenti di dissensi e strumenti di controllo governativo*, «Annali di storia delle Università Italiane», VII, 2003, n.7, p.149-164.

¹²⁶ Pietro Vaccari, *La scuola pavese per la politica estera*, in «Annuario di politica estera 1923-1925», a cura di Carlo Emilio Ferri e Pietro Vaccari, 1926, p. V-VIII.

¹²⁷ Tesoro, *Com'è nata la Facoltà*, cit., p.198.

¹²⁸ See S.Beretta, *Per Pietro Vaccari, fondatore della facoltà*, in «Il Politico», LIV, 1989, n.1, p.165-167. Interesting is also Tesoro's remark: « In his mind Vaccari continued to envisage [the Faculty], as an educational gym [palestra di formazione] in order to enrich the ranks of high bureaucracy without black shirt, that is without those propagandistic themes [and] updated on those duty which regarded «the new state», in the name of the nation», Tesoro, *Com'è nata la Facoltà*, cit., p.206.

¹²⁹ P.Vaccari, *La scuola pavese per la politica estera*, «Annuario di politica estera 1923-1925», cit., p.VI-VII.

¹³⁰ «a foreign policy more active and fruitful», P.Vaccari, *La scuola pavese per la politica estera*, «Annuario di politica estera 1923-1925», cit., p.VI-VII.

¹³¹ Official for the League of Nations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he would teach economy at the University of Pavia.

The *Annuario* aims at starting a new area of study, which makes easier to think about an ambitious foreign policy «It is needed to prepare the human element, that is the raw material of history»¹³².

The scholar considered crucial to inform the Italian population in regard to international events and dynamics of world politics, with the object to create a broader consensus for the fascist foreign policy. But the journal didn't appear to be as a simple sounding board to disseminate fascist propaganda, actually articles and essays written for the «*Annuario*» reflected a willingness to think about the most important questions of their contemporary world so that «deepening the most important themes a critic of the fascist foreign policy was produced»¹³³.

From April 1928 started the publication of a second journal of the Faculty, «*Annali di Scienze Politiche*», to be

Both an instrument for the preparation of young students to the diplomatic career and to the public administration as well as a mean to disseminate the knowledge of political science among scholars and people interested in these subjects¹³⁴.

It is in this cultural milieu that the future founders of the Institute for Studies in International Politics found a lively intellectual laboratory in which history, international law, economics, the study of foreign languages mixed together to form a new body of knowledge in order to better understand international dynamics and foreign policies. The relatively freedom to decide which kind of subjects to investigate helped the students to find their own paths during their years of study, in a field which was still unexplored in Italy. The changes which characterized in those years the international environment gave the impression that in order to keep up with the times a serious development in the study of international relations was needed: a modern nation had to accommodate this request with the creation of experts and scientific instruments to make its voice heard. This challenge was taken seriously by the “founding fathers” of international relations in Italy, who were trying to mix the need for a scientific study and the demands of the fascist regime.

At the University of Pavia Solmi had the opportunity to develop his interests in the history of international relations teaching Diplomacy and History of Treaties. His courses focused on the diplomatic issues from Italy's unification to the outbreak of the World War, a reconstruction which relied upon political-diplomatic events and treaties, especially those concerning the Peace Conference of Versailles and the post-war international situation. A particular combination between a rigorous historical approach and a broad analyzes of ongoing international affairs was thought to be a useful method to form the future Italian political and diplomatic class. As a consequence the students of the Faculty of Political Science needed to be introduced to a set of new conceptual instruments in order to be well aware of the international political situation. Thanks to Solmi's cultural baggage the thesis prepared by his students were really diversified, touching different issues: the topics covered not only the diplomatic policies of European countries but there was also a specific attention for non-European countries such as United States and Japan. This peculiar cultural openness present at the Faculty of Political Science of Pavia encouraged its students to spend a period abroad for their studies¹³⁵.

Indeed, the new field was full of uncertainties and as Volpe revealed during one of his speeches at the Italian Parliament in 1924: «it is not only a problem of foreign policy [...] rather a problem about the means, the instruments of foreign policy. It is about culture, in its links with international life and foreign policy»¹³⁶. According to Volpe, Italy had three needs to fulfill: first of

¹³² Carlo Emilio Ferri, *Introduzione*, in «*Annuario di politica estera 1923-1925*», cit., p. XV.

¹³³ Bolech Cecchi, *La Facoltà di Scienze Politiche dalla costituzione alla riforma (1926- 1968)*, cit., p.232

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁵ Carlo Marchiori went for several months at the University of Yale, Annibale Carena spent a long period at the University of Vienna, Pierfranco Gaslini and Mario Toscano spent few months in Geneva. See, Luciano Monzali, *Arrigo Solmi storico delle relazioni internazionali*, «*Il Politico*», Vol. 59, No. 3 (170) (Luglio-Settembre 1994), pp. 439-467.

¹³⁶ Gioacchino Volpe, *Scritti sul fascismo 1919-1938*, Vol.II, Giovanni Volpe Editore Roma, 1976, p.5.

all it had to defend and sustain the culture of its emigrates, in a world in which it was more difficult to preserve a strong national affiliation with the motherland. As a consequence it was better to direct Italian actions towards those territories which were easier to affect such as the areas close to the Mediterranean sea. Beyond this, it was fundamental to set out a project for the improvement of teachers and the Italian colonial schools: «in order to do this we need money and people». Secondly, Italy had to disseminate its culture abroad, thought as a «mission» which had the duty to assist and to make Italian interests known to other countries. The aim was a political one: activating a robust program of Italian culture abroad it was possible to attract foreign students and to affect foreign public opinions on themes concerned Italy and its foreign policy. The Italian historian stated that it was thanks to the new university reform that the divisions between Faculties collapsed, «mitigating the professional character of our studies, which were functional only for internal use, and on the contrary accentuating the scientific character of those studies, so that students were freer to decide their own path». In this way, «we have made possible a broader participation of foreign students to our universities». Volpe cited the initiative of Mr. Torre who had proposed the establishment of an official body in Rome with the duty to coordinate and implement projects for the cultivation of *italianità*, by expressing some doubts on this proposal. As a matter of fact, for Volpe it was better to preserve the spontaneous character of such initiatives, with the establishment of autonomous Institutes capable of promoting Italian culture through the collaboration of foreign cultural centers. Finally, the third need was represented by the link between domestic public opinion and foreign policy:

we want to support the Italians abroad; we want to make foreigners known about ourselves; but we should not forget to nurture ourselves, Italian citizens and Italian ruling class, about the others [sul conto degli altri], that is about global [mondiali] and international issues¹³⁷

This necessity arose alongside another structural problem that afflicted the administration of foreign affairs, that was a lack of modernization of the structures which should have sustained that power politics strongly declared by the regime from its beginnings. In this perspective, Volpe showed his satisfaction with the possibility of a broader recruitment for diplomats thanks to the decree of 30 September 1923¹³⁸, as well as with the establishment of Offices which had to help the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: «it has been established a “General Coordination Office” which has to collect, coordinate and value all the information from outside ... equally a “Diplomatic-historical Office” which collects and processes historical documents which can have political importance¹³⁹». According to Volpe, if on one hand the fascist government was the first to try to implement and modernize the administrative structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the other hand he denounced a lack of Institutes for proper education and training of young students in foreign affairs: «their mentalities were made of juridical and economic studies: that is, inadequate culture and mentality». In this perspective, the new university reform could have helped students to form their own paths, especially the establishment of the Faculties of Political Science could have merged juridical, economic, political and historical subjects. Volpe thought that university Faculties were able to find in themselves the forces for their regeneration: «when we talk about the scientific character of University, we are referring to its duty [...] to provide the live elements of study, remaking with students the training process of knowledge [il percorso formativo del sapere]». So that, the effort to renovate the student’s learning process had to be found and implemented by specific Schools affiliated with Universities, which had the duty not only to teach different subjects, rather to explain them «in a different spirit». Volpe’s argument was designated to be a critic response to another motion put forward by Mr. Andre Torre¹⁴⁰ who advocated the establishment of

¹³⁷ Ivi, p.17.

¹³⁸ This decree abolished the requirement to own a certain degree of income in order to become a diplomat.

¹³⁹ Ivi, p.19.

¹⁴⁰ He was an Italian politician and journalist. At the beginning of 1922 he founded, alongside with Giovanni Amendola and Giovanni Circolo, the newspaper «Il Mondo», which assumed an anti-Giolitti position being an expression of that

a post-university institute organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, profoundly different in terms of method, system and organization from existing organization. He envisaged the construction of a place which was «a seminary and at the same time a laboratory of culture and art¹⁴¹». Volpe admitted that there was a necessity to create a direct contact between students and the actual problems regarding foreign policy but this relationship had to be established within the university environment through an implementation of other instruments such as school trips with a period of stay abroad «this is why the program of the Faculty of Political Science foresees a limited number of disciplines in favor of extra-curricular activities» in particular with the possibility to stay abroad thanks to specific scholarships. «Foreign policy, international problems, political issues» said Volpe «have to be treated outside school, after the required preparation. This is a truth which we recognize in theory but not in practice¹⁴²». He claimed that it was not only a question regarding the training of diplomats and officials, rather «a country which wants to make a serious foreign policy has to deepen and disseminate the knowledge of the life of the world and its meaning, in what are peculiar problems as well as in what are unity and interdependence of the same problems. And I am referring to the knowledge of the past as much as the knowledge of the present¹⁴³». He insisted on the fact that there were a multitude of links between Italian history and histories of other countries, so that foreign archives in «Vienna, Paris, Marseille, London are full of Italian documents. History of Italy ... is universal history, seen from a specific standpoint, and you don't know Italian history outside universal history ... Italians look at their history in the narrower sense of the term ... after all Italian historians reflect perfectly Italian bourgeoisie and its spirit ... so parochial [casalingo] and so afraid to open up to outdoor air¹⁴⁴». This was due not only because of a narrow-minded attitude but also because they were short of instruments as well as spirit of initiative: «our Faculties of letters were full of poor young students [and] young ladies» who, according to Volpe, were interested in history only in terms of erudition rather than in the intelligent reconstruction of the past: «wasn't history as action made by men?» he wondered, stressing at the same time the inadequacy of women in connecting historical knowledge with the political realm. Moreover in Italy there weren't journals which undertook the task to study seriously the problems of other countries, by sending their foreign correspondents for instance, so that when a journalist went abroad he tended to write a piece full of his own impressions and personal feelings rather than an article drafted with a serious approach and with a precise description of the issues at stake: the only exceptions were the journal «Politica» and the newspaper «L'idea nazionale» which was considered by Volpe as houses for the training of some among the better informed in the field of international politics: «Coppola, Cantalupo, Vitetti and few others¹⁴⁵». Again the problem was a political one: Volpe denounced the fact that in order to know some specific political issues Italians had to read foreign books, especially from France, «but is it possible ... to study the political culture of a nation relying upon books from other countries, from another country called France, which permeates [francesemente] everything it sees, and that it considers the world as its own territory?¹⁴⁶». He considered the efforts of Italian government before the war in the field of international politics as insufficient, exactly because no politician attempted to develop a political culture among Italian people which could have meant a more coherent and powerful foreign policy: «it is astonishing, and for sure it will be shocking also for future historians of Italy, to think that among the thousands and thousands of Italians who had invoked the war, they fought with two or three words in their pockets [avendo in tasca due o tre formulette]: «freedom and justice», «principle of nationality» and the like ... with culture in this condition in our country, this country

radical world which gathered around Francesco Saverio Nitti. After the suppression of the newspaper on October 1926 he was director of «La Stampa».

¹⁴¹ Ivi, p.22.

¹⁴² Ivi, p.23.

¹⁴³ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁴ Ivi, p.24

¹⁴⁵ Ivi, p.25.

¹⁴⁶ Ibidem.

and its government can't conduct a serious foreign policy as it is done by other countries¹⁴⁷». The key element of his speech was exactly this problematic conjunction between foreign policy and a national public opinion which was considered one of the linchpins of a coherent action outside national borders. A foreign policy which had to go beyond domestic antagonism, in order to follow the very interest of Italian nation otherwise «formulae and ideologies will take control; myths will be absolute truths. We will make agreements and treaties but we will put them in the archives without using them ... so that they will die facing the changed situation and the changed necessities and we are not even aware of it. When we have to pick them up in order to apply them, we will see them falling apart ...¹⁴⁸». Without a systematic and deeper knowledge of other countries Italy would never have become a respected great power: the defence of *italianità* and the spread of Italian culture had as they linchpin a better knowledge of other countries: «so that our watchword should be: to know the world, to study the world [...] to help young people to do this, to acquire this knowledge¹⁴⁹». Actually, Volpe set out to decrease the number of Italian universities in order to invest more money in scholarships and in the budget of Italian institutes operating abroad, which should have become a reliable support for Italian students sent to different countries to study foreign policy. In this perspective the Italian scholar mentioned a project to establish an Institute in Cairo before the war with the aim to study closely the Egyptian as well as the Semitic world: then finally the war came and «we saw at the time of the Peace Treaty what that meant to Italy had no say in the matter, because of a lack of studies». It is clear from this speech what Volpe meant when he talked about the necessary efforts to make in order to develop the studies in foreign affairs: the training of young students as well as the creation and the support of suitable bodies in Italy and abroad had the final aim of projecting the Italian influence in other countries. If on one hand the Volpe's speech can be placed within the broader canonical discourse about the need of Italy to expand and to reach a status of great power, on the other hand his claim was substantiated by a new element of "cultural diplomacy" which envisaged both a systematic scientific study of other countries and a better appreciation of those political dynamic which contributed to form the world of international relations. He paid particular attention to the Islamic as well as Asiatic world, talking about the importance of nations such as China and Russia and the reference to Cairo as the new Rome, giving its central place in the Islamic area. The core idea was to put forward this «organic and continuative work» as the basis for a great policy understood by Volpe as «a far reaching policy, of continuity, practical and capable of linking the Country with the government; a policy which has always to be responsive to our needs and possibilities». He cited Cavour as the most skilled politician who understood to what extent Italian foreign policy had to be pushed and at the same time he judged Crispi's attitude as beyond the capabilities of the Italian nation. According to the Italian historian even if Italy was a nation with poor capabilities it had great needs because of its past, its position and its demographic condition: «our tragedy [...] is in this contrast between these needs [...] and the mediocre capabilities. When we ask for a stronger state, which had free movement in international relations, it is to see whether it is possible to adapt our little opportunities with those great needs¹⁵⁰».

Again in his final remarks, Volpe showed both how the nationalistic elements were instrumental for the choices made by the regime in the field of cultural policy and the necessity to associate the alleged power politics declared by the regime with the scientific study of international politics.

What Volpe pointed out as «organic and continuative work» represented a promising and growing area of study for a new generation of students who were increasingly interested in the field of international relations but they didn't receive a satisfactory preparation to deal with new and complex topics of their times. This was the reason why groups of students with a degree in law

¹⁴⁷ Ivi, p.26.

¹⁴⁸ Ivi, p.27.

¹⁴⁹ Ivi, p.28.

¹⁵⁰ Ivi, p.33.

decided to continue their studies in order to get a second degree at the Faculty of Political Science in Pavia. Among them there were three young students who would play a crucial role in the foundation of Ispi. The first one was Annibale Carena, born in 1906 in Treviglio near Bergamo: he studied at the Collegio Borromeo achieving a degree in Law and then a second degree in Political Science. In 1929 Carena was in Vienna at the Hungarian historical institute:

He was granted a scholarship as part of an exchange promoted by the Italian government with Collegio Borromeo to Vienna [...]. He was writing his second thesis, under the guide of Arrigo Solmi who was teaching Diplomacy and history of Treaties¹⁵¹.

His skills would lead him to study issues concerning corporativism and public law with a comparative approach, in which the focus was constituted by the organization of power and the new state structures. But the activities of Carena went beyond the intellectual field: his life was divided between university studies, writing articles for newspapers and propagandistic activities with the local GUF, the fascist groups in the universities.¹⁵²

His willingness to study the various themes with a scientific approach helped him to consider fascist propaganda inadequate in order to understand in a serious way the political and juridical dynamics both in the national field as well as in the international one. Indeed, Carena was profoundly immersed in the ideological context of the fascist regime and his arguments, even if he claimed them to be objective, were severely affected from the nationalist polemic against the former liberal governments accused of *rinunciatarismo* and to have failed to sustain Italian interests. Nevertheless, his adhesion to such rhetoric doesn't prevent the complexity of his discourse:

He was willing to sustain a form of internationalism as an answer for a coordinating action in many areas: as the League of Nations, as long as it refused to be caged by the law, by attempting to immobilize history, or, even worse, to realize an absurd project of endless peace¹⁵³.

His short life¹⁵⁴ was summed up by the newspaper «Il Popolo di Pavia» in an article written by Carlo Morandi who remembered him as a dynamic and intelligent man: «just after he got the degree he participated at various international congresses, appointed in 1925 to be part of the direction board of the GUF, he was the Segretario Federale from 1932 [...] he founded the GUF in Vienna, he was president of the Fascist Institute of Culture, and Segretario Generale dei Fasci di Combattimento di Pavia from 1934». The article continued highlighting his successes in the cultural field: he was depicted as a young professor at the University of Pavia, skillful scholar with a rich culture, a man with an open mind, who loved travelling and keep contacts with foreign intellectual circles, especially in Geneva, Vienna and Budapest. He was one of the most active fascist figures and he was trying to build a bridge between the cultural sphere and the political one, without forgetting the importance of the international environment as the inevitable field of action by which the results of the fascist regime had to be measured. This peculiar formation allowed him to maintain his own vision about international phenomenon and their consequences, to escape from an acritical support of the fascist propaganda¹⁵⁵. Again Morandi concluded the article saying that

¹⁵¹ R. Maggi, *Politica e cultura e Pavia dal 1926 al 1935: Annibale Carena e la Facoltà di Scienze Politiche*, «Il Politico», 1996, anno LXI, n.4, p.651.

¹⁵² University Fascist Groups.

¹⁵³ R. Maggi, *Politica e cultura e Pavia dal 1926 al 1935*, cit. p.652-653.

¹⁵⁴ Annibale Carena died after a tragic accident in March 17th, 1935. Following the chronicle of a newspaper of the time Carena together with other political authorities were following a game fish alongside the Ticino's bank. There was a boat in order to allow the authorities to take a closer look at the competition. The problem was that the boat was overcrowded so that it went upside down and a few of the passengers were missing among which Annibale Carena, ASUPv, fascicoli studenti, fascicolo di Annibale Carena, *Edizione straordinaria*, «Il popolo di Pavia», Lunedì 18 marzo 1935, anno XV, n 32.

¹⁵⁵ An assesment confirmed by Elisa Signori: «He was a brilliant student [...] from his scientific contributions [...] emerges an interesting profile of neither fanatic nor opportunistic fascist, who linked human qualities with academic ability», E. Signori, *Minerva a Pavia.*, cit.,p.185.

Carena was a strong supporter of the utility of specialized studies in political science and he was for the creation of a ruling class «truly fascist and seriously prepared¹⁵⁶».

His vision of an interdependent international community and «the willingness to conduct scientific studies in order to channel them into political aims, without sacrificing the objectiveness of the product [constituted] one of the reasons for which Ispi was founded [...]»¹⁵⁷.

The other important figure for the foundation of Ispi was Gerolamo Bassani, vice-director of Ispi during the interwar period and director of the Institute from 1948, when it fully recovered from the consequences of the war. Bassani was born in June 24th 1908 and he graduated with honors in Law at the University of Milan. Then he attended the Faculty of Political Science of Pavia where he got his second degree in Political Science. His curriculum tells us that during his first years of study he focused on the analysis of the corporative system, from which he published a book in 1934¹⁵⁸. In 1933-34 he was appointed as assistant in economic institutions at the University of Milan, continuing to write a few articles about the general principles of corporativism and the trade policy of Italy. Moreover, he worked on some attachments on the general relation on Italian custom policy for the Second International Study Conference held in London by the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation in 1933.

Last but not least, Pierfranco Gaslini, the most important figure in the foundation of the Institute. Gaslini was born in Milan in September 2nd 1906. He graduated in Law in 1930 at the University of Milan under prof. Ranelletti with a thesis on “Il gran consiglio del fascismo”. Then he choose to achieve a second degree at the Faculty of Political Science of Pavia in 1931, under the guide of prof. Arrigo Solmi with a thesis on “La revisione del trattato di Versailles”. Then he decided to apply for a scholarship in order to follow the courses at the Bureau d’Etudes Internationales in Geneva in 1932, directed by prof. Alfred Zimmern, from which he obtained a Diploma. Then he was appointed Assistant professor on International Law at the University of Milan, vice-president of the “Comitato Lombardo della Società Nazionale per la storia del Risorgimento” as well as secretary of the National Committee for the publication of Dalmatian Statutes. He acted as representative of the fascist party at both the Congress of Associations for the League of Nation held in Geneva in 1932 and at the first Congress of Doctors in Law in Venice, in 1933. In addition to this, he was a member of the selection board to the corporativist law among university students, member of the board of the Milanese GUF and the director of the Scuola Mistica Fascista in 1934. To emphasize his interest in Italy’s international relations he was given the role of secretary of the Italian section of the Association des Amis de la langue française, as well as adviser of the UK-Italian association. Finally, he was invited by the League for the revision of Trianon Treaty to held some conferences during the period 1933-34 in a few Hungarian cities among which Budapest, Sekespehervar, Pecs, Debrecen.

At the time of the foundation of Ispi he published a book *La natura giuridica del Partito Nazionale Fascista*, a bibliography of the League of Nations, and some articles of foreign policy under the nickname “il minutante” in newspapers like «Popolo d’Italia», «Annali di Scienze Politiche dell’Università di Pavia», «Gerarchia», «l’Italia», «il Corriere del Danubio» (Budapest), «l’Economia italiana».

To conclude his curriculum Gaslini wrote a list of contact persons from which it is possible to reconstruct his network of political and academic contacts: a series of connections that starting from its tutor Arrigo Solmi they were developing in the cultural, institutional and political field. There were professors like Carlo Morandi and Carlo Emilio Ferri, the *prefetto* of Milan Bruno Fornaciari, important figure of the Milanese economic establishment like Giovanni De Capitani D’Arzago¹⁵⁹, the provost of the Università cattolica del Sacro Cuore Agostino Gemelli, as well as

¹⁵⁶ ASUPv, fascicoli studenti, fascicolo di Annibale Carena, *Edizione straordinaria*, «Il popolo di Pavia», Lunedì 18 marzo 1935, anno XV, n 32.

¹⁵⁷ R. Maggi, *Politica e cultura e Pavia dal 1926 al 1935*, cit. p.667.

¹⁵⁸ G.Bassani, *L’ordinamento economico corporativo*, Cedam, Padova 1937.

¹⁵⁹ The former *Podestà* of Milan, senator from 1929 and president of the “Cassa di risparmio delle province lombarde”.

the diplomat Luigi Villari¹⁶⁰. What clearly emerges from the list is that Gaslini was a peculiar figure of scholar-manager naturally inclined to build a web of networks, which would have been crucial in the foundation of Ispi.

Pierfranco Gaslini: a young fascist in Geneva, 1932.

The particular interests of Gaslini can explain his early-growing concern about Anglo-American think tanks like the Foreign Policy Association. In 1930 he wrote an article about it in the journal of the Faculty¹⁶¹. He considered the Institute as a new and relevant answer to the chronic necessity of governments to acquire as soon as possible valid information with regard to the international dynamics. This new way of perceiving the international environment was due to the cultural technological and political changes after the Great War, that if on one hand it revealed the fragility of the international system and the necessity to find a new and more stable order, on the other hand it unleashed nationalistic passions ready to poison attempts of political understanding between nations. The analysis of the work of the American association demonstrated that its activity was not a «doctrinaire exercise, but rather object research and practical solution of every problem»¹⁶²

In order to reach this aim the Foreign Policy Association organized radio programs, luncheons, even if the main activity remained to publish a weekly journal, which collected the remarks about the events of the week, and a bi-weekly which utilized data and official documents around a specific international problem, particularly important for the national politics. Therefore «the scholar or a broader public can get an idea about the importance and the relevance of the event¹⁶³». Moreover every article was checked by the director, the historian Raymond Leslie Buell along with other experts which followed scientific and not political criteria, so that «everyone could make its own judgment»¹⁶⁴. In the end, Gaslini noted the importance of having an Office in Washington linked with the FPA which facilitated the relationship between the institute and the American government.

The issue raised in the article founded a widely eco in the Italian political and intellectual spheres, intimately linked with the technical requirement of reorganizing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the need to promote an increased awareness on the part of Italian population about the challenges coming from the international environment that the government had to face. As showed above, the issues regarding both the requalification of the Italian diplomatic staff and the establishment of a school which was able to close the gap of the technical offices had already been identified by important intellectuals like Gioacchino Volpe and Andrea Torre¹⁶⁵, and the need to build a more suitable environment for the study of international issues was felt as an urgency.

This was the main theme on which Gaslini was reflecting upon: through an analysis of the Foreign Policy Association, he found a viable solution in order to provide the Italian State with a modern instrument to study and disseminate themes which were critical to understand international dynamics as well as a unique laboratory where intellectuals, diplomatic staff, scholars could write articles, meet and exchange information and get first-hand information about international life.

¹⁶⁰ He was an Italian historian and diplomat, who kept solid links with the British fascist environment. His activities in London took the form of conferences, articles and books pro-fascist regime.

¹⁶¹ P.Gaslini, *Foreign Policy Association*, in «Annali di scienze politiche», III, 1930, fasc.IV.

¹⁶² Ivi, p.314.

¹⁶³ Ivi, p.315.

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁵ About the reform of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the reorganization of the diplomatic staff see A.Montenegro, *Politica estera e organizzazione del consenso. Note sull'Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale. 1933-1943*, «Studi Storici», XIX, 1978, n.4, pp.778- 780.

Moreover, Gaslini stated that the Italian version of the American institute had to supply to another specific aim: beyond promoting studies and accurate information the institute had to open the world of international relations to a broader public through a systematic campaign of education made by the publication of journals, books and periodical seminars.

In 1931 Gaslini would get his second degree under the guide of Arrigo Solmi with a thesis on the revision of Versailles Treaty and then he would go to Geneva at the Bureau d'études internationales (Geneva school of international studies) to attend Alfred Zimmermann's courses.

The experience of Gaslini in Geneva can be taken as an iconic example of that particular exchange of students, professors and people who were working between national and international-based institutions, promoted by the League of Nations and its more fervent followers.

What was the Geneva school of international studies and why did Gaslini participate to its courses?

The Bureau was a sort of summer course thought as an extension of the Institut universitaire de hautes études internationales, an Institute founded in 1927 with the help of an endowment provided by the Rockefeller foundation. The aim of the Institute was to create a research center for the studies of international questions. It promoted a broader approach with the interaction of different knowledge drawn from political, legal, economic, social and historical fields. It claimed to be an impartial observer, namely not to be inspired by any preconceived ideas and not to pursue any kind of propaganda. The objective and scientific approach on complex international issues alongside with a respect of any ideas and actions should have constituted the best guarantee for the progress of international solidarity. The working method followed by the Institute was to organize six-monthly or annual courses in which the organization of conferences and seminars had to be counterbalanced by a certain degree of self-study from students. The directors of the Institute were Paul Mantoux¹⁶⁶ and William E Rappard¹⁶⁷. Among the professors who were teaching at the Institute there was Guglielmo Ferrero¹⁶⁸ with a seminar about the study of contemporary history. The facilities of the Institute were a series of libraries with a focus on international issues. Indeed Geneva itself constituted a magnet for students not only for the wide range of primary sources they could get but also because it was the place in which most of the important international institutions were built: as a consequence a never-ending series of commissions and conferences were convened to solve a particular international problem. Students, to be suitable candidates, had to have a thorough knowledge in law, political, economic and social history, as well as a university degree. The Geneva School of International Studies was a derivation of this Institute and it was designed for

students who are prepared to give up two months in the summer for the intensive study of international problems. It was founded in the belief, growing out of the study of ancient Greece, that what is most needed for the understanding and the practical handling of international affairs is neither the development of special disciplines, nor the imparting of information on current events, but a method of approach combining the knowledge and high standard of the specialist with a constant sense of the variety and the complexity of the modern world. Uniquely favorable conditions for this combination are to be found at the seat of the League of Nations, and it is one of the aim of the School to make the resources of Geneva as a laboratory for the study of contemporary world affairs available for serious students University rank¹⁶⁹.

The work of the school in the summer of 1932 was divided into two sessions: the first part was meant to cover the six weeks preceding the meeting of the League of Nations Assembly; the

¹⁶⁶ Secretary of the League of Nations

¹⁶⁷ Professor at Harvard University who during the war accomplished a series of diplomatic missions for the Swiss government in Washington, Paris and London. He was also the director of the Mandates section at the League of Nations

¹⁶⁸ Guglielmo Ferrero (1871-1942) was one of the most important Italian liberal thinkers. Because of his political ideas he was forced to live Italy and in 1929 he accepted a professorship at the Institut universitaire de hautes études internationales.

¹⁶⁹ ASMAE, Direzione generale affair Società delle Nazioni.

second took place during the period of the Assembly session, so that the whole period would have been from July 25th to the end of the Assembly in September. In particular the six weeks lecture-course would touch every aspect of international relations: economic relations between Europe and the rest of the world, international institutions, the national idea in central Europe as well as the interaction of economics and politics in the international system. Specific themes would be emphasized like colonization and decolonization, economic disarmament, psychology and internationalism, international aspects of unemployment and a general review of the League of Nations. There were also discussion groups in which an expert on a particular field was invited to address the conversation. For example, in 1932 there was a discussion group organized by prof. Zimmern with the help of «dr. Zecchi from Rome» with a focus on international organization in its political, economic and social aspects, with a comparative study of nationality.

The strong pace of activity helped to the success of the School: the students were required to attend two lectures in the morning, the first one in French and the latter in English, each of which was followed by questions. In the afternoon there were the activities of the groups meeting with a Lecture in the evening. To conclude the already bulky program there was a general discussion on the lectures of the week on Friday.

In order to allow students to participate to this “summer school” governments and international organizations undertook to provide a certain amount of scholarships.

From the documents stored at the Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it was possible to reconstruct the process thanks to which Gaslini and with him other Italian students were able to attend the courses in Geneva. In this process was involved a series of international as well as Italian institutions: generally speaking the request started from the director of the school, prof. Alfred Zimmern, to the president of the Italian National Committee for the Intellectual Cooperation¹⁷⁰ in order to know the names of the young students deserving the scholarship who would attend the school for that summer. In 1932, the Geneva School of International studies provided Italy with three scholarships «which were awarded, in agreement with GUF, to Orazio Graziani, Francesco Beduschi and Pierfranco Gaslini».

In addition to these grants, there were other four scholarships being paid by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the Ministry of National Education. Even in this case the ministers relied up the Ufficio Centrale dei GUF which was legitimized to nominate the four young students¹⁷¹.

In this process there was also the active participation of the PNF (National Fascist party) with Starace who wrote a letter to Paolucci de Calboli, at that time minister plenipotentiary in Geneva, informing him that July 24th would arrive the students who won the scholarships to attend the courses at the Zimmern’s school. They were Giorgio Molfino, Renato Calabi, Erberto Casagrande, Giovanni Piazzola, Francesco Beneduschi, Pierfranco Gaslini, Orazio Graziani and Giuseppe Nardi. The group leader nominated by the fascist party was Giorgio Molfino from the GUF of Genova: «I assure you that all of them were indoctrinated according to what your experience had suggested. Please, help them with advice and moral support». From a reminder for the State secretary it is possible to extract the names of the students who used the scholarships from 1928 to 1932: in 1928 there were Dino Gardini and Renato Trepiedi; in 1929, Alfredo Grillo and Giulio Santoni; in 1930 Enrico Rizzini and Luigi Guerriero; in 1931 Carlo Mason and Giorgio Picon, in 1932 as mentioned above Erberto Casagrande and Giovanni Piazzola.

¹⁷⁰ In the case of 1932 Zimmern met the president of Italian commission Alfredo Rocco during the first international conference for the scientific study of international relations in Milan. During that meeting Zimmern urged Rocco to make known the names of those students who would attend the Geneva courses. This is why Rocco wrote to Grandi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in order to pressure him to give an answer. (ASMAE, letter from Rocco to Grandi).

¹⁷¹ Giovanni Piazzola (GUF Verona), Erberto Casagrande (GUF Venice) (scholarships from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Giorgio Molfino (GUF Genova) and Renato Calabi (GUF Verona) (scholarships from the Ministry of National Education). ASMAE, Direzione generale affari Società delle Nazioni, Federazione internazionale universitaria per la Società delle Nazioni; corsi annuali a Ginevra presso “Bureau d’études internationaux e borse di studio a studenti italiani dal governo.

Thanks to this transnational mechanism which involved the League of Nations, the International Committee of Intellectual Cooperation, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Educations as well as the GUF, Pierfranco Gaslini were able to go to Geneva in 1932 in order to attend the Geneva School of International Studies. From this experience he wrote a book, published in 1933 with the title *La società delle nazioni in pigiama*¹⁷². The text reflected his willingness to produce a salacious critique about the whole mechanism represented by the League of Nations. It is important to notice though that, even if the “pamphlet” is full of ideological and acritical statements, the final aim was not to destroy, once and for all, the League of Nations and its *raison d’être*, on the contrary there was an attempt to better understand it in order to find a way to reform the whole machinery.

The very title of this book is emblematic in this regard: *The League of Nations in pajamas* wanted to be an effective metaphor to highlight the inertia with which the intergovernmental body was working. What were the roots of this inertia and how, according to Gaslini, the League should have been adjusted in order to construct a new and stable international order?

Gaslini unashamedly, from the very beginning, pilloried both the delegates and the bodies of the League in order to criticize the particular idea that some of the representatives had of it. Gaslini was assertive in his condemnation of the work that the League had done until then: the whole mechanism put in place in Geneva was no more than a sand castle and its supporters were professors who lived in a dream world or, worse, they were represented as opportunists who were trying to scrounge from the League. Gaslini represented himself as a seasoned analyst of international relations, who saw in his younger colleagues nothing but unpreparedness and utopianism and in women a certain degree of blind naivety, while he showed more consideration in respect of representatives from the “old” Europe.

He depicted the courses at the summer school as a form of propaganda and indoctrination in which peace, League of Nations, democracy had to be the new North Star to follow.

Nevertheless, there was a section of the book in which Gaslini showed something more than a series of arguments against the League of Nations and let us to enter in his *forma mentis*: that is when he was reporting a speech during one of the meetings organized by the Geneva School of International Studies. The speaker was claiming that history had to be modified by a broader spirit of understanding and that the duty of experts and intellectuals had to be that of preparing peoples to be the new citizens of the world for an Universal Parliament of Humanity. A new system of alliances had to be made in order to mitigate national and racial rivalries. Gaslini commented the speech with irony saying that the discourse «*makes me want to come back to my country and to raise my hand to our professors, who taught us the historicity of war, its justification and its necessity as an instrument for the selection of the human race as well as a way to develop a nation*»¹⁷³

According to the speech made by the Geneva representative, historians had to write as they were impartial and objective: the simple idea of winners and losers had to be transformed in a single motion of civilization in which every nation was involved. This theory was an outright religion for Gaslini, especially tailored for naïve and opportunist people. Just to give an example about the image which Gaslini wanted to vehicle from his stay in Geneva, he reported to have been invited by a Danish representative to participate to a dinner organized by the International Alliance for Peace, in order to know its chairwoman. After a short and negative description of the members of the Club, Gaslini concluded saying that the Danish representative played him: «that swindler was paid by that hotel to recruit people in order to ensure a revenue to the activity». Nevertheless, the dialogue with this chairwoman helps to better understand how Gaslini wanted to be seen: «Fascist? Of course; for peace? Indeed; for Geneva? The future will give you the answer!». When he was taken to the hall in order to participate in a discussion, he described the experience as a warm and wrap hypnosis, «so that you can think that, after all, it is not so bad to stay in Geneva».

¹⁷² Pierfranco Gaslini, *La Società delle Nazioni in pigiama*, Casa editrice Giacomo Agnelli Milano, 1933.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, p.56, emphasis added.

He revealed a certain degree of appreciation to the way in which the French delegates were engaging with the problems in international politics even if he didn't like the content of that policy. Here can be found the "classic" polemic against France, «a nation which was more careful to respect treaties instead of being concerned about the wills of peoples». This was the key with which Gaslini opened up the principle of the self-determination of peoples expressed by Wilson. For instance, wrote Gaslini, as regards to the Anschluss, France was trying to avoid it with the wrong argumentation: the Anschluss was unlikely not because a treaty said so, but because it would have been an anti-economic move given the fact that the two economies are not compatible. In short, through these experiences, Gaslini wanted to make a quite clear point: despite all the pyrotechnic rhetoric displayed by Geneva and their followers, the more seasoned experts knew that the only right was that one imposed by force.

Gaslini then described the activities of the "little" League of Nations, meetings organized in parallel with the official one in which young delegates were involved in discussions about international problems. He criticized also this initiative: according to him, these meetings were useless, causing the false feeling that everyone could have been an expert in international affairs and fundamental for world peace. Once again he blamed the delegates of the League of Nations with their internationalism, saying that it was more valuable to follow the nationalistic arguments put in place by politicians and professors of their own countries.

The bottom line of his pamphlet was to warn people from the propagandistic activities of the Geneva organization: after this experience a lot of people would come back home praising the League and on the other hand blaming national governments, if this was the case «it means that the Geneva drugs have had the maximum effects».

Similarly, in the third chapter of his book, Gaslini criticized the bureaucratization of the League of Nations, fostered by officials who came from some branches of the public administration instead of the diplomatic carrier. He was very clear in his disapproval of the work of this class of bureaucrats: for them the important thing was to keep their job and not to promote the interests of their own nations.

Gaslini pinpointed a clear fracture between who resisted using the work at the League to promote national interests and who abandon himself to the bureaucratic tide which ultimately benefits France or Great Britain. He represented the Secretariat as a complex of opposing tendencies in which in the shadow of humanitarian issues were moving a tangle of nation-based interests.

Why Gaslini was so critical in respect of the League? The answer has to be found in his particular conception of the international life and the principles which sustain it: according to Gaslini even if in the legal field it can be claimed that every nation was equal to each other, in the political field there were differences which could not be overcome: the strongest would be the most admired and the most feared. The young Italian scholar went on to examine the delicate mechanism between Ministry of Foreign Affairs, delegates and League of Nations. In this circle the delegates were the weak link because in every negotiation they needed to be guided by the Ministry. But sometimes could happen that they were influenced by public opinion, described as a powerful force organized by newspapers which were vehicles of more or less clearly interests.

The problematic knot represented by the transmission of information from delegates and their respective governments, and the necessity to domesticate public opinion will constitute one of the major topics in Gaslini's reflection. He found that this delicate exchange of information was left at the mercy of newspapers, which were «owned by opportunistic people» who wanted to pursue their own personal interests instead of supporting national interests. It is quite clear that in Gaslini's mind the League of Nations had lost its international task, and it was becoming an instrument to justify particular interests. The manipulation of information in order to believe that the Geneva institution was doing well and it was the only lifeline for the people of the world was on the agenda of the League: «the man on the street imagines to be well-informed, while we guide him as we want through the construction of complicated systems of press and propaganda».

It emerges from the book on one hand Gaslini's categorically condemnation of internationalism, seen as food for naïve people or, even worse, as a justification for more opportunistic and particular interests, on the other hand he used this experience to study the functions of the League of Nations, especially the mechanisms of transmission of information among governments, delegates and the League. The latter issue would have constituted a terrain in which Gaslini was willing to dig deeper: from his standpoint he saw a sort of permanent distortion in the way in which information was constructed, that was an inextricable tangle of facts and propaganda in which he saw the new «*diplomacy of public opinion*¹⁷⁴».

His last section is dedicated to take stock of the work of the League after thirteenth years of activity. Gaslini noted that the League tried to apply the principles of the Covenant in order to free humanity from the threat of war, through a slow work of propaganda. It tried to improve international treaties, to limit national egoisms, to sustain international cooperation through an examination of those elements which could have seen as an obstacle to peace. But what was lacking, according to Gaslini, was an international conscience. The latter couldn't exist in the political field: «every people and state observes a pact until it corresponds to its own national interests in a particular historical time». According to him, every juridical instrument, even those put in place by the League of Nations, is affected by political facts and a real international conscience should be formed by this acknowledgement. The very idea of the League of Nations, said Gaslini, was in sharp contrast with the history of Europe. There was an effective antinomy between the desire to be safe and the willingness to expand and to lead the field. The humanitarian doctrine resolved the problem diverting the desire from a method which favored the struggle to a method which favored the mutual collaboration, stating that hegemony and injustice lead to instability and disasters. Gaslini was stuck with the idea that it was impossible to expunge the element of struggle, as the very concept of evolution implied it. He then referred to the complications about the conference of disarmament saying that even if the democratic ideology had a clear vision about armies and weapons, namely every nation should have had the necessary to defend itself and an international force should have been strong enough to prevent every nation from the use of its army against another one, a solution was far to be found. This was because there were fundamental resistances from great powers about the meaning of security and international arbitration, all in all every nation was skeptical to delegate vital interests to an international body.

In 1932 Gaslini would discuss his dissertation, under the guide of prof.Solmi, on article 19 of the Treaty of Versailles about the possibility for revising the Treaties. His educational path under the fascist regime resembled an original mix between a peculiar interests for international affairs, a significant awareness of the important role played by “the media” and the role which could have been played by public opinion, as well as a capacity in organizing and managing research and more in general intellectual work. Against this background his familiarity with the professors and students which formed the Faculty of Political Science of Pavia and his international experience in Geneva played a crucial role to establish Ispi¹⁷⁵.

¹⁷⁴ Ibidem, p.117, according to Gaslini «propaganda was wittily defined as the diplomacy of public opinion».

¹⁷⁵ Elisa Signori describes the atmosphere which surrounded the University of Pavia as a parole system (sistema di libertà vigilata) Signori, *Minerva a Pavia. L'ateneo e la città tra guerre e fascismo*, cit., p.119. Nevertheless it was characterized by more openness towards the outside world and animated by a willingness to study international problems in a scientific way. In this regard, Maggi claims that Ispi was, to some degree, a subsidiary of the Pavese Faculty, Maggi, *Politica e cultura e Pavia dal 1926 al 1935*, cit., pp.667-668. As the research will show the Pavese matrix will constitute an important part in the creation and development of Ispi, even if, especially after the entry of Alberto Pirelli as the President of the Institute, Ispi was subjected to important changes both in its organization and in its openness to new themes.

II Ispi, a think tank under the fascist regime? (1933-35)

The first steps of the Institute

The March 27th 1934, in the main hall of the University of Milan, the Institute for Studies in International Politics founded the official acknowledgment of the authorities¹⁷⁶. At the ceremony there was Gaslini's professor and friend Arrigo Solmi as representative of the regime. Solmi played a crucial role not only in educating the founders of Ispi but also as "facilitator" between his former young students and Raffaele Mattioli, the C.E.O of Banca Commerciale Italiana. Solmi wrote a letter to Mattioli as guarantor of Ispi: «Dear Raffaele, please receive the bearer of this letter [Gaslini], who will let you know about the aims and the function of the Institute for Studies in International Politics, recently born in Milan, which has the sustain of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and aims to study and disseminate important themes of foreign policy. I would be grateful if you give your support to the initiative¹⁷⁷.

As a matter of fact, the history of Ispi had begun one year before, as the first Charter of the Institute testifies. The first article of the Charter said that

it is founded in Milan an Institute with the aim to study and disseminate the problems of international politics [...] it is named Institute for Studies in International Politics¹⁷⁸.

In order to achieve these objectives the Institute undertook to collect documents, to form a file with all the relevant information about international politics, and to create a well-stocked library. In this perspective, Ispi was thought as an effective, up-to-date research center in which scholars had the opportunity to conduct "scientific" studies, thus contributing to the birth and development of the International Relations as an academic subject in Italy.

Secondly, the Institute undertook to disseminate knowledge of international relations, through the publication of journals cater for both scholars and a wider public. This activity was promoted by means of a series of conferences on specific issues of international politics as well as Italian foreign policy.

In article 5 there was a description of how the Institute was organized: Ispi was managed by a Steering Board formed by 7 members, from which a secretary and a treasurer were elected. The Board was formed by the very founders of the Institute: Pierfranco Gaslini (then elected secretary), Gerolamo Bassani, Annibale Carena, Alberto De Capitani D'Arzago, Gianpaolo Riboldi, Adriano Orlandi e Cesare Rizzini (then elected treasurer). The starting point of the Institute was a social fund of 25.000 lire. Moreover it is important to notice that even if already from the first Charter there was an article dedicated on the appointment of three auditors, this option would not be applied until 1943.

The second of February the Board decided to approve the program for the current year: the Institute had to publish a monthly journal «Rassegna di politica internazionale», a series of bi-monthly monograph «Problemi del giorno», and a «Annuario di Politica Internazionale». Gaslini took the responsibility to edit the first number of the journal, assigning to each member a specific area of study: Bassani and Riboldi for the economic part, Orlandi for the colonial and Oriental issues, De Capitani D'Arzago for the European topics.

¹⁷⁶ *Vita dell'Istituto*, in «Rassegna di Politica Internazionale», 1934, p.171.

¹⁷⁷ A.Solmi a R. Mattioli, Roma, 21 dicembre 1934, in Historical Archive of Intesa San Sanpaolo, patrimonio Banca Commerciale Italiana, (henceforth ASI-BCI) ASI-BCI, fondo CM 266, Soika Giovanni.

¹⁷⁸ Historical Archive of the Institute for Studies in International Politics (henceforth ASISPI), I 1 Statuti, busta 1, 1-5 «Statuti» 1935-49.

On February 12th Gaslini announced to the members of the Board that the Council granted Ispi, under a payment of 2.750 lire per year, with two buildings in Pizza Duomo n.21. Given the fact that the financial situation was problematic, they couldn't commit to new expenditure but «the secretary [Gaslini] announces that he has some furniture from his house, and a table, chairs which can be obtained from other bodies. Doctor Riboldi shall ensure the functioning of the electrical system through his electrician¹⁷⁹». It was again Arrigo Solmi who committed himself to find new funding for the Institute:

A. Solmi has promised to take care of the Institute by ensuring to gain grants from the government for 15.000 lire and precisely 5.000 from the Ministry of National Education and 10.000 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹⁸⁰.

The initiative had a considerable success among the political and cultural elites present in Milan, and the Institute ensured a wider advertising thanks to the space that national newspapers gave to this project. The «Corriere della Sera» celebrated the birth of Ispi as a sound and effective initiative, which would allow to know the foreign policies of other nations and the actual place occupied by Italy in this international game. According to the article:

The basis on which the Milanese association [sodalizio] was built were twofold: the interdependence between the political element and the economic one, and the certainty that the peculiar situation of every Country is connected, for clear as well as underground links, with a broader situation¹⁸¹.

Moreover, the newspaper pointed out the innovative ways in which the Institute was trying to study international affairs: the purpose was to go beyond a journalistic analysis of the international situation, achieving a deeper understanding of its dynamics. From the beginning Ispi was recognized as an Institute able to put forward a far-reaching portrayal of the international situation and its links with the foreign policy of every country.

The conclusion of the article sounded like an encouragement to continue its efforts:

It is good that a thoughtfully bunch of young scholars [pensoso manipolo di giovani studiosi] fosters comparison with other countries. Research of this kind provide useful insights¹⁸².

Despite the support of the “media” as well as the Milanese bourgeois class of politicians and intellectuals, Ispi had to deal with a precarious economic situation, which can be better understood through another article from «Regime fascista»¹⁸³. The newspaper provided a short description of the origins of the Milanese Institute: the article stressed both the economic difficulties that Ispi experienced in the begging as well as the Institute's peculiarities as it was a rare example of a private initiative which was performing useful public activities. The article made it clear that a better understanding of international dynamics was essential to conduct an effective foreign policy, giving the fact that the international environment had achieved a marked degree of complexity and relevance in which every state was trying to impose its political power in order to achieve better economic conditions. In this perspective, the article accused England for being the first country to exploit its political influence to organize economic and commercial activities in relation with its needs, leading to a situation in which every country was persuaded to begin an autarchic economic

¹⁷⁹IASISPI II.2 Consiglio, busta 14, 70- 75 «Verbali del Consiglio Direttivo» 1934.

¹⁸⁰ Ibidem

¹⁸¹ *Un istituto milanese per studi internazionali*, «Corriere della Sera», 14 marzo 1934 in IASISPI, IV.5, Rassegna stampa e rapporti con la stampa, busta 94, 738. «Articoli sull'attività dell'Ispi», 1934-1944.

¹⁸² Ibidem.

¹⁸³ The article was written on July 1938 on the occasion of the Second National Conference of Italian Foreign Policy held by Ispi. *L'istituto per gli studi di politica estera*, «Regime Fascista», 8 luglio 1938, in IASISPI, IV.5, Rassegna stampa e rapporti con la stampa, busta 94, 738. «Articoli sull'attività dell'Ispi», 1934- 1944.

policy with a consequent contraction of international trade. In short, the result was that there were some nations that had too little amount of gold and raw material and other nations that had too much of them. Once again it was emphasized that the research and the study had to be used to rectify this situation of injustice, so that the members of Ispi were immediately given the responsibility to bring out these contradictions to legitimize the demands of Italy's foreign policy as well as to solve this intricate international issue. As a matter of fact, the founders of the Institute had a clear idea on this issue: they were persuaded by the fact that it was impossible to go back to the previous liberalism in which international trade had to be reestablished without any control. According to them, the heart of the matter was no longer how to defend private interests or to let them develop without any restrictions, rather how to defend productivity and workers within the state as well as how to associate them with the activities of a national company. As a consequence, the point in question was how to defend economic national interests in a context in which private interests were subordinated to the well-being of the country. Economic activities could have carried forward by private companies but the ultimate end had to be the implementation in terms of money, prestige and status of the nation. In my opinion, this specific conception of the corporatist project would play a significant role in the development of the Institute as well as in its international political reflections. Ispi applied to be a place where the political, cultural and economic forces of the country could find a synthesis between their different interests, providing the foundations for the effective national unity that would lead to a greater Italy. This predisposition to become an instrument at the service of the state but at the same time the ability to propose new tools and skills for the political-ideological project of the fascist regime it represented the key factor which animated the members of the Institute and, to some extent, its collaborators. Its ambition to constitute a reference point for anybody who wanted to investigate and understand international issues, boosted the interest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which looked at Ispi for further information and vice versa members of Ispi collaborated with the government. Moreover a lot of young students as well as scholars went to Ispi as it provided a unique studies and research center where they could meet together and to study on the large amount of sources that the Institute kept.

In July of the same year Gaslini, during another meeting of the Board Committee, pronounced an important speech for the Institute's next future: he proposed a revision of the Chart «to give the Institute a new physiognomy more suitable to the duties to which it plans to carry out», transforming it in an "Ente morale", namely an Institute with its own legal personality able of owning and operating its own assets. Gaslini wanted to take the Institute in a new level but in order to be successful Ispi had to be accompanied with a new and attractive program likely to stir the sympathies of the government. The members proposed a new cycle of conferences and the creation of new initiatives for secondary school students. Also the location had to be changed: it was necessary to establish the headquarters in a bigger and more decent site in order to be able to host all the members, by enabling them to use the library and all the information service available.

The early history of Ispi saw in Pierfranco Gaslini and Gerolamo Bassani the most active members who were trying to find some help both from the Milanese environment and from the government in Rome, while the connection with the Faculty of Political Science in Pavia seemed to be in constant decline.

This choice to privilege contacts with Milan and then with Rome instead of continuing a closer cooperation with the University of Pavia is quite clear from the changes occurred in the direction of the first journal «Rassegna di Politica Internazionale», as well as in the new initiatives undertaken by the Institute.

The first collaborators of the Institute, specialists in the field of international relations, they were all linked to the Faculty of Political Science of Pavia: Rodolfo Mosca, Ugo Longinotti, Renzo Sertoli Salis, Mario Toscano, Cesare Grassetti and Federico Curato.

This first group reflected the interests and aspirations of the Pavese Faculty and it was a lively mix between young professors who were already known for their intellectual capabilities and young scholars who obtained a second degree in Political Science, ready to launch new initiatives.

Rodolfo Mosca, who had studied under the guidance of Arrigo Solmi, in 1933 was a highly appreciated specialist in international politics and law, who taught history of Treaties and diplomacy in the University of Pavia during the academic year 1931-32. Mosca

after graduating with a thesis on Hungary, he participated to the Committee “Friends of Hungary”, constituted in Milan in 1928 and chaired by Dino Alfieri [...] in 1936 was appointed as professor of Italian civilization of the University of Budapest, as well as director of the Institute of Italian culture from the same university. Being a skilled professor perfectly integrated in the fascist regime, Mosca represented the typical figure of a university teacher who was working outside Italy in the interwar period, entrusted by the government, with the purpose to present “scientifically” fascism as the natural consequence of the nation-building process, started with Risorgimento¹⁸⁴.

The scholar would be one of the first promoter, together with Pierfranco Gaslini and Gerolamo Bassani, of the first journal of Ispi «Rassegna di politica internazionale».

Renzo Sertoli Salis taught colonial law in Pavia. He was born in Varese in 1905 and gained two degrees, the former in law at the University of Milan, and the latter in political science at the University of Pavia¹⁸⁵. He would participate in the activities of the Institute as collaborator and member of its board, at least during the first part of its story¹⁸⁶. These two scholars gave an essential intellectual contribution to the first numbers of the journal: thanks to their specific expertise Rassegna showed a particular interest to international themes and an openness to extra-European dynamics¹⁸⁷.

Cesare Grassetti was born in Milan in 1909 and he gained a degree in Political Science at the University of Pavia in 1932¹⁸⁸. He would become one of the most important professor of civil law in the Italian post-Second World War¹⁸⁹. Mario Toscano was born in Turin in 1908, achieving a degree in the same Faculty in 1931. Toscano would become one of the most important Italian historian of International Relations, a protagonist of Italian political and cultural scene of the twentieth century¹⁹⁰. He was raised in a conservative-liberal bourgeois environment which had welcomed the establishment of the fascist dictatorship, entering in the GUF of Novara as secretary. Then he gained his first degree in Law at the University of Milan, and finally he obtained a second

¹⁸⁴ S. Santoro, *L'Italia e l'Europa orientale. Diplomazia culturale e propaganda 1918-1943*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2005, p.106. Vedi anche ASUPv, fascicoli docenti, fascicolo di Rodolfo Mosca.

¹⁸⁵ Renzo Sertoli Salis played an important role in elaborating a new “racist” Italian colonial law different from the Enlightenment egalitarianism. In one of his book *La giustizia indigena nelle colonie* (Padua, 1933) he explained how the Italian juridical system sought inspiration in a “differentialist” criterion based on the principle that there is not a unity of the nature of man, and that it is impossible to unify the world under a same political, administrative and civil regime. According to Sertoli Salis as the assimilationist theory was declining, it was needed a differentiation between the codes and jurisdictions intended for citizens and those intended for subject populations: «the topic of racial diversity formed the core of differentialist arguments and led to an evaluation of the “civilizational gap” on which the legitimation of domination and the separation of juridical space in the colonies were based». Olindo De Napoli *The legitimation of Italian colonialism in juridical thought*, *The journal of modern history*, Vol.85, n.4, pp.801-832.

¹⁸⁶ ASUPv, fascicoli docenti, fascicolo di Renzo Sertoli Salis

¹⁸⁷ R.Mosca, *La crisi in estremo Oriente*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934, pp.29-36; R.Sertoli Salis, *L'indipendenza delle Filippine*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934, pp.93-111.

¹⁸⁸ with a thesis titled «Se e in quale misura il diritto internazionale formi parte del diritto interno dell'Inghilterra e degli Stati Uniti d'America», ASUPv, fascicoli studenti, fascicolo di Cesare Grassetti.

¹⁸⁹ One of his student remembered him as a mentor, who was able to «instill his love of research to a large group of students and all of them became university professors» edited by Roberta Clerici, *Gli ottanta anni della Facoltà di Giurisprudenza*, Giuffrè editore, Milano 2006. Cesare Grassetti taught at the University of Cagliari, Catania, Modena, Parma and Milan.

¹⁹⁰ Luciano Monzali in his interesting book on *Mario Toscano e la politica estera Italiana nell'era atomica*, Le Lettere, Firenze 2011, underlines the importance of the Italian historian since the end of the Second World War, a scholar who tried to put together intellectual reflections and the experience of doing international politics as a diplomat. Toscano was deeply marked by the political events occurred between the two world wars: his support of more integrated continental and transatlantic processes were mixed with values and traditions of the previous period, with a traditional conception of nation and of state sovereignty.

degree at the University of Pavia, under the guidance of Arrigo Solmi, with a thesis dedicated to the reconstruction of the diplomatic negotiation of the Treaty of London drawn up in 1915. In 1930 he spent a period of study in Geneva at the Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales, in order to collect new documentary material for his studies and to improve his knowledge on issues of international politics. The Geneva experience was useful and meaningful for Toscano, as he had the opportunity to come into contact with a more open atmosphere compared with that one created in the Fascist Italy and it allowed him to enrich his own cultural perspectives.

Toscano was entitled to teach diplomacy and history of treaties and in 1932 he tried to enter in the diplomatic carrier, being rejected because of his family's history¹⁹¹. As a consequence he fully involved himself in the political and academic carrier: he published his thesis with a preface of his mentor Arrigo Solmi, showing a proximity with strands of nationalistic matrix near to fascism. In agreement with the liberal-nationalistic perspective of Solmi, he considered in a positive view the work of Sidney Sonnino and his choice to take Italy into the war. Fascism's watchwords were accepted and followed by Toscano, especially the myth of mutilated victory, criticizing the geopolitical approach of the previous diplomatic class, because of its little concern for the Mediterranean framework, as well as towards Italian needs of colonial expansion.

In those years Toscano was very active with regard to both historical studies and cultural organization. He taught at the University of Turin and in 1933 together with a bunch of graduate students from the Faculty of Political Science of Pavia he was one of the founders of Ispi, especially collaborating for the launch of «Rassegna di Politica Internazionale». In his writings he showed a strong support for the expansionist directives of the fascist foreign policy, even if it is possible to find between the lines of his work a wish for a reconciliation between Italy, France and Great Britain with a certain degree of distrust of Nazi Germany. In his work there was a particular attention to the role played by public opinion on foreign policy, and a careful study of colonial literature. All in all, it was clear the adhesion of Toscano to the imperialistic directives of the fascist regime and its policy of colonial expansion. An example can be found in one of his works, *Gli accordi di San Giovanni di Moriana*, a volume dedicated to the collections of Russian diplomatic documents published during the interwar period, accompanied with the consultation of Italian diplomatic papers. Talking about San Giovanni di Moriana agreements and the subsequent failure to apply them by France and Great Britain was used to defend on historical level the political reasons of the international action of the fascist regime during the Ethiopian war, showing how at the origin of fascist expansion there was the fact that Italy had been hindered by its allied powers in the effort to realize its colonial aspirations after the war. The link between study, historical research and political events was a constant concern for Toscano. In 1934 he wrote about the necessity to create an Italian tradition of scientific studies on International Relations in order to provide Italy with better instruments, through the cultural education and the publication of works as well as the selection of a skilled diplomatic and political staff. The aim was to create those conditions for an improvement of Italian actions in the field of international relations, defending its own national interests. We can assume that Toscano's view of the fascist regime was similar to those fascist personalities of nationalistic and liberal-national origins, such as Arrigo Solmi, Amedeo Giannini and Gioacchino Volpe: fascism was understood as an authoritarian regime, instrumental for the fully realization of the Italian State, able to put forward the process of integration of the masses with the state organization, preserving order and social stability within itself, and capable of transforming Italy in a great power at international level¹⁹².

¹⁹¹ The suicide of his father was considered as a symptom of mental instability,

¹⁹² At the end of 1938 with the adoption of the racial law in Italy, Toscano was ostracized from the political environment, even if he wasn't totally isolated from the Italian cultural environment. As a matter of fact, the implementation of the racial laws represented for Toscano the beginning of a process of removal from the Mussolini's regime. See the above mentioned book on Toscano written by Monzali and Di Nolfo, *Gli studi di storia delle relazioni internazionali in Italia*, «Storia delle relazioni internazionali», 1986, n.2.

These were the scholars who created the first numbers of *Rassegna di Politica Internazionale*, representing the first and interesting standpoint from which Ispi reflected upon the international situation and the Italian foreign policy.

Why did they produce this journal, how did they structure the various sections and what were the topics chosen by the members?

According to the text written at the beginning of the first number of the journal:

Rassegna [...] wants to be a faithful review of all events and problems which in this precise historical period affect the living conditions of the peoples. Articles will be characterized by [...] those elements of objectivity and equanimity [serenità], which are the most important forces for peoples aspiring greater goals [...] that objectivity which will be achieved through the variety of collaborators and assessments¹⁹³.

The journal had to fulfill the aim of linking a scientific research made on documentary material with the creation of a more precise information for the Italian diplomatic staff, addressing with more farsightedness the foreign policy of the regime.

The journal was structured in two parts: the first part was formed by the critical assessment of the various collaborators and their different methods of investigation. The second part will be dedicated to the documents, which will guarantee the objectivity of information. This is why:

A serious study of the foreign policy can't be conducted without those which are the crucial products of foreign policy itself: that is documents, understood in their broader sense¹⁹⁴.

Finally, there was a section dedicated to notes and "Cronache" which would be used to give a sense of coherence to the structure. In this way the journal hoped to offer a complete overview of the international situation to the reader. The first number of the journal reported a kind of manifesto in which it was stressed the changes in the structure of international relations, highlighting the role of scholars and observers, alongside diplomats, in making foreign policy. The journal stressed the importance of a series of institutes such as the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, the Council on Foreign Relations and the Foreign Policy Association in the United States, the Institute of Pacific Relations in Honolulu, the Japanese Foreign Policy Association in Tokyo and the Magyar Kulugyi Tarsasag in Budapest which were experiencing a sharp development. This was taken as a sign that the sphere of international affairs had climbed over the fence of the old politics and that alongside with the development of the civilization, the intensification of media, and the growing interdependence of different markets, a new public opinion wanted to be informed on such problems from which depended the peaceful development of the international society.

In this discourse Mussolini and Fascism retained a place of honor, being considered the architects of the increase in prestige of the Italian nation in the international environment. This is why, from the point of view of the Institute, it was essential to disseminate an adequate political culture on international affairs both for a general public and for a more specific auditorium:

the world now is no more conceivable divided and isolated in different parts: it is a unity of interests even if not of ideas [...] there is an interdependence between political and economic factors; there is an interdependence among nations, so that a particular situation is nowadays the consequence of a broader situation.

Italian public opinion had to know how international forces were composed and developed because of its new role in the political chessboard of nations:

¹⁹³ Text written by the Board and placed at the beginning of the first number of «*Rassegna di politica internazionale*», cit., pp.3-4.

¹⁹⁴ Ibidem.

the Institute operating with organically and in accordance with the actual circumstances will show and will disseminate all the problems which concerned the international field [...] the Institute is born alive and vital: alive because it is managed by young people, vital because will act according to a well-thought plan [...]

Showing the correspondence of views between the old nationalists, then converted to fascism, and the young founders of Ispi Arrigo Solmi wrote the broader context in which Ispi would be called on to work. Along this general line Arrigo Solmi was invited in writing his thoughts about fascism and the studies in international politics¹⁹⁵. According to Solmi, Fascism realized Italy's desire to be a great power with global interests, so that it was necessary to provide scholars and politicians with the opportunity to examine the right path to follow in the international environment: the task was to make the study of international relations as a widespread discipline in order to both contrast the dilettantism which surrounded the subject and to disseminate its insights beyond a very small number of specialists. As a matter of fact, it was necessary that

the public opinion was properly guided; that all the elements useful for judgment were collected and rightly understood in order to find the right way forward.

Italy's actions couldn't be restricted within its national borders and its interests in the Mediterranean sea, rather it had to gain knowledge and use its influence in «Europe, America and Australia», following the lines of its emigration.

Solmi in those years gained a reputation for his studies in diplomatic history, using color books¹⁹⁶, including the tsarist diplomatic documentation published in those years. As always, the approach was that of an exaltation of the Italian foreign policy, but at the same time there was a great breakthrough in the study of the Italian diplomatic history between 1910 and 1915. Solmi was the first to recognize the importance of the relationship between Italian and Russian diplomacy in the context of the Libyan crisis and in the Italian intervention into the world war¹⁹⁷.

The young members of Ispi inherited the belief, widely shared by scholars like Arrigo Solmi, Gioacchino Volpe, but also Amedeo Giannini¹⁹⁸, Carlo Alfonso Nallino¹⁹⁹, that there was no contradiction between being affiliated to the fascist regime and pursuing rigorous studies based on a scientific understanding of history. On the contrary, they believed that was in the interest of the fascist government the development of a serious study of diplomacy and international politics.

Maybe the clearest reflection in order to detect the systematic interpenetration between scientific research and political reasons in Ispi's activities is represented by Mario Toscano's article appeared in the first number of «Rassegna di politica internazionale». The diplomatic historian stressed the political importance of a better understanding of international politics, especially the origins of the First World War, proposing Italy as the best place where to study this matter with objectivity. «Italy» he affirmed «is the only great power which is free from any responsibility». Against this backdrop, Toscano encouraged Italian scholars to be more involved with the latest results of international historiography in order to develop a more solid national historical interpretation about the origins of the war. He believed that this work was necessary for political, scientific and didactic reasons. Political because Italy, as it was a great power, needed to take a firm position about this matter and to make its voice heard on the international scene. Toscano claimed that the general dissatisfaction with studies on international politics created a situation in which the official *vulgata* around these themes lacked of the Italian contribution: «all the German research has

¹⁹⁵ *Il fascismo e gli studi di politica internazionale*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», cit., p.7.

¹⁹⁶ They are collections, usually official, of political documents relating to a single subject. Such collections are published in various countries. the term colored books derives from the practice of binding the collections in a cover of particular color.

¹⁹⁷ Luciano Monzali, *Arrigo Solmi storico delle relazioni internazionali*, «Il Politico», Vol. 59, No. 3 (170) (Luglio-Settembre 1994), pp. 439-467.

¹⁹⁸ Chief press officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and keen observer of Eastern Europe.

¹⁹⁹ The founder of the Istituto per l'Oriente and an authoritative Italian Orientalist especially of the Arab world.

a political background behind the scientific surface. It is about to dismantle those aspects of the Peace Treaties which require a specific responsibility of the defeated powers. The question [...] is coming to light, should we be caught by surprise? But every political approach requires a preparation which is not yet in place». According to Toscano, the role played by Italy during the period between 1870 and 1914 was instrumental and it was unfair that «we have to study it exclusively from foreign books».

There was also a scientific aspect, that was «the need to publish and exploit the Italian diplomatic documents [...] it is time to draw attention to these documents from all scholars, so that this endless mine could be adequately exploited».

Finally, the didactical side, that is «an opportunity to modernize education programs of modern history in our Universities [and that] professors could reach in their courses until 1915-20». This was very important in particular to get young students interested in that particular historical period, so that they would be able to give their scientific contributions. For Toscano students needed to fill this militancy and this adhesion to a new historical climate: «no more procrastination which might prove a bitter taste. The alarm cry has been evoked. Italian scholars had to feel the important high political function which is requested by our homeland [patria]»²⁰⁰. He explained well how all the three areas had to be developed to the maximum, but it was also clear the hierarchical relationship between the three: for Toscano everything started from the political factor.

«Rassegna di politica internazionale» involved authors like Giuseppe De Capitani D'Arzago, a politician and businessman, as well as leading representative of the Milanese liberal conservative bourgeoisie. A follower of Salandra's policies, he became a fervent interventionist and after the conflict he tried to support a political bridge between Mussolini and the former Italian Prime Minister in order to put together all the different souls of the Italian right. As a matter of fact, he had been appointed Ministry of Agriculture during the first Mussolini's government, by imposing a conservative policy which helped the interests of landowners against the working classes. De Capitani d'Arzago supported Mussolini in the occasion of the Matteotti murder, which established his disagreement with Salandra and part of Italian liberals and a more and more confidence in the head of fascism. In 1928 De Capitani D'Arzago in addition to being President of Cassa di Risparmio delle province lombarde, he was also appointed *podestà* of Milan and vice president of the Senate, becoming one of the most important figures of the Italian financial world. His intervention within the pages of «Rassegna»²⁰¹ pointed out the way in which the Institute would have looked at the economic policy of the regime in relation to international trade. De Capitani D'Arzago's understanding of the international trade movements was oriented to support Italian export-oriented industries as well as to limit the pro-inflation policy with the justification that Italy was a country which needed to import raw material. His support in creating a new department under the control of the government (Ministero degli scambi e delle valute) with the task to manage foreign exchange as well as the control of currency exchange rates, showed a clear adherence to the institutional work done by Alberto Pirelli²⁰² in an attempt to regulate and increase the degree of centralization of decisions about the exchange with foreign countries as well as the growing connection between economic policy and foreign policy. In full agreement with the protectionist actions of the regime, in a world which was witnessing a continuous contraction of international trade he identified the root of the economic problem in excessive production costs and in prices, judged too law. In this way De Capitani showed his continued adherence to the Mussolini's deflationary policy, having a conservative view of corporativism as an instrument to ensure the free movement of capital within the State. The latter should have played more a coordinating role rather than to intervene directly in the economic field.

²⁰⁰ M. Toscano, L'Italia e la Kriegsschuldfrage, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934, n.1, p.69-70.

²⁰¹ Giuseppe De Capitani D'Arzago, Il problema delle esportazioni in rapporto ai sistemi monetari, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934.

²⁰² Alberto Pirelli in 1926 founded the Istituto nazionale fascista per il commercio estero.

Another strand of interest developed by «Rassegna» concerned the revisionist goals pursued by the regime. The arguments put forward in order to demonstrate the need to give a change to the international status quo established in Versailles were articulated on two fronts. On one hand the journal gave full rein to the Hungarian revisionism, hosting a series of articles from political and cultural figures of the Magyar state. The articles written by Ferenc Herczeg²⁰³ and Tibor Eckhardt²⁰⁴ represented a series of serious accusations against the politicians who decided on the future settlement of Europe in Paris. Indeed, the underlying objective of their writings was to highlight the iniquity represented by the Trianon Treaty, defined as a «true demonic work²⁰⁵», unable to provide the essential conditions for peace in the Danube area. As a consequence a revision of the Treaty was essential, through an Italian-French agreement with a veiled anti-German connotation. At the same time, Eckhardt was confident that a Hungarian-Italian cooperation was needed to guarantee a better future in the area²⁰⁶. The relationship between Ispi and the Hungarian political and cultural environment was further developed in the following months. It was Mario Toscano with a review of a book on the Trianon Treaty, appeared in the last section of the journal «Bibliografia», to reaffirm the fair principle of balance which inspired the Italian delegation in that occasion. He wrote that Orlando and Sonnino were operating without hegemonic aims and that the discussions developed in a not serious atmosphere in which Benes was able to win the support of the members of the Council with false statements²⁰⁷. This «special relationship» occurred between Ispi's activities and the Hungarian political and cultural environment lasted at least until 1935 when Alberto Pirelli took the presidency of the Institute and a dispute started between Gaslini and his collaborators from the University of Pavia.

The other front from which the journal was fighting its revisionist battle was constituted by showing the necessity to reform the League of Nations as well as to revive the Four-Power Pact, or as it was called by fascist rethoric «the Mussolini pact», for the stability of Europe. The articles written by Cesare Grassetti are exemplar from this point of view. The Italian scholar represented Mussolini as a wise and forward-looking politician who wanted to find a new European stability through the cooperation of greatest powers. In this perspective, the League of Nations was considered as a conservative institution with the task to preserve the situation brought about the Treaty of Versailles. Against this backdrop, Grassetti denounced a clear attempt on the part of certain political groups to use the League to dominate and control other nations, at the expense of an effective international cooperation. Why was the League of Nations not working? What were the causes which negatively affected the creation of a fair international organization? According to Grassetti the fundamental problem of the League was its attitude to solve political problems with a legal approach, which was considered by the Italian scholar as ineffective and irreconcilable with the new international situation. On the other hand, the Four-Power Pact had the capacity to put the issue in different terms giving priority to political aspects instead of legal issues. Grassetti showed a third way between the acceptance and the refusal of the existence of the League, saying that the problem was not the League itself but the very principles according to which this international organization was established: «the Mussolini Pact is not meant to impose any directives from the main four powers to any other states [...] the Pact recognizes that it is easier to reach an agreement

²⁰³ A well-known Hungarian playwright and a member of the conservative-liberal political movement, see Remenyi, Joseph, *Ferenc Herczeg, 1863-1954* (book review), books abroad 28.3 (summer 1954) p.301.

²⁰⁴ He was elected to Parliament in 1922 as a representative of the Independent Smallholders Party, during the period 1934-35 he served as Chief of Hungary's delegation to the League of Nations. Then he led the opposition in the Hungarian Parliament from 1935 until his departure for the United States in 1941, when Hungary joined the Axis powers. in order «to continue the fight against Nazism which had become impossible in Hungary» with the immediate goal being «to bring over at the earliest opportunity Hungary and her armed forces to the Allied side», M.Stout and Katalin Kadar Lynn, 'Every Hungarian of any value to intelligence': Tibor Eckhardt, John Grombach, and the Pond, Intelligence and National Security, «Intelligence and National Security», 2015.

²⁰⁵ Ferenc Herczeg, *Prima dell'alba*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934

²⁰⁶ Tibor Eckhardt, Il problema ungherese, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934

²⁰⁷ Bibliografia, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934, n.4, p.316.

in four rather than in fifty», taking for granted that every kind of interest was summarized by the very interests of the four Powers. Grassetti's thought supported a hierarchical vision of the international relations, so that the League of Nations had to change its attitude in order to deal with this reality: «until the international community [...] will not have a super-legislator [super legislatore] which dictates under coercion its own solution to all states, it is clear that an international conflict cannot be solved from above, and that the only solution will be the consensus of the interested parties²⁰⁸». Grassetti showed a clear appreciation for Mussolini's proposals, stressing the fact that international community had to decide to follow either a hierarchical conception of international relations or a consensus-driven policy, and that the former path was the only concrete possibility to solve the impending international issues at stake. To sum up, Grassetti believed that the Mussolini pact was the only way forward to reach an agreement between different nations which naturally pursued different interests: once again it was emphasized the political realism of Mussolini in conflict with the legalistic view of the League of Nations. In another article Grassetti pressed even stronger in the supposed contradiction between the legalistic approach of the Geneva body and the international reality which was more dynamic and elastic. As long as this contradiction was not solved, according to Grassetti it was better to rely on external mechanisms, bypassing the League of Nations, in order to solve international issues. In short, for the Italian scholar the problem of the League was how to launch a serious program of reforms, which had to fulfill the nationalistic aspirations of Italy and the group of revisionist countries, and at the same time to preserve its principles which relied upon the fact that all the members should have agreed upon a proposed solution. The passage here was quite important as it denounced the fact that if on one hand it was true that until the invasion of Ethiopia, the diplomacy of the fascist regime was trying to find a compromise between its aspirations and the international system established in Versailles, on the other hand there was a more profound ideological tension between a foreign policy based on democratic principles and the foreign policy promoted by fascist states: «who, like us, has a faith in the hierarchical principle as the only possible system to save the international system and a specific idea of freedom, it is more than justified to state the validity of such a principle in the field of international law [...] such a conception was condemned by some groups of French public opinion which distrusted a Directory formed by the greatest powers». Grassetti considered the Mussolini pact as a guarantee of national autonomy as opposed to every political project which was trying to superimpose a political and juridical system. In his conclusion he stressed the fact that the problem was not who was acting as delegate to the League of Nations, rather «in the actual political framework of international affairs, which is impossible to ignore if we want to build on the real situation²⁰⁹». In another article Cesare Grassetti returned to the issue of the reform of League of Nations. He denounced the fact that the League adopted a clear policy of status quo and that there was a clear intention not to use article 19 in favor of a revision of the Peace treaties. He cited the work of Giulio Diena²¹⁰ who had investigated specifically if article 19 was an efficient reform tool in order to avoid conflicts and at the end his answer was positive: «the failure to implement article 19 is not because of a congenital inability of the Covenant, rather there is a political reason; in short [...] the appropriate means exists, but it was not used²¹¹».

²⁰⁸ Cesare Grassetti, *Patto Mussolini e Società delle Nazioni sotto il profilo dell'equilibrio politico europeo*, «Rassegna di politica estera», 1934, p. 25.

²⁰⁹ Cesare Grassetti, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934 p.158

²¹⁰ Giulio Diena was born in Venice in 1865 and he taught international law at the University of Pavia from 1924 to 1935. He was cited by Grassetti as “internationalist” and he was the Italian representative in a several international commission at the League of Nations as well as at the Hague in order to codify and to reform International law.

²¹¹ C.Grassetti, *La revisione dei trattati e l'art.19 del patto della Società delle Nazioni*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934, pp. 411-419. In the preceding numbers Grassetti had already dwelt upon this issue. See C.Grassetti, *Patto Mussolini e Società delle Nazioni sotto il profilo dell'equilibrio politico europeo*, p.23-32, and *La Società delle Nazioni*, p.156-58.

Grassetti wanted to analyze the issues posed by this article through a new standpoint asking what article 19 meant about «treaties which have become inapplicable²¹²». According to Grassetti the concept of inapplicability should have understood in a more comprehensive terms including not only juridical conditions, rather political one²¹³: according to this view, the Four Power Pact was the most viable solution to unfreeze the Geneva mechanism and to satisfy the demands of the won powers, thus ensuring a more stable peace.

Another aspect which was taken up and developed by «Rassegna» was the effort to corroborate the friendly relationship that had been established with the British government, through the willingness to host some writings from the British conservative environment. The first article of this type to appear between the pages of the journal was written by Muriel Currey²¹⁴, an active figure in the field of international relations, who was particularly attracted by Mussolini's personality as well as by the political project of the fascist regime. Moreover, Muriel Currey was part of a small group, briefly attached to Chatham House, which studied the Corporate State and included Harold Elsdale Goad²¹⁵, James Strachey Barnes²¹⁶, Charles Petrie²¹⁷.

Miss Currey was trying to point out how the fascist foreign policy was perceived by the British government. She admitted that at the beginning the views of the British in respect of Mussolini were quite negative, especially because of a distorted information promoted by national newspapers. Currey fully supported the way in which the fascist regime was conducting its foreign policy saying that the two nations (Italy and Great Britain) had converging interests and they could contribute to guarantee a peaceful future. Italy's actions in international relations were claiming for stability: in her words, during the negotiations for the Disarmaments Conference, Grandi was the true «apostle» for disarmament and Mussolini represented the only statesmen in Europe who was able to positively influence Hitler's government. She stressed some points of common interest between Italy and Great Britain the first of which was the preservation of Austrian independence. She concluded saying that «in a Europe dangerously disturbed by the war and its consequences, the friendship between Italy and Great Britain is one of the few secure and stable things: it is one of the guarantees for world peace²¹⁸». She wrote a widely distributed book titled *Italian foreign policy, 1918-1932*, with a preface by Luigi Villari in which she provided readers with an account for Mussolini's diplomacy. The book was positively reviewed by John W. Wheeler-Bennett²¹⁹ in «International Affairs²²⁰», writing that the book «provides an admirable study from the Peace Conference to the present day, the chapters dealing with Franco-Italian relations being of especial value and interest. She approaches her subject in a benevolent but unbiased attitude. She leaves facts to speak for themselves and draws a clever comparison between the foreign policy of lethargic post-war Italian liberalism and that of the most robust and virile fascist regime²²¹». He concluded

²¹² The Covenant of the League of Nations, article 19 « The assembly may from time to time advise the reconsideration by Members of the League of treaties which have become inapplicable and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world».

²¹³ In this perspective Grassetti didn't agree with Diena who saw the issue of the revision of treaties within a broader juridical problem, rather he wanted to underline the political mechanism behind the applicability of this article.

²¹⁴ She was the secretary of the All People's Association in Rome

²¹⁵ a British writer, journalist and poet. He was also Director of the British Institute in Florence.

²¹⁶ a British theorist of Fascism. He lived in Italy, becoming a member of the Partito nazionale Fascista and a friend of Benito Mussolini. He became the leader of the Centre International des Etudes Fascistes in Lausanne. See Matthew Feldman, *Fascism: the fascist epoch*, Taylor and Francis 2004 and Thomas Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939: Parties, Ideology and Culture*, Manchester University Press 2000.

²¹⁷ See Claudia Baldoli, *Exporting fascism: Italian fascists and Britain's Italians in the 1930s*, Stephen Dorril, *Blackshirt* and Julie V. Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism: Women in Britain's Fascist Movement, 1923-1945*

²¹⁸ Muriel Currie, *La pubblica opinione inglese e la politica estera italiana*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934, p.18.

²¹⁹ He was an influential conservative English historian, who also worked as the director of the Royal Institute of International Affairs' information department.

²²⁰ The journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

²²¹ John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1931-1939), Vol. 11, No. 4 (Jul., 1932), p. 562.

with a quotation of Villari's introduction «no-one who wishes to grasp the development of international affairs in the last years can afford to ignore Miss Currey's book». Another reviewer, Howard Rosario Marraro²²² from Columbia University, in the «American Political Science Review» wrote that «the chief merit of this study is the strikingly different picture it draws of Mussolini's foreign policy when compared to that painted by man who, as Luigi Villari points out in the preface, through ignorance and willful misrepresentation have created an atmosphere unfriendly to Italy. It is not denied that Italy's foreign policy, like that of the other nations, has been prosecuted on the basis of what her government officials have considered to be the country's best interests. But it is none the less true that Mussolini in his speeches has repeatedly, and with ever-increasing firmness, sought to make certain and safeguard the peace of Europe [...] not only Italy was one of the guarantors of the Locarno Treaty, but she has actually signed a greater number of international treaties than any other power since the war [...] in addition Mussolini has faithfully supported the policy for a reduction of armaments, and has collaborated with the League of Nations in its efforts to facilitate the economic recovery of Europe. Italy, finally, was the first nation to accept unconditionally President Hoover's proposal for a moratorium. It would seem, indeed [...] that, despite the aid which the Italians undoubtedly gave to the Allies during the World War [...] the Allies have since regarded her vital interests as things unconnected with their own. This is unfortunate. But it may be well to remember that if in the future Italy should succeed in adjusting her foreign policy to those interests which are far removed from those of her former Allies, they, and they alone, can be held responsible for her actions²²³. The only review which was quite critical with Currey's book was written by an Harvard scholar Robert Gale Woolbert. He judged her work as «on the whole an uncritical apology for Fascist foreign policy [...] accepting their own evaluation of Fascist aims and achievements, Miss Currey escapes the necessity of determining whether the action has always fit the word [...] her conception of Mussolinian diplomacy is much too sublime». Nevertheless he considered the book as «the best treatment of the subject from the Fascist angle», stressing the irreducible gap that separated those who accepted the «authoritarian state of the twentieth century» and those who thought that the only possible state was that one preached by «the good old liberalism of the nineteenth century²²⁴».

Another scholar who dealt with Anglo-Saxon policies was Enrico Bonomi. Analyzing his articles, it offers the possibility to better understand the way in which a non-fascist intellectual was approaching international issues in relation with fascist policies. Treating the disarmament problem, Bonomi considered its failure as the most clear signs that the League of Nations wasn't working well. He found two fundamental explanations: firstly, its willingness to produce universal treaties as if a single response could be the right one for in any situation, and then the principle of equality between all the member states, which in practice it is only an obstacle to find a viable solution. According to Bonomi the realistic thing to do was to let great powers with the responsibility to decide about the most important international issues «even if the aggressive war was condemned in several treaties, and it was enshrined the necessity of the international cooperation²²⁵» the program of disarmament failed to be implemented showing the artificiality of those positions. According to Bonomi «the sense of mistrust among peoples [who] fight with each other for dominance and survival is still the reality more alive and active in the field of international relations²²⁶». As a consequence three groups had been formed: defeated nations with Germany on the head which saw the disarmament as a useful thing to restart on an equal basis; winning nations which wanted

²²² He was an Italian-American historian who emigrated to the United states with his family in 1905. He studied at Columbia University, becoming full professor at the same University.

²²³ Howard Rosario Marraro, *American Political Science Review*, Volume 26, Issue 06, December 1932, pp 1125-1126.

²²⁴ Robert Gale Woolbert, *Italian foreign policy, 1918-1932*. Muriel Currey *Mussolini diplomatico*. Gaetano Salvemini *Le Fascisme à Genève*. Silvio Trentin *La politique fasciste et la Société des Nations*. Egidio Reale, «The Journal of Modern History», 1933 vol.5, n.2, 263-265.

²²⁵ Enrico Bonomi, L'Inghilterra e il disarmo, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», n.2, 1934, p.112.

²²⁶ Ivi, p.113

disarmament like Italy and England; winning nations which didn't want disarmament like France. In Bonomi's words, the English government was too passive in supporting disarmament, but it had its political reasons which had to be evaluated. On one hand it couldn't go against France in favor of Germany, especially with an international situation which saw the Japanese threat; on the other hand it had to take into account the attitude of its public opinion who interpreted arms limitation as an unjustified favor to Germany and Japan. The result of this situation was the re-armament of Germany. For the Italian scholar was clear that England was acting as if the best guarantee of peace was to maintain a good level of armaments, and Italy was just following this similar path. In conclusion both nations rejected the disarmament project for a more realistic political program in which a new militarization of their countries meant to be safer and to promote a realistic path toward peace. Finally, it was clear that Bonomi hoped for a more solid agreement between Italy and England, in the belief that a partnership between the two nations would allow a more realistic settlement of Europe. The general view of a conservative Europe stabilized by the Italian-English friendship was sustained also by Charles Petrie²²⁷, a conservative historian sympathizer with the British fascist movement. As mentioned above, during the 30s Petrie chaired alongside with Muriel Currey and Harold Elsdale Goad, the London Group for the Study of the Corporate State, an informal London group to study corporatism and its applicability to modern Britain²²⁸. In the article written for «Rassegna di politica internazionale» Petrie gave a voice to those members of British right-wing political environment who saw Italian-British friendship as a positive step towards the creation of a conservative Europe which was able to guarantee a sound balance and a peaceful international system. He underlined the fact that every foreign policy was conditioned by natural factors and that «in the case of Great Britain and Italy it is obvious that history, geography and economics called for a policy of close collaboration between the two countries, not only for the interest of these two nations, rather for the interest of a peaceful World». Within this perspective he sustained the Four Power Pact proposed by Mussolini believing that «the destiny of Western civilization depends on Italian-British friendship ... the issue of the revision of the treaties has to be done based on a policy of equality, not partiality. Barbarians are on our very doorstep and it is the duty of England and Italy to reject them²²⁹».

Alongside with the attempt to construct alternative and informal diplomatic channels which the involvement of a range of different non-state actors, «Rassegna» reported the writings of those scholars affiliated with the University of Pavia, such as Renzo Sertoli Salis and Rodolfo Mosca. If on one hand they tended to use the journal as a platform to promote their studies, on the other hand they introduced new themes to investigate, focusing on non-European matters. The latter focused on the stages of Japanese imperialism, assessing the anti-western character and the underlying objective to separate its sphere of influence from the West: «this is in contrast with the tendency to strike a balance within the international environment and it shows a hunger for power which [...] can't be coordinated within the scheme of the Western action²³⁰».

This article is representative of a shared way of thinking among Italian scholars in international relations for which the imperialistic attitude and the constitution of an hegemonic power within a certain area were legitimized only if they followed a specific Western path. Mosca's view considered Eastern culture as different and incompatible with the Western one. The former, being primitive and dangerous, had to be domesticated and initiated to the Western development model. Indeed, it represented a racial outlook which had a twofold result to legitimize Western imperialism and to reiterate the inferiority of other civilizations. In his conclusions he supported the

²²⁷ During the 30s Petrie flirted with the far right headed by Oswald Mosley and he wrote a short and respectful book on Mussolini in 1931. He attended the 1932 Volta Conference in Rome and during the late 30s he backed Chamberlain's policy of appeasement.

²²⁸ Patrick Glenn Zander, *Right modern technology, nation and Britain's extreme right in the interwar period*, Phd dissertation, Georgia Institute of Technology, May 2009.

²²⁹ Charles Petrie, *Le relazioni fra l'Italia e l'Inghilterra*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934.

²³⁰ R. Mosca, *La crisi in Estremo Oriente. Questioni preliminari*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934, p.34-35.

fascist regime as a mediator between «these two worlds» in order to establish a more complex international society.

It was clear that the members of Ispi saw the phenomenon of colonialism as a positive historical dynamic in which colonial powers were able to enrich and help their colonies to start a process of development. All the scholars who wrote for the Institute were sympathetic to colonialism, seeing it as a beneficial passage for the colonies. This emphasis on the positive aspects of colonialism and its reduction to a beneficial parenthesis was integrated by the “realist” assumption that imperialism always existed, so that colonial imperialism typical of the capitalistic powers lost its peculiarity. This is why the criticism towards England was not aimed at denouncing its imperialistic policy rather its selfishness which was causing problems to the willingness of Italy to implement its own imperialistic project. An attitude which was emphasized by the way in which Ispi treated Arabic/Middle East issues. Just to give an example Renzo Sertoli Salis published an *instant book* in *Problemi del Giorno* titled *Yemen*. He analyzed the firm British colonial policy in the Peninsula with the aim of conquering some strategic territories, describing its policy of *divide et impera* in order to better control the area. In this perspective the author emphasized the importance of the Italian-Yemeni treaty in 1926, writing that «the fact that now Italy is a great power and that it is no longer willing to follow British policy» was considered unacceptable by Great Britain.

In the meanwhile Mario Pigli, a publicist and political figure, wrote an article in which he pushed for a revision of the tripartite pact of 1906 between France England and Italy about their attitudes towards Ethiopia. He denounced the fact that Italy was not an active part of the agreement and that it could have been better to surpass it in favor of bilateral agreements which would left Italy freer to operate in Ethiopia.

This intellectual activism followed the fascist conception of Italian foreign policy and the role which Italy wanted to play in the international scenario. As a matter of fact, in the same period «Foreign Affairs», the journal of the Council of Foreign Relations, hosted an article written by Dino Grandi on the foreign policy of Mussolini, in which the fascist minister emphasized the way in which Italy was «deceived and defrauded» at the Paris conference especially by France and the political consequences of these actions. He depicted an international public opinion which

is beginning to ask how statesmen could have parceled out immense colonial territories without any regard for the only one of the Allies for whom the pressure of population was creating a vital and urgent problem. How could statesmen, when distributing colonial mandates, have seen fit to entrust these to Great Britain, France, Japan, Belgium, South Africa, New Zeland and Australia, and none to Italy? ... why, in short, should Italy, who had been a loyal member of the victorious alliance in the war, have deliberately been thwarted and made discontented?²³¹

According to Grandi even if Italian representatives committed some mistakes in Paris

but this does not alter the fact that the men who represented England, France and the United States were fundamentally lacking in any understanding of Italian needs. They failed to realize that Italy was a young and active country, entering in a new phase of demographic and economic development, and that she was animated by new spiritual values which were to take shape in a much more vigorous conception of the future of the nation and the role of the state²³²

Grandi wanted to clarify that Mussolini’s foreign policy was not only aimed to a mere correction of the diplomatic results of the Paris Conference, and the fact that Italian people had been particularly interested in the question of the revision of treaties was due «to its own painful experience at the Peace Conference». According to Grandi, the duce felt from the beginning the necessity on «incorporating the Italian question in the vaster and more general problem of a revision

²³¹ D. Grandi, *the foreign policy of Duce*, «Foreign Affairs», 1934, p.553.

²³² *Ibidem*.

of the principles upon which the peace settlement had been founded», so that «Italy's vital needs» were seen as one factor of the European problem, «which demands a single organic settlement²³³».

These needs were incorporated and channeled by Rassegna which tried to put Italian questions in a broader context in which not only other revisionist powers but also other interests and international dynamics were playing an important role.

In the first numbers of Rassegna there was also a specific section called “news²³⁴”, in which the Institute wanted to make known, «with objectivity and accuracy of data», the most important events of the international environment, already filtered, contextualized and linked to each other in a historical perspective from the members of the Ispi's Study Office.

Rassegna from the beginning was thought to be an innovative instrument to better understand international affairs, both through an effort to write article accessible also to a general public and with the publication of a series of documents for the benefit of scholars and specialists. Moreover, it can be detected an effort to broaden Italy's view from the classical concerns of its foreign policy in the Adriatic, Mediterranean and Danube area to a series of extra-European topics and considerations. Finally, it is quite important to underline the total consciousness to link a serious scientific study with political and didactical aims and the effort to introduce a well-rounded approach in the study of the Italian foreign policy and its position within the international system.

As a matter of fact, the Institute began with a series of concrete a diversified initiatives with the goal to concretize what a bunch of students had created just a year before. Those activities would prove to be successful not only because of propaganda reasons rather thanks to the relevance of their initiatives which for the first time would try to tie up some of the most challenging issues of Italian political and cultural history.

The threefold objective of «Rassegna», which was the attempt to develop the political, scientific and didactic knowledge connected to international politics, didn't prevent the Institute to engage with current Italian foreign policy issues. As a matter of fact, the journal tended to focus on a specific topic, establishing a thematic structure. For example the second issue of «Rassegna» was entirely dedicated to the Rome protocols, a series of three international agreements signed in Rome on 17 March 1934 between the governments of Austria, Hungary and Italy. The journal underlined the diplomatic success represented by the Rome protocols as their aims were to revitalize economically the Danube area within a broader political architecture promoted by the fascist regime inspired by the *do ut des* philosophy. This aspect was particularly emphasized by Rassegna which saw the abovementioned approach as a concrete and viable way of conducting international relations: «every international agreement [...] has to be a *do ut des* that is a mutual exchange of interests [comunità di interessi] which allows to assess if a political friendship is worth it or not». According to the journal this agreement aimed at strengthening the European economic system and consequently its political stability. The protocols enshrined Austria's independence as a fundamental element in maintaining peace; moreover they «represented a new method of administering the current international situation, in order to resolve the existing problems»²³⁵. It was clear how Italy was trying to solve the “Danube issue” without involving the diplomatic machinery of the League of Nations, instead the fascist government promoted a series of bilateral agreements in which the key players at stake were nation states and their interests rather than the universalistic approach, which required a unanimous agreement, promoted by the League.

Alongside with the publication of the first numbers of Rassegna, Ispi was continuing its activities concerning several important issues. Annibale Carena published with the Institute the first book of the planned series “Problemi del giorno” on the subject of the interconnection between politics and post-war Constitutions. This first book had to be followed by Rodolfo Mosca's work on the Saar issue and the second one by Renzo Sertoli Salis on Yemen. Moreover, the library was

²³³ Ibidem.

²³⁴ Le Cronache.

²³⁵ Initial remarks written by the editors, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934, p.85.

enriched by new publication and collections, involving League of Nations' books, journals from foreign institutes and some of the most important newspapers from Europe.

The structure of the journal assigned to the first pages of «Rassegna» the analysis of the most important international events, offering a political as well as historical perspective on the issues. The variety of the expertise was assured, at the begging, thanks to the skilled collaborators coming from the Faculty of Political Science of Pavia. It was the case of Federico Curato, who treated the delicate issue of the diplomatic-commercial relations between Russia and Italy²³⁶. Curato emphasized the fact that even if in 1923 Italy was the first nation disposed to recognize Soviet Union in exchange of a favorable commercial treaty, nevertheless he was not optimistic for the future of Italian-Russian relations. First of all because of the Russian industrial development which would cause a contraction of Italian goods in Soviet Union and then because of its imperialistic policy «Slavic is expansionist par excellence²³⁷».

The last section of the journal, titled *Bibliography*, provided the reader with a general review of Italian and foreign books regarding international issues. Apart from the review in itself, examining this section is useful to better understand interests, aspirations and goals of Ispi. How did the Institute welcome a foreign study about a specific international topic? Did Ispi have a tendency to favor a specialist study or it preferred to promote “educational” books for a broader audience? Judging from the chosen books and from the content of the reviews, the Institute welcomed those Italian studies which were trying to submit to a general public a broader study about some important international topics. For instance a book like *England today*²³⁸ written by a young Carlo Giglio, was positively reviewed by Mario Toscano who praised the author for his ability to synthesize a complex issue, offering an overall view of a series of problems: «our historiography lacks this useful political landscape [...] it can help to better understand the inner meaning of certain English issues».

«Rassegna» was trying to follow closely the international political events, giving voice to the experts and leading figures from the international field. Indeed, in the second half of 1934 the journal focused on the murders of Engelbert Dollfuss, the Austrian Federal Chancellor, who was assassinated as part of a failed coup attempt by Nazi agents in July 1934. Dollfuss was described by John Gunther (an American journalist famous for his series of socio-political works known as the “Inside” books, including *Inside Europe*, 1936) at the beginning of 1934 as «the political darling of Western Europe²³⁹». The ambition of Dollfuss was to allow Austria to live alone, becoming a nation permanently neutral, peaceful and self-sufficient. At the beginning of 1934 Gunther saw that the fear of Hitler had drawn Italy and France closer together and the Powers knew that «his [Dollfuss] stand was a test case for the whole peace treaty structure. Dollfuss, by opposing Hitler, made Austria in effect a state committed to a status-quo rather than a revisionist policy; and other states, watching Dollfuss, have been inclined to dilute the pure liquors of their revisionism. This is especially true of Italy, who [...] does not want the Prussians on the Brenner. Nor do any of the Powers want to encourage Germany in further adventures in prestige politik²⁴⁰». Then Gunther made an interesting parallel between Pilsudski who prevented communism from overspreading Western Europe and Dollfuss who was standing against Nazi. «Should Austria go Nazi, then

²³⁶ For a complete analysis of the diplomatic relations between Italy and Soviet Union see Tonino Fabbri, *fascismo e bolscevismo. Le relazioni nei documenti diplomatici italo-russi*.

²³⁷ Federico Curato, *Italia-Russia*, «Rassegna di Politica Internazionale», 1934, n.3, p.174.

²³⁸ Carlo Giglio, *Inghilterra oggi, CEDAM*, 1934. Giglio wrote especially about the colonial policy of European Great Powers. His more valuable works were dedicated to the contemporary history of Italy or England, and after the Second World War he gained the first Chair in History and Institutions of African-Asiatic countries at the University of Pavia. Following the subtle judgment of prof. Giampaolo Calchi Novati «his articles written in the period in which the dates appeared also in Roman numeral were objectively affected by political consideration, both internal and external» Giampaolo Calchi Novati, *Colonialismo e indipendenza dell’Africa nell’opera di Carlo Giglio*, «Africa», LVII,2, 2002, pp.225-241.

²³⁹ John Gunther, «Foreign Affairs», Jan 1934, p.307.

²⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p.318

Hungary and Czechoslovakia, even Switzerland, even Denmark, may feel the Hitler hammer [...] Austria was the objective of the first attack. It failed. But it was a lesson. Europe gives thanks to little Dollfuss²⁴¹». A supporter of Dollfuss' policies was Fritz Grossmann, an art historian born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, who left Vienna after the Anschluss for London where he continued his studies. He promoted Dollfuss's political design to constitute an independent catholic Austrian state, maintaining good relationship with the other countries which had been under Austro-Hungarian domination. He saw in Hitler and in his work *Mein Kampf* «a declaration of war by Germanism to the entire world²⁴²» and the need for a joined European action in favor of the independence of Austria: «friendly relationship between Austria and Italy, the commitment to the Mussolini Pact, the protocols of Rome, all of these diplomatic acts can be useful to understand Dollfuss' foreign policy: a common policy with Italy which means common policy with Europe [...]»²⁴³.

In order to calm the «Nazi beast» and to pacify Europe for Grossmann it was necessary to allow Germany to positive solve the Saar issue, but it was also crucial to sustain Austria, forcing Germany to abandon its «terroristic» policy against its German-speaking neighbor. The author was sure that the new chancellor Schuschnigg would continue Dollfuss' policies in order to guide Austria ever closer to Italy and its idea of reshaping the European political system. While «Rassegna» seemed to promote a moderate international policy, supporting Austrian efforts to rebuild its political autonomy, at the same time the journal hosted an article written by Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg, an early Nazi supporter of the Protestant faith²⁴⁴, and German diplomat who served as the last German ambassador to the Soviet Union before Operation Barbarossa. In his article he gave shows of all his anti-Semitism, writing about the demonic attempt of Jewish people to ruin German civilization «the salvation is represented by the restoration of the myth of the ancient German people [...] all economic and political problems must take second place before this issue». In the same way, other articles appeared written by German authors in which they were concern to differentiate the totalitarian Italian state with «our racial state» and saw Hitler's seizure of power as a clear dividing line in which the new leader represented not only a head of government but a religious entity, a man who embodied «a state, a people and a Church».

In the meanwhile, something began to change even in the way in which the regime tried to promote its presence in the international field, especially towards Italian communities abroad. From the second half of the 20s, the regime implemented a general process of centralization and political control, which went hand in hand with its attempt to «fascistize» the Italian society and its institutions²⁴⁵. Nevertheless, it was with the beginning of the 1930s that fascist propaganda directed to foreign countries acquired new forms and aspirations, paving the way for more specific and organic interventions. The proclamation of the universality of fascism as well as the issue of the exportability of its doctrine constituted increasingly insistent arguments and they contributed to push towards a more efficient organization of the fascist propaganda abroad. Against this backdrop, it was crucial the role played by Galeazzo Ciano, who was appointed at the press office of the head of the government in 1933. He expanded the functions of the office with the establishment of a specific section for the activities on propaganda abroad: in this perspective, the new body represented a qualitative leap in the field of control of public opinion formation processes. In September 1934, «Rassegna» reported in the first pages the transformation of the office in the «Sottosegretariato per la stampa e la propaganda», confirming the importance of this new office in order to offer a guideline to follow and to favor a more informed propaganda «propaganda which doesn't mean a mere preachy dissemination [mera divulgazione predicatoria] of a set of ideas; but, in a fascist way, with a brave and calm objectivity an exposition and information about what is true

²⁴¹ Ibidem

²⁴² Fritz Grossmann, *Dopo i recenti avvenimenti in Austria*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934, p.317. , p.316.

²⁴³ Ibidem.

²⁴⁴ He was member of the Order of Saint John, the German Protestant branch of the Knights Hospitaller.

²⁴⁵ B.Garzarelli, «Parleremo al mondo intero». *La propaganda fascista all'estero*, Edizioni dell'Orso 2004.

for the Revolution, about what it is true for the fascist Italy. So, active work in order to clarify and rectify equivocal maneuvers. Even here a moral and political function, which are intimately connected to each other²⁴⁶». Even experts in international relations had to feel the moral need and the political opportunity, as well as the technical capabilities to feel connected with the unitary effort of the Nation «wingmen, and exactly because wingmen extremely aware of the necessity to have a deep discipline, internally and externally²⁴⁷».

From this number the institute decided to add a new section named “Profili” in which there was an effort to put together a short biography of some of the most important political figures of that time with the aim to make them known to a broader public . The first to be chosen was Hindenburg who, according to Varo Varanini, was a faithful servant of his country, great commander and the man who organized perfectly the German army so that «it seems the German Empire to be defeated rather than its army» during the war. Greatly admired by Varanini, who judged him a wiser and inflexible leader, Hindenburg found in Hitler both a man who was able to channel passions and interests of the German people and an extremist to be “domesticated”. Unfortunately Hindenburg’s death caused a first dramatic tension between Germany and other states and according to Varanini a deviation from the political path followed until then, so that «today without him there will be a lot of uncertainties along the way».

Towards the end of 1934 it appeared an article written by Rodolfo Mosca about *Italy, France and Europe*. Mosca stated that the post-war relationship between Italy and France were not satisfying because of a series of prejudices, clichés and mental habits which tended to make the political atmosphere between the two nations somehow cantankerous. According to Mosca this is because of the lack of mutual knowledge of the real life conditions, problems and interests «as a consequence we were not able to address the continuous demonstrations of ignorance showed by French in understanding Italian problems²⁴⁸». Italians and French people judged each other with absolute and abstract categories which were out of history, but contributed to construct of an Italy incurably affected by machiavellism and a France destined to be ruined by the lack of newborns and moral principles: «it has been forgotten that the foreign policy of each country is the eternal expression of the political activity produced by states. Individuals, as organs, realize this activity but the subject of it remains the state. Now, assessments on the relations between Italy and France were affected by too subjective preconditions». Mosca claimed that it was a «mistake to judge the relations between states, only taking into account that a State is fascist, democratic or Bolshevik», and quite unexpectedly, he stressed the complexity of the international environment and the unstable equilibrium which structured a foreign policy between the necessity for a single state to follow its aspirations and the fact that every nation is linked with one another. In this perspective, it was not difficult to understand France’s needs to be the strongest continental power in order to defend itself from Germany, as well as to affect the new post-war European order to preserve its interests: hence its support for the inviolability of international treaties, the aversion towards revisionism and its conservatism. On the other hand, Italy won the war but not the peace: «it didn’t have an important role at the Peace Conference. When it tried to make its voice heard it was disregarded and it left the room forgetting that absent are always in the wrong. The fact is that domestic weaknesses reflect themselves on international relations²⁴⁹». Mosca saw in the post-war Italian diplomacy an excess of pro-slavism which thought to come to term with them without a previous agreement with the other great powers: «in this conditions it is clear that France thought for herself without taking into consideration our friendship». The Italian scholar saw Fascism as a cultural and political force which was able to give Italy back her reputation, «it was not possible to become a second order power, after having conquered with our blood the right to be a great

²⁴⁶ It is the introductory piece written by the Direction in the occasion of the establishment of the “Sottosegretariato della stampa e della propaganda”, *Rassegna di politica internazionale*, 1934, p.378.

²⁴⁷ Ibidem

²⁴⁸ Rodolfo Mosca, *Italy, France and Europe*, p.447.

²⁴⁹ Ivi, p.453.

power²⁵⁰»: peace by means of justice were axioms of the fascist foreign policy, and the political guideline of the Milanese Institute. On these basis derived the principle of the equality of armaments with the major continental power, the adhesion to revisionism, the mistrust of international mechanisms which were designated to avoid these kind of issues and then the offer for a genuine cooperation with every nation. In short, the truism of Italy as a great power which had the right as well as the duty to reshape the international environment according to its interests and needs was deeply felt by these scholars, contributing to make their writings even more demanding and pretentious. As a consequence Mosca really believed that in order to reach a peaceful relationship between Italy and France, the latter had to be aware of the changed political reality which saw the new leading role played by the Italian nation. Moreover, he underlined the growing demand on the part of some of the nations vanquished in the War for the revision of the territorial clauses of the Peace Treaties but at the same time the scholar claimed for Italy a legitimated influence in the Danube area which was regularly frustrated by the French foreign policy. It was clear the desire of fascist Italy to bolster its presence in the Mediterranean as well as in the Danube area, and the efforts produced by «Rassegna» were directed towards the reaffirmation of this truism. In this perspective, Mosca believed that in order to demand “justice” for Italy it was essential to review the Italo-French relations in terms of equality, but the fact that the French government would agree on these basis remained to be determined.

As the year was coming to an end, Ispi promoted the inauguration of its courses and lessons with a prolusion of Giacomo De Martino who would officially represent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Then there would be a series of conferences held by Paul Einzing, director of the Financial News, as well as a sequence of public meetings about the most important Italian Foreign Policy's issues, such as disarmament, the Balkan and Danube situation, and the Mediterranean issue.

In particular, an analysis of De Martino's prolusion²⁵¹ represents an interesting opportunity to see what kind of issues were touched by the Italian Ambassador and above all, how Ispi was considered by the governmental environment as De Martino was chosen to represent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. De Martino was one of those political figures with a high degree of knowledge about foreign and international politics and his personal experience created a deep interests in the activities of the founders of the Institute. First of all, he framed the work of Ispi in a broader context saying that these kind of institutes had been founded all around the world with the twofold task of helping their respective governments and at the same time to develop a mutual understanding between nations. In short, De Martino understood the role of these Institutes as valid tools in order to make public opinions of different countries aware of the specific problems in international politics, by eliminating those misunderstanding which could have caused divisions and clashes. De Martino showed a clear awareness that in those years diplomatic relations were affected by the role played by public opinions and media: «once journalists were considered as extremely dangerous people [...] but now these outdated ideas disappeared [...] I have considered journalists as collaborators, because there is no possible foreign policy if you don't have the consensus of the public opinion and if you don't know how to play with the keyboard of public opinion's flows. Today, it is recognized by all, that the flows of the public opinion are instrumental for the diplomatic game. As a consequence, you have heard statesmen and political figures to talk about open diplomacy [...] this means to leave useless mysteries in favor of a direct relationship with public opinions». According to De Martino, open diplomacy acquired a particular meaning related to the capabilities of a country to talk directly to public opinions. During his stay in the United States the Italian ambassador got the impression of a strong national public opinion which was very interested to European issues and as a consequence all European countries were vying in order to attract «this force in foreign policy, that is the American public opinion²⁵²». There was a general optimistic attitude in respect of United States and its policies: not only because Italian-Americans

²⁵⁰ Ivi, p.454.

²⁵¹ Giacomo De Martino, *Prolusione ai corsi per l'anno XIII*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934.

²⁵² Ivi, pp.532-33.

«constituted a link of mutual understanding between the two nations», but also because with the implementation of the New Deal Roosevelt demonstrated to accept a new system and to condemn old principles²⁵³.

It is quite interesting how De Martino pointed out a clear change in the way in which governments were dealing with their foreign policies and, more in general, with international issues: over the years the effectiveness of diplomatic actions were also measured with respect to the degree of cooperation and influence they were able to establish with public opinions, especially with the press. Ispi had the task to study and disseminate these aspects of the international life, and it had to continue to implement its eclecticism, including «some savage lands [...] but also some tidy garden consisted of sophisticated diplomatic flowerbeds ...». Also De Martino showed to agree with the activism impressed by fascist foreign policy in the field of international relations, stating that even if «I recognize international law as a crucial instrument for diplomats and political scientists» nevertheless «international law has to be adapted to facts», namely legislation had to follow politics and not vice versa.

In the meantime, the Institute was moving from the narrow location in Piazza Duomo to a bigger headquarters, with reading rooms provided with political newspapers (a hundred) and a wide range of journals (almost three hundred). The Institute was organizing a richer library, and the creation of a database filled with documents and news regarding the most important international issues with a specific bibliography. In addition to this, it was formed sub-committees of specialists in order to investigate more accurately political, military, judicial and economic problems. Ispi announced also the publication of a new journal «Le Relazioni Internazionali», which will be produced with the beginning of the new year. This journal was supposed to be less academic than «Rassegna», and suitable for students. Finally, it was decided to begin new collections dedicated to historical, political and economic problems with a particular focus on documents and important cultural/political figures who shaped the field of international relations. The underlying ambition was to produce series of volumes which somehow would try to appeal not only an elite of scholar but the public at large²⁵⁴.

Pierfranco Gaslini on the occasion of the inauguration for the new cultural year read the first public report about the activities of Ispi, nine months after its inception in Milan:

we would like to state the nature of Ispi: namely an Institute which marries science with propaganda. This means to disseminate, with the most suitable instruments, the problems facing peoples, the power of the fascist state in the world, the issues to which the young generations will have to deal with in order to pursue the work of one man. Science and study are for the accuracy of data, for research and for the correct interpretation of documents [...] the Institute acts within the directives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: regular contact with the Cabinet, a prior approval of our program from the historic-diplomatic Office, thanks to Colonel Mazzolini who keeps the Institute in touch with the Ministry, all of this makes us confident to produce a useful work in order to reach out to a wider section of the population: to inform in order to guide could be the motto of our Institute. Foreign policy can be affected by some oscillations but immutable data, historic, economic, geographical which guide it, they have to prevail on temporary events. Hence every intemperance should be suppressed and a rigid discipline should be applied especially in the field of studies, if we want to reach useful results. The institute has followed the directives and its research has been considered as something useful for the nation, the presence of S.E De Martino proved this. We consider his presence not only a reward but also as a responsibility which will be satisfied²⁵⁵.

Gaslini pointed out that the program of the Institute was systematically carried out, that the journals and other materials were regularly published, and that several activities were distributed in different offices: «7.800 volumes had been placed in the library, at the documentation Office receive official publications from governments, 95 political newspaper from 18 nations, 83 journals

²⁵³ Aldo Maria Marzio, *il significato delle recenti elezioni nord-americane*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934.

²⁵⁴ Vita dell'Istituto, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934.

²⁵⁵ Vita dell'Istituto, Rassegna di politica internazionale, 1934, p. 613.

from 12 nations, 10 journals dealing with military issues, 17 foreign magazines. All this material is placed at the library where every member can read it». Focusing on the publications, Gaslini stated that «Rassegna di politica internazionale» was starting to be reviewed by foreign journals and that the series “Problemi del giorno” was about to publish its fourth volumes²⁵⁶. Even if Ispi saw the establishment of a new and more decent headquarters and the recruitment of 15 members of staff, the director posed a new challenge for the Institute. The program for the new year included an implementation of courses and conferences, with the collaboration with other institutes such as the Istituto per il Medio e Estremo Oriente. Moreover there was a desire to implement the publications, thinking of a different journal more able to engage with students and a broader public. It was exactly with this aim that a monthly journal «Le Relazioni Internazionali» would start to get out from the following year. In addition, a second Annual of International Politics would have been published during next spring dedicated to extra-European, African and Asiatic issues. Those publications were drawn up by the hard work of the Study Office which included some of the most trained specialists in international relations. All in all, they were feeling to fulfil a national task «with our desire to be the young authors of Mussolini’s time».

The last number of the year hosted also the first articles of two of the most controversial figures who collaborated with the Institute: Luigi Salvatorelli with an article about the church’s institutional history and its relationship with the State and Giovanni Mira who analyzed the work of Lloyd George as prime minister. Mira judged him a skilled statesman as he was able to strengthen the home front and to lead his people to win against Germany: «the publication of the Lloyd George’s diaries is really important as all the works of this kind, it is the voices of the individuals which, by weaving together, allowed us to reconstruct the history of the peoples». Mira took advantage of this situation encouraging also Italian diplomats and politicians to write something about their experiences and viewpoints, otherwise there would be an even more imbalance between foreign memories and the Italian one: «this is why I appeal to the Italian officials, so that they could offer their memoirs before they leave this world».

Another topic which the Institute was particularly engaged was the Saar issue²⁵⁷ and with the plebiscite at the gate, Rodolfo Mosca wrote an article in which he pointed out all the complexities about that situation²⁵⁸. First of all, the Saar area was a territorial unit, so that even if majority and minority would present themselves in an uneven way it would have been impossible to divide the area in two zones. On balance, it was more likely a victory from the German population, but the most difficult thing was to understand «if Hitler will stop there or if a positive result would lead him to a new and even more serious threats in foreign policy». Mosca showed an agreement with the policy of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pierre Laval who stated the importance of consider the Saar issue as an international question to be solved with a general agreement.

As was mentioned above, Ispi promoted various and systematic studies which tried to shed new light on Italy’s position in the world of international relations. As a consequence, scholars were free to move from one topic to another, following the transformation of the international environment and disclosing to the Italian reader a new and to some extent complex image of the world, overcrowded by treaties, agreements, a different set of national mentalities, but also by

²⁵⁶ The first three were: *Il plebiscito nel bacino della Sarre* by Rodolfo Mosca; *Politica e diritto nelle costituzioni postbelliche* by Annibale Carena; *Riflessi politici del conflitto d’Arabia* by Renzo Sertoli Salis.

²⁵⁷ The penalties imposed on Germany after the First World War included the permanent or temporary annexation of territory, including the Saarland area of the Rhineland, which was rich in coal. Under a League of Nations mandate of 1920 the Saar region was to be governed for 15 years by a commission appointed by the League, while control of the coal mines was given to the French, who pocketed the proceeds as part of their reparations. With the mandate’s 15 year term ending, the League of Nations arranged a plebiscite which gave an overwhelming majority for rejoining Germany (91% of the voters).

²⁵⁸ Italy alongside with Argentina and Spain were chosen by the Council of the League of Nations as a committee guided by Pompeo Aloisi with the duty to study measures to ensure the regularity of the vote, to guarantee the safeguarding of the population, to study any suggestions for the maintenance of order during the period of the plebiscite.

international bodies, statements of solidarity and mutual understanding between nations, all in all an intricate international system with which it was not always easy to deal with and to find the right path to follow. Beyond some fixed points promoted by the Institute and its members, the plurality of collaborators and viewpoints hosted by «Rassegna» represented for itself an effort to look at the various options offered by the international environment alongside with an awareness of the complexity underlying every foreign policy, strengthened by the peculiar approach promoted by the Institute which was trying to mix historical, political, geographical and economic knowledge in the conduction of its studies.

The list of conferences presented by the Institute for the year 1935 pointed out exactly this attitude: Alberto De Marinis²⁵⁹ and Stefano Cavazzoni, both Italian delegates of the League of Nations, would talk about the disarmament issue and the problem of opium and drugs. Edmondo Tarjan would deal with the relationship between Czechoslovakia and the Treaty of Trianon while Paolo Orano would treat the interconnections between the press, foreign policy and Italy. Finally Aldo Valori, Carlo Sandri and Edoardo Scala would talk about the economic and political reasons of the war, with a focus on the years 1914 and 1915. Again, the public utility of this initiative was thought in close connection with an opportunity to advertise the Institute itself: the value of this cycle of lessons and conferences were meant not only to disseminate a better knowledge on the topics on the agenda but also to make people aware of the existence of the Institute²⁶⁰.

Gaslini was also really concerned with the organization of the library of the Institute: there was an effort to collect and systematize all the publications regarding international politics under every viewpoints: from the historical-diplomatic standpoint to the juridical, economic and financial one. Moreover, the collection was completed by memories of some of the most important statesmen, official documents and publications. At the end of 1934 the library contained 912 books, with some publications from the League of Nations and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs. In particular, the library had a static part where some of the most important reference books were located such as the Year Books or the Survey of International Affairs, and a dynamic part composed by periodical publications, journals and newspaper from European and extra European countries thanks to which an index was formed²⁶¹.

Moreover, the Study Office kept an information service with other institutes such as the Institut Colonial International of Brussels, Commission internationale de l'Elbe (Dresda), Commission Internationale de l'Oder (Parigi), Carnegie Foundation in Paris, the Unione Internazionale des Associations pour la Societe des Nations, the Bureau International de la Paix and the Bureau International du travail in Geneva.

In 1935 «Rassegna» saw a change in its internal structure: the first pages occupied by a section titled «Orientamenti», written in anonymous form by a member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which it was offered the unofficial version of the government about one of the dominant issues of the Italian foreign policy. In particular, the first number of 1935 reported the contents and consequences of the Italian-French agreement. The latter was divided in two parts: the first part was about a rectification of Italian colonies' borders and the extension of the convention of 1896 for Tunisia. The second part related with the Austrian issue and the common effort to guarantee the independence of Austria with the broader aim to find a better stability in the Danube area²⁶².

In the section «Rubriche e Note» appeared a review of a book on the Nazi foreign policy, in which the anonymous author of the remark stressed the importance for a scholar in international politics to study the domestic situation of every single state. An internal situation examined as a

²⁵⁹ He had a long experience as military attaché at the Italian embassy in Berna, Brussels and the Hague. He praised the work of the Institute, stressing the fact that «nowadays all countries feel the need to guide public opinion on the major themes of international politics, and all governments are concerned with the development of a cultural policy to be used to form the future ruling class». As a consequence, for him it was natural to sustain an Institute like Ispi which was trying to fulfill these goals.

²⁶⁰ IASISPI, IL.2 Consiglio, busta 14, 70- 75 «Verballi del Consiglio Direttivo», 1934.

²⁶¹ The total number of journals received by the Institute were 90, while the number of newspapers were 91.

²⁶² *Orientamenti*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», n.1 1935, p.2.

whole, mixing economic problems with the aspirations, feelings and hopes with roots lying in that specific nation's past. As a consequence, in order to write a meaningful book on foreign policy the political element should have been linked with the diplomatic one, grasping the feeling of the masses as well as understanding the innermost feeling of people. From this reflection, the article concluded that Nazi foreign policy was lacking of realism, conducting a series of actions without worrying about the consequences: «the transfer of ideals and ways of actions from the domestic to the international field it is not foreign policy but a dangerous adventure²⁶³».

At the beginning of 1935, Italy was at the center of the diplomatic discourse in Europe and it was searching for a general consensus in order to fulfill its aspirations: from the first number of the journal it is possible to find a recurrence of words such as common action, compromise mixed with the necessity to satisfy the “natural aspirations” and the “natural development” of Italian people.

At the same time, Ispi was trying to find its own place in the political and cultural environment promoted by the regime, being confident that it would be able to offer a new and reliable way in the study of international affairs as well as in the formation of a “more informed” public opinion. Gaslini on one hand were able to win the confidence of some key actors of the fascist regime and on the other hand he endorsed a continuous development of the Institute. As a matter of fact, at the end of 1934 the steering board would leave Gaslini alone at the head of the Ispi with the aim to transform the Institute from a local entity to a legally responsible body with national duties²⁶⁴.

Having created the basis for the formation of the Institute, for Gaslini it was time to push further in order to put Ispi among «the most important bodies of study and propaganda at the service of the regime». In order to achieve this goal the members had to make the Institute more attractive for an ever increasing number of people. The next Steering Board should have functioned as a stimulus for a set of new initiatives:

the distrust and the suspicion, the skepticism emerged in certain circumstances, natural logic of the lack of knowledge about the environment and the terrain on which the Institute has to rely upon, they must disappear²⁶⁵.

The program of the Institute would include an intensification of a promotional campaign, especially regarding the publication of the journals and an attempt to strengthen the links with the top figures of the regime in order to obtain a political help.

Moreover, Ispi decided to host a section of All Peoples Association, a global association with sections all over the world, with the aim of helping foreign scholars with their studies in Italy.

The new steering board was formed with the same members: Pierfranco Gaslini, Annibale Carena, Gerolamo Bassani, Adriano Orlandi, Mario Toscano, Renzo Sertoli Salis, Carlo Vaccaro, Alberto De Capitani d'Arzago, Gianpaolo Riboldi and Alfio Biondo, the new treasurer of the Institute who took the place of Cesare Rizzini. The financial situation was precarious, nevertheless Gaslini was confident to have done a good work: he had hired a new staff and he had organized new offices as well as «given a new direction to the journal, trying to increase its prestige»:

At the end of October Bassani and I went to Rome and we were told to follow specific guidelines as the intervention of Suvich for the conference in memory of Dolfuss showed²⁶⁶.

The conference, held on 21st November 1934 by the Austrian Foreign Minister Berger Waldenegg «about Dolfuss' effort of reconstruction», it was the first national event promoted by the

²⁶³ *Rubriche e note*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», n.1 1935, p.40.

²⁶⁴ Gaslini stated «I will arrange [...] a Charter which will set the aims and the duties of the Institute, by giving it a national stature», IASISPI, II.2 Consiglio, busta 14, 70- 75 «Verbali del Consiglio Direttivo», 1934.

²⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

Institute, which boosted its popularity within diplomatic circles, a meeting on a subject so sensitive which required the presence of the undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fulvio Suvich²⁶⁷.

The highest point of the Institute was reached in December when some members of the Steering Board gained an appointment with Mussolini:

On 20th December was an historical date for the Institute: we went to the head of the government; Carena and Bassani can testify the welcome. The head of the government gave us specific directives: to invite important political figures, even foreign representatives to held a conference for the Institute, to continue along this path, growing in Milan and then spread out into other cities, maintaining the headquarters in Milan²⁶⁸.

A support was also obtained from the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Propaganda «as a sign of sympathy sent us a contribution of L.25.000²⁶⁹». Gaslini then turned his attention to the internal organization of Ispi, saying that it was appointed as director of the Study Office Giovanni Mira, «he is a person with a lot of experience and he will fit for purpose²⁷⁰». Mira was known to be a critic of the regime, and from the beginning this choice would testify all the difficulties and the contradictions which Ispi would have faced during this period, fluctuating between the proudness to serve as a useful instrument for the regime, and its willingness to pursue a scientific and systematic analysis of foreign affairs.

The last issue discussed at the meeting of the Steering Board was the opportunity to establish an office in Rome, so that it would have been easier to maintain direct contacts with the government and the Embassies. Gaslini was in favor of such proposal as from the beginning he tried to strengthen the contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the other hand, Annibale Carena was averse to endorsing the creation of an office in Rome, pointing out that it would have been enough to have a person who could keep contacts between Rome and Milan:

Having an office in Rome we will oblige to become the Study Office of those people [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] we have to avoid to put ourselves in that situation [...] it seems to me that the Ministry is trying to infiltrate a bit too much into our Institute in order to unload some responsibility to us²⁷¹

Even Federico Curato was worried about a possible office in Rome, saying that in the worst scenario Ispi would have been swallowed up by Rome and its governmental circles. Toscano added that a place in Rome would have cost a lot, and that it would have been better for the Institute to consolidate in Milan, trying to attract there the best specialists in international affairs. Eventually, the hypothesis of an office in Rome was discarded, preferring to enlist a person with the duty to maintain contacts between the capital and Milan.

²⁶⁷ Suvich himself stated: «the place couldn't be more adequate. The initiative started from the Institute for studies in international politics, an Institute created by young scholars and it is making a great effort to attract Italian public on these issues», *Vita dell'Istituto*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», cit., p.692.

²⁶⁸ IASISPI, II.2 Consiglio, busta 14, 70- 75 «Verbali del Consiglio Direttivo», 1934

²⁶⁹ Ibidem.

²⁷⁰ Ibidem. Giovanni Mira was one of the most followed names by the Prefecture which was checking his actions and it reported everything to the Casellario politico centrale. Here we find this statement «although he is a fierce and determined opponent of the regime, currently his behavior doesn't cause any problem» Archivio Centrale dello Stato, *Casellario Politico Centrale*, b.3309, fasc. «Mira Giovanni di Francesco», rapp. N.028190 Gab. Pol. del 2 novembre 1930 del prefetto Fornaciari in Decleva, *l'ISPI di Milano e la Francia (1934-1943)*, cit., p.704.

²⁷¹ IASISPI II.2 Consiglio, busta 14, 76, «Verbali del Consiglio Direttivo» 1935

The expansion of Ispi between Pirelli and Gaslini

From analyzing the documents stored at the historical archive of Ispi as well as from reading the first issues of the journal emerges the desire of the members to continue with a program for developing the functions of the Institute, and the determination to find political, cultural and economic support in order to carry out a work that they believed to be crucial in forming a new and shared Italian political culture which should have matched the expectations of a great Italy. From this perspective, the meeting between Pierfranco Gaslini and Alberto Pirelli can be read as the perfect combination between a scholar/manager who was trying to channel and promote a new, specialized knowledge in international relations, combining different perspectives from the study of politics, culture, history and economics, and one of the most important captains of industry with a taste for the cultural element and a remarkable sense of duty for his country. Alberto Pirelli contained within himself three important features: he was destined, together with his brother Piero, to succeed to his father Giovan Battista to lead the family business, which had become one of the few Italian firms to be able to compete in the international market; he was a skilled businessman and diplomat²⁷² able to deal with the forces of the Italian government as well as with foreign representatives during the several post-war international meetings on reparations and debts; finally, he was a man genuinely interested in cultural and “pedagogical” activities, thinking that it was necessary to raise the quality of Italian ruling class and at the same time to guide more effectively public opinion in order to fulfill the aspiration to build a great Italy²⁷³.

In 1934 Pirelli was a man of international prestige and a well-known representative of the industrial as well as financial world. In particular, within the national borders he was considered as a key political and economic figure, holding the presidency of the Confederation of Italian Industry. Moreover, his peculiar nature led him to get involved in the most thorny international issues of that time, studying them as a businessman as well as a scholar. As a matter of fact, in 1913 while he was working in North Africa on behalf of Pirelli Company he wrote a letter for his father in which he revealed a sort of existential crisis and the willingness to concentrate in historical and political studies rather than to follow a business career²⁷⁴.

Pirelli's involvement with the activity of the Institute dated back to the founding of Ispi when he became a “socio sostenitore” sending L.1.000²⁷⁵.

The curiosity for the Institute led him to have some personal contacts with Gaslini who sent to him a detailed report to the Ispi's tasks as well as its budget²⁷⁶. Pirelli was immediately interested in the project, sending a memorandum of the activities of the Institute to the undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fulvio Suvich as well as to Galeazzo Ciano²⁷⁷. An assessment corroborated by the testimony of Giovanni Loviseti, one of the most long-lived members of the Institute:

it was natural that the invitation was accepted by Pirelli, even because he wanted to ameliorate the Italian ruling class, to get public opinion involved in foreign policy's issues, and to make known the Italian

²⁷² Before the advent of Fascism, he took part of the Italian delegation for the Peace Treaty of Versailles, and then he continued to play an important role as an economic expert in the Reparation Commission. In that occasion he was able to establish personal links with other foreign representatives, first of all John Maynard Keynes. See *Taccuini: 1922-1943, Alberto Pirelli*; a cura di D. Barbone, Il Mulino, Bologna 1984.

²⁷³ Sergio Luzzatto described Pirelli as a *glocal* entrepreneur: «local and global, at the same time» even if his nationalistic attitude emerged from time to time, especially during the Ethiopian war as well as when Italy entered the war.

²⁷⁴ For this point see N. Tranfaglia, *Vita di Alberto Pirelli (1882-1971). La politica attraverso l'economia*, Einaudi, Torino 2010, p.70.

²⁷⁵ IASISPI, I.2.1 Fondazione, busta 2, 7 Primi contatti fra Pirelli e l'Ispi, 1934.

²⁷⁶ IASISPI, I.2.1 Fondazione, busta 2, 10 Relazione per S.E. Pirelli, 1935.

²⁷⁷ IASISPI, I.2.1 Fondazione, busta 2, 11 Nota di Pirelli sull'Ispi per l'udienza con Mussolini, 1935.

standpoint to other nations. Ispi, which demonstrated to have a peculiar vitality, and it could have been that real center of study and documentation if only it had been provided with adequate financial means²⁷⁸.

Pirelli thought that Ispi could have been an effective instrument to influence the Italian political environment: the Italian entrepreneur saw the Milanese Institute as an opportunity to develop a broader understanding of international relations in Italy and to link this knowledge with the contributions from the French and British culture. He believed that the cultural element was instrumental in order to carry a diplomatic action through to a successful conclusion, because it helped to gain a broader view of the issue at stake, anticipating risks and consequences. Alongside with these cultural reasons there was, indeed, a more political aspiration to help Italy in its “natural” task to become a great power in the field of international relations. In this perspective, Pirelli’s thought was very similar to those figures which were working more closely with the regime both in the academic as well as political field: Gioacchino Volpe, Arrigo Solmi, Mario Toscano up to the nationalistic discourse of Alfredo Rocco.

Pirelli thought that thanks to his personal prestige the Institute could have followed an independent path from the government sphere «but in concrete to follow its directives²⁷⁹». Moreover Ispi could have become a serious research center, achieving in this way a world-wide high reputation among scholars, politicians and publicists. Its activities could have also used to inform diplomatic and consular representation, the Fasci all’Estero and the Italian chambers of commerce outside the country. Finally, Pirelli encouraged a further financial intervention of the regime²⁸⁰ so that Ispi could have both established more vigorously its presence as well as «to discourage the formation of analogous institutes and publications²⁸¹»

From the beginning it was clear that if on one hand Pirelli wanted to preserve the necessary autonomy of the Institute on the other hand he was searching for a public help from the government, and in particular from Mussolini himself²⁸², in order both to gain a broader financial basis and to ensure a sort of monopoly in that particular field of study. As a matter of fact during the 1920s other bodies with the task to study a specific aspect of international politics were established in Rome such as the I.P.O (Istituto per l’Oriente) and the IPEO (Istituto per l’Europa Orientale). The two bodies were founded in 1921 under the pressure of Amedeo Giannini, official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a keen expert of the various phases of Italian foreign policy. These two institutes were fully financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and developed within a context in which the eyes of Western powers were focused on the new states brought about the collapse of the central Empires as well as the Russian Empire. One of the most important members of I.P.O. was Carlo Alfonso Nallino thanks to which the Institute reached relevant results in the field of Eastern studies. While Giannini acted as a bridge between the Institute and the government, looking at the body as a useful instrument to produce an oriented information in order to tame public opinion as well as to support fascist foreign policy in those territories, on the other hand Nallino tried to shape the Institute according to the needs of a scientific research. Even if they had two different conceptions about the purpose of the Institute²⁸³, Giannini and Nallino were both willing to re-think Italian colonial policy in order to develop a more sophisticated actions in the East. For them, it was crucial to understand their peoples and believes, especially regarding themes such as Islam and the Muslim world, as a key element to produce a more effective administration of those territories²⁸⁴.

²⁷⁸ G. Loviseti, *I 60 anni dell’Ispi: uno sguardo alle origini*, «Relazioni internazionali», Ispi, dic 1993, p.90.

²⁷⁹ IASISPI, I.2.1 Fondazione, busta 2, 11 Nota di Pirelli sull’Ispi per l’udienza con Mussolini, 1935.

²⁸⁰ In the document he talked about L50.000 every year.

²⁸¹ Ibidem.

²⁸² The duke would contribute with L.100.000 every year, IASISPI, I.2.1 Fondazione, busta 2, 12 Finanziamento concesso all’Ispi dal Capo del Governo, 1935.

²⁸³ Giannini wanted to transform the Institute as a top advisor for the government, Nallino was animated by a more complex attitude, looking at the Institute as a critical stimulus for Italian foreign policy.

²⁸⁴ The analysis made by Santoro and Giro point out the ambiguous relationship between knowledge and power, between scientific studies and their manipulation in favor of the imperialistic aspirations of the regime and its

As Gaslini and the members of Ispi pointed out in several occasions, also Giannini considered the link between press and international politics as one of the key elements of these Institutes: they had the task to make the press less parochial and to guide themes and thoughts in international politics. Channeling the work of journalists along those “right” paths of foreign policy meant to avoid inappropriate deflections caused by ignorance and to tune the various voices to vibrate at a common frequency.

Nevertheless there were some elements which differentiated the two Institutes founded by Giannini and Ispi: first of all Ispi was a private initiative and, even if it received some funding by Mussolini, its links with the government were less clear than IPO and IPEO²⁸⁵. Moreover, its foundation in Milan and the desire to look at the capital from a distance, heavily affected the way in which it would develop, receiving a decisive help from Lombard financial circles which comprehended people who, for sure, were not among the first hardcore supporters of the regime such as Raffaele Mattioli and its Commercial Bank. Finally, among the first collaborators of the Institute there were scholars which founded or were educated in the newborn Faculties of Political Sciences in which the study of international politics was conceived as a whole, taking into consideration the entire spectrum of international relations and not only a singular aspect or area.

Therefore, behind the creation and development of Ispi it was built a meaningful collaboration between cultural forces, the political power expressed by Mussolini and some representatives of the government as well as a significant support from those circles within the General Confederation of Italian Industry which saw in Pirelli one of its leader. It will be interesting to see how this peculiar alliance would be implemented during the following years as well as when and for what reasons the first creaking started to appear.

In a new note for Pirelli, Gaslini exposed in details the functions of the Institute:

our Institute was created not only to disseminate and to inform but also to study. That is to develop a specialized center with a series of publications cater for different categories of people. It is about to form public opinion in the field of foreign policy which is missing in Italy, and this can be helpful especially for a regime like our own [...] there is nothing new about the recognition of the mistrust among Italian people which accompanies every choice in international issues; therefore, it is useful that there is a private Institute which, even if autonomous, tries to convince and to disseminate in those areas in which neither the apparatus of the regime nor the press can do something.

Ispi should have been considered

a center of experts, so that an assessment produced by the Institute in a certain political moment could have a great influence even outside national borders, almost a national point of view on a specific problem. Moreover it should operate as Study Office for the Ministry preparing those works and research which cannot be done by official bodies ... on the other hand the Institute should not be limited itself with the publications already in the program [...] publications which an editor can't do and that will free Italian scholars from foreign works which are always insufficient and tendentious towards our country.

Therefore, Gaslini suggested to develop a new kind of publications which had to talk about current problems: «the tone of the journal could be given by an article which had to represent a new contribution to the political and historical studies. We need to produce lively articles which talk about the current situation rather than bricks [mattoni] which reflect upon theory ... for the collaborations I would propose to accept only those articles requested by the Institute». The attempt of Gaslini was to present a program in which the cultural criterion should have been accompanied

propaganda, , M.Giro, *L'Istituto per l'Oriente dalla fondazione alla Seconda Guerra Mondiale*, «Storia contemporanea», 1986, p.11-39, S.Santoro, *Cultura e propaganda nell'Italia fascista: l'Istituto per l'Europa Orientale*, «Passato e Presente», 1999, n.48, p.55-78.

²⁸⁵ Ispi was not created by a legislative act of the political power, rather, as we have seen, from a private initiative of young students, which only later were helped by political or academic figures.

by an effective political weight, with a desire to make the publications more attractive for a broader public «taken for granted that we are working on a brand-new field²⁸⁶».

Pirelli convinced of the goodness of this initiative proceeded to take the presidency of the Institute sending a letter to the future members of the executive board: Raffaele Mattioli, Giuseppe Bevione, Giovanni Stringher, Gino Olivetti, Francesco Salata and Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata²⁸⁷.

In this way Pirelli linked to the Institute some of the most important Italian businessmen: Raffaele Mattioli was CEO of the Commercial Bank, Giovanni Stringher was CEO of the Italian Credit and Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata was the president of the General Confederation of Italian Industry from 1934 to 1943. On the other hand there were members more related with the political and cultural establishment of the regime: Giuseppe Bevione, a nationalist journalist with an expertise in foreign policy, who supported the interventionist front during 1914-15, becoming fascist after Mussolini came to power. He covered prestigious functions during the regime as president of National Insurance Institute. The other one was Francesco Salata, one of the most skilled historian during the fascist regime and an important reference point for Ispi. Salata, a former nationalist, shared with the members of Ispi a general support for the regime which was characterized by profound disillusionment of what liberal Italy had been as well as by the belief that fascism could have been the right instrument to transform Italy into a great power, fulfilling, in his perspective, the ultimate mission of Risorgimento.

As a consequence it was prepared a new Charter, with a meaningful addition of article VI which said «the institute is based on contributions made by members, bodies or companies, through donations²⁸⁸».

It was clear that the economic circles which gravitated around the Institute, accepted to take part of the financial support of the Institute. Article IX described the new organization of the institute which was mainly structured in three blocks: President, Direction and Executive Boards. The latter had the duty to appoint the secretary, the vice-director, and above all the director who was responsible to handle the Institute and to draw up the budget. Finally there was an article dedicated to the appointment of auditors who should have checked the financial situation of Ispi, but this rule would be disregarded until 1943, with serious consequences for the Institute. As it is clear from this brief review, the keener to collaborate to the Institute were those men, former nationalists, who were willing to drop the liberal features of their political commitment and to accept the social authoritarianism promoted by fascism in exchange for a commitment to make Italy a great power.

Pirelli took the presidency of the Institute after a careful verification that the Ispi was “healthy”, and that its activities had an effective cultural and political interest. As a matter of fact, Pirelli drew up a financial report in order to let the Executive Boards know about the balance-sheet of Ispi. The new administration could have fixed the annual budget at L.280.000. Contribution would come from the members (L.16.000), donations from companies and financial institutions (L.169.500) as well as from Mussolini himself (L.100.000). In this special ranking the Commercial Bank was the most generous with the Institute by offering L.20.000, followed by the Italian Credit with L.12.000 and the Italian Cotton Institution with L.10.000. The president of the latter was Gino Olivetti whose work was instrumental in order to establish the first solid united representation of the Italian industrialists, and in this way to give a social legitimization of the entrepreneurial class in Italy. Olivetti was one of the first both to promote the principles of scientific management theorized by Frederick Taylor as well as to lay the foundation for a modern system of industrial relations. The relations between Olivetti and Mussolini were always “cold” and after 1934 the latter decided to remove Olivetti from the presidency of the Italian confederation of industry, nevertheless the businessmen continued to offer his contribution to the economic and cultural spheres as this

²⁸⁶ IASISPI, I.2.1 Fondazione, busta 2, 13 «Appunto di Gaslini per Pirelli», 1935.

²⁸⁷ For further information about Francesco Salata see Luca Ricciardi, *Francesco Salata tra storia, politica e diplomazia*, Del Bianco, Udine 2001.

²⁸⁸ IASISPI, I.1.Statuti, busta 1, 1-5 «Statuti 1935-1943».

involvement with Ispi demonstrated²⁸⁹. The document concluded with a statement which it could sound as an acute omen for the development of the Institute: «it will be a cornerstone of our administration, and the director has to retain responsibility not to involve the institute in expenses which cannot be covered by ordinary funds»²⁹⁰.

Pirelli suggested a connection between the effort of the Institute, the economic circles and the fascist government:

as much as the fascist government considers that the initiative is useful for the country, it will represent the degree of support given by bodies, corporations, privates in order to provide the Institute with a sufficient funding, as well as to assure the collaboration of the most skilled people and appreciate also by the government. Moreover, it seems to me indispensable [...] to gain a continuative support by the regime for the time necessary to consolidate the Institute [...]²⁹¹.

It seems as if the Institute tried to represent a sort of common ground between economic and political forces upon which to test a series of initiatives and proposals in the field of foreign policy. In this perspective, intellectuals, politicians and businessmen who participated in the development of the Institute, shared the belief that a real national foreign policy could have been constituted in order to make Italy a great power. This goal remained the bargaining chip between the different sectors of Italian industrial, cultural and political circles, and it should be seen as an essential interpretative key in order to understand the astonishing development of Ispi during the fascist regime. Indeed, as Gaslini wrote to Pirelli: «the Board will always be in contact with the Roman environment both to have the necessary support as well as to obtain the consent to publish works politically more tricky». Between the attempt of the fascist regime to monopolize the choices even in the field of foreign policy and the most genuinely scientific research deployed by the work of Ispi's specialists, economic circles were trying to sustain the Institute, believing that the Institute could have represented a better place to influence, at least indirectly, the directives taken by Italian foreign policy.

This is why in Pirelli's mind there wasn't a contradiction between the manifest willingness of the Institute to remain autonomous and the commitment to follow the directives of the regime: the Institute would have been the place in which political, economic and cultural needs met each other, producing a new balance which should have represented «almost a national point of view on a specific problem»²⁹².

Even if Ispi was pressured by these two forces, it could be a mistake to consider the Institute as a puppet sometimes in the hands of the political power, the other times in the hands of Pirelli. As a matter of fact Ispi was a lively Institute in which the Study Office as well as the collaborators were trying to pursue their research and political goals. If the results of their works were «ideologically» oriented this was a matter of willingness rather than constriction²⁹³.

The development of the Institute seemed unstoppable: in 1936 Ispi decided to open a new section in Trieste with Bruno Coceani as its president; in 1937 a further section was inaugurated in Turin with Gino Olivetti as its president. The sections of the Institute were born both to accommodate the willingness of these two cities to have a body like Ispi and to prevent the birth of «institutional duplication» [doppioni istituzionali] which, according to Pirelli, would have constituted a dispersion of men and money. It was Gaslini the first to promote this solution: Ispi's

²⁸⁹ After the adoption of the racial laws by the fascist regime in 1938, he had to escape in Switzerland and then in Argentine where he died in 1942.

²⁹⁰ A directive which will be systematically circumvented by Gaslini with negative consequences for the Institute as we will see later on, IASISPI, II.1.4 Promemoria (AP), busta 13, «Relazione finanziaria al Consiglio Direttivo», 1935.

²⁹¹ Ibidem

²⁹² IASISPI, I.2.1 Fondazione, busta 2, 13 «Appunto di Gaslini per Pirelli», 1935.

²⁹³ Pirelli wrote a letter on 15th May 1935 to Ciano, Starace and Suvich stating that: «the willingness of the Board was to undertake a scientific as well as educational [divulgativo] activity within the sphere of the directives of the regime» IASISPI, I.2.1 Fondazione, busta 2, «Nascita del consiglio di amministrazione», 1935.

sections would be «useful to define the national character of the Institute, as well as to contribute to the dissemination of its activities and members». Even Gaslini was clear on the fact that this expansion should have been controlled by its center in Milan: «the activities of such sections should be directed in the organization of events or conferences, while the political responsibility remains to the central management. Every section should have constituted by a Committee composed by the President and 5 members from which it will be elected the secretary [...] the funds are given by the headquarters at the beginning of the year²⁹⁴».

Pirelli inaugurated in Trieste the first section of Ispi with a speech on 6th November 1936. The president stressed the effective organization of the Milanese Institute, focusing on the work of the Study Office «undertook by young people chosen through a national examination, Study Office which has the duty to publish the journals of the Institute, to prepare special publications, to collect the documentation on international events, and to compile special files on the same facts»; a body which was inside the Institute and it could use for its studies, «a specialized library with 6.000 volumes which regard all international events from the end of the war, and the Italian foreign policy from 1861». Then, he listed the various publications of the Institute and their goals: «the periodical publications were informed by different criteria: first of all to be used as guidelines of international events and this is the function of “Rassegna di politica internazionale”, secondly for a more documented information and this is the role played by “Documenti di politica estera” as well as “Cronache” and a pure informative criteria with “Le Relazioni Internazionali” destined to be read by the general public who wants to follow the weekly events in their historical development». In addition, it was published the «Annuario di politica internazionale, 1935» which aimed at describing the whole international situation in 1935. The Annuario was divided in two parts: after a short introduction in which it had been described Italy’s position in the European context, there was a first part dedicated to (300 pages, 57 chapters) the most important issues of international policy: from the Italian-French agreements to the London Naval Conference, from the Saar plebiscite to the German rearming. «for each event is given the exact chronicle, the subsequent political documents and a sober background». There was also an attempt to make the most representative figures and the geographical locations more attractive through portraits and novel maps. The second part (300 pages) included «as many chapters as European States are», describing them through a general geographical-political introduction, followed by political information such as their «constitutions, fundamental laws, the division of powers, administrations, schools, justice, the relationship between State and Church, armed forces. It is a short monography for every state [...] essential for the scholar in international politics. Every chapter concludes with an economic remark: raw materials, agriculture, industry, trade and currency». The last part was thought to be a compendium for a rapid consultation: chronology of events, followed by an accurate and updated bibliography of international politics and a series of charts in which the reader could have found interesting political and economic data of every single state. The «Annuario» was thought to be the ultimate synthesis of the work of the Study Office, on the basis of lengthy consultation and selection of various materials (documents, reports, newspapers, journals, books, maps)²⁹⁵.

Moreover, the Study Office published «I problemi del giorno»: a series of monograph studies which dealt with single crucial international issues, a febrile activity which was completed by external collaborations. Again, it was confirmed the desire of the Institute to involve as much readers as possible: specialists, scholars, diplomats but also members of the economic establishment as well as general public. Pirelli pointed out as the «National Congress for the studies in foreign policy» promoted by Ispi had had a great success, attracting personalities from different Italian political and cultural sectors: «publicists, economists, academicians, men of action, officials and freelancers [liberi professionisti]». According to the President, Ispi for the first time promoted that syncretism between intellectual activity and technical expertise which was fundamental to inspire a new and well-equipped ruling class: «on a certain degree of intellectual and technical work [...]

²⁹⁴ IASISPI, I.2.2. Sezioni, busta 3, «Sezioni dell’Istituto. Generalità», 1935-1936.

²⁹⁵ *Le pubblicazioni dell’Ispi*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», April 1936, p.324

politics, law, economics are intertwined in our discussions, so that current situations with their own historical premises as well as the permanent directives about the foreign policy of other countries with their transitional expressions».

More in general, Pirelli recognized the effectiveness of the studies in international politics, stressing the relational aspect: among different people, social and political contacts «are woven together with complex domestic and international acts, between past and present as well as between political factors and financial-economic factors». Pirelli's thoughts seemed to try to find a further moment in which, after having praised the tendency towards a new kind of specialization, which carried a precise, objective and clear knowledge, it was possible to synthesize all those specialist results into a broader understanding. In this perspective, contacts and interdependence represented the best antidote towards a sterile specialization which led to isolationism and incommunicability among the various sectors of human activity. Ispi was thought as a laboratory in which economic and cultural aspects should have been put together through a work of serious and constant research. Pirelli pointed out the necessity to establish a new kind of capitalism which refused the radical aspects of what he called "mechanical civilization", which was promoting a wild and unregulated progress able to destroy the basic values of human beings. Even here, Pirelli suggested a compromise with the introduction of «corrective elements». Ispi could have been one of them as it allowed a more detailed study of the international situation, promoting new economic contacts and exchanges. Given his international experience in the field of diplomatic relations, he was fully aware of the necessity to better inform the Italian ruling class as well as to increase the stock of knowledge of diplomats: «whoever took part in international diplomatic meetings can see how, alongside with few figures which instilled respect, the major part appeared unprepared and sometimes unworthy to represent their country». Pirelli insisted that Ispi had a twofold task: to provide Italy with a well-prepared political elite as well as to guide public opinion, becoming an element of strength for Italian foreign policy: «the public needs to be helped in order to understand the problems and, in the field of international relations, to acquire a precise knowledge of those factors which characterized single events [as well as] the historical and geographical elements which represent the premises». The president agreed with the implementation of a cultural program able to reduce the gap between «the technician and the man on the street», in the attempt to transform every person into a "true Italian" aware of the importance of the issues at stake and able to support his country for the "right" reasons. This passage was inevitable given the fact that «the progress of the nation relies upon the transition of an increasing number of people from a social step to the upper step²⁹⁶». Indeed, one of the most important elements for that rise was a better knowledge of international issues.

Finally, according to Pirelli, the institute was trying to fulfill all these requirements through an interdisciplinary study, mixing historical, political, juridical and social knowledge. In this perspective, the specialists of Ispi found themselves in the best condition to forecast probable scenarios in which addressing national foreign policy, trying to understand what were the most effective actions to be taken by the government.

Indeed, the Institute had to grow and increase its initiatives if it wanted to accomplish these multiple tasks. On one hand Ispi tried to bind the most skilled historians to the Institute. As Pirelli pointed out, but this was an attitude shared by all the members of the Institute, historical perspective constituted a powerful weapon in order both to make Italian people aware of its "national mission" to become a great power as well as to offer a solid and documented point of view able to make Italian voice heard in other capitals of the world. Indeed, this effort to create a sort of historical national narrative had to be closely linked to the issues encountered by Italian foreign policy as well as to the dynamics present in the international scenario.

Pirelli had the chance to reflect upon this set of issues when he made the inaugural speech for the new Ispi's section in Turin, on 26th April 1937: «the link between history and the study of international politics is clear. In order to understand the foreign policy of a country it is useful both

²⁹⁶ IASISPI, I.2.2. Sezioni, busta 3, «Sezioni dell'Istituto. Discorso di Alberto Pirelli a Trieste», 1936.

to insert it in the broader system of relations with other countries and to be aware of the historical trajectory of that policy [...] history and international politics are two objects of study so related to constitute a single one». On the other hand Pirelli showed his acceptance of Mussolini's foreign policy: according to the president, the duce was trying to remedy the mistakes of the former Italian liberal ruling class. In this perspective, revisionism was seen as a form of justice, claiming more favorable international pacts to Italy. Pirelli was speaking in a context in which the "Italian dream" to gain an Empire had become reality, as well as the acceptance of Italy within the great powers club. The president saw all of this as the great success of Italian foreign policy and he agreed in supporting the new position conquered by Italy with an even more intense activity of the Institute. It was essential to develop a national conscience worthy of the "Great Italy" and its imperial foreign policy. In this speech, Pirelli dropped some accents and proposal which characterized the previous discourse: Ispi was no longer represented as a lively laboratory in which the government would have found some reference points to guide its foreign policy, a center of research capable of elaborating a specific culture and political conscience, rather a body which was increasingly committed to «disseminating the spirit of Mussolini's politics and his continuous achievements²⁹⁷».

Between 1935 and 1936 Ispi found its definitive physiognomy. On 15th May 1935 Pirelli informed Gaslini that a bank account of about L.25.000 was opened to cope with ordinary expenditure and that the Director could have used the account freely, provided that the expenses were included in the budget²⁹⁸. This period was characterized by a steady expansion of the Institute: indeed, it suffered by a variable streams of funding linked to the donations of the economic circles as well as the "generosity" of Mussolini, nevertheless Pirelli and Gaslini were trying to develop the Institute both in its research activity as well as its publishing activity.

Gaslini wrote a letter to Pirelli stressing the importance of Ispi's activities in the light of an unprecedented leading role played by international relations which «nowadays have become very intense in every field: cultural, artistic, law, politic and economic [...] every crucial element of a single civilization has become the legacy of the whole world». The director showed a special sensitivity to themes such as the interdependence between nation-states, the intensification of international relations and the crucial link between economic and political factors: «we have to know every single state, because international influences can be decisive for its life [...] leading foreign Institutes founded in London, Tokyo and New York aim at studying [these dynamics]²⁹⁹» and Ispi should have fulfilled the same goals. To observe, study and disseminate all the problems in international affairs were the elements of a path put together by the Institute in order to understand international dynamics and to put them in the context of Italian interests.

At the end of 1935, Gaslini launched the future program of the Institute, including the desire to replace the monthly «Le relazioni internazionali» and made it a weekly journal, even if this solution «cannot be adopted without special arrangements with Rome». The director's attempt to create a closer relationship with the fascist government didn't seem to have an impact on research activities. If ever, Gaslini wanted to expand the Study Office by supporting the necessity to organize a public examination in order to hire qualified personnel. Finally, for the first time Gaslini referred to a project for the preparation of a *History of Italian Foreign Policy* which was entrusted to Ispi by Mussolini³⁰⁰ and which would be remembered as the most ambitious work of the Institute, unfortunately never finished.

²⁹⁷ ISISPI, I.2.2. Sezioni, busta 4, «Sezioni dell'Istituto. Discorso di Alberto Pirelli a Torino», 1937.

²⁹⁸ IASISPI, I.2.1 Fondazione, busta 2, 18 «Apertura conto corrente», 1935.

²⁹⁹ IASISPI, I.2.1 Fondazione, busta 2, «Appunti di Gaslini per Pirelli», 1935.

³⁰⁰ IASISPI, I.2.1 Fondazione, busta 2, 20 «Appunto sull'Ispi», 1935.

Ispi as a research center

As demonstrated above, Ispi was thought to be an innovative research center for the study of international politics, so that the Study Office represented the primary tool in order to fulfil its role. The Study Office, which was at an embryonic state until 1935³⁰¹, would develop through the holding of two public examinations which had been taken place in January and September of 1936. The aim was to hire young scholars to make them specialists in the study of international affairs.

At the beginning the Study Office was formed by Giovanni Mira, who would have been the director³⁰², Bruno Pagani³⁰³ and Marco Maffei³⁰⁴. Gaslini recognized in Mira a real intellectual authority «Giovanni Mira, a great past as soldier, then he retired from teaching in order to pursue his personal studies; his skills allow him to know the problems which the Institute should study and disseminate. Given the fact that he is also an adviser for Mondadori his help will not only be cultural but also commercial» It was always Gaslini to prescribe the lines of development of this internal organ of Ispi:

the Study Office is a question of men and organization: the former will be fulfilled by a public examination, for the latter it is needed to provide the Study Office with an organic and continuous activity, that at the moment it is only used to produce the publications of the Institute [...], it is necessary to give a new direction to the Office which can be satisfied if we resolve the staff issue. The Study Office has to have its internal organization so that it can conduct research and documental work. This activity is important both for the results which can be reached and in order to exploit all the documentation that the Institute is collecting [...] in a rational and systematic way³⁰⁵

This would have meant to divide Study Office's activities in two sections: a first part in which the members had to classify the documentation in order to create thematic indexes and a second part in which was stressed the pure research, that was «to develop certain issues working on elements previously extracted from the documentation». Moreover, every member had to specialize on a particular area, following a single nation-state as well as to focus on a particular theme. The establishment of an up-to date database would allow the scholars to conduct original research, having the opportunity to cross their works, by finding links between different countries. The result was a network of information, exchanges and links which should have been put together in order to form a new knowledge about a specific subject or theme.

In this perspective, it was the Institute that should have developed as an organic whole: «the Study Office will have to implement a comprehensive program in the same way as the Institute will be expanded» to cover the entire national territory. «If *Relazioni Internazionali*³⁰⁶ were to become a weekly journal, there will be no journalistic articles, but they will have a more solid structure, due to the research previously made». The Study Office was also committed with the preparation of the «Annuario», «Rassegna di politica internazionale», «Problemi del giorno» and with radio

³⁰¹ During the first period the members of the Study Office were the same people who formed the Board Committee.

³⁰² IASISPI, I.2.3. Ufficio Studi, busta 4, 29 «Ufficio Studi. Prima organizzazione», 1935-1936. Reported by the regime as a possible opponent, Mira would remain at the Study Office until the beginning of 1937.

³⁰³ Bruno Pagani was reported to be a «conscientious and assiduous worker». IASISPI, I.2.3. Ufficio Studi, busta 4, 29 «Ufficio Studi. Prima organizzazione», 1935-1936. He too came from the «cultural laboratory» of Pavia, and he graduated in 1934 with a thesis titled «Il problema renano dopo Versailles», under the guide of Rodolfo Mosca, ASUPv, fascicoli studenti, fascicolo Bruno Pagani.

³⁰⁴ As the other members of Ispi, he graduated in Law and in Political Science, reported by Gaslini as «a good element».

³⁰⁵ IASISPI, I.2.3. Ufficio Studi, busta 4, 29 «Ufficio Studi. Prima organizzazione», 1935-1936.

³⁰⁶ «Relazioni Internazionali» was the second periodical of the Institute after «Rassegna di politica internazionale». The journal had started as a monthly journal and then it became a weekly journal from 1936.

broadcasting. Given the huge amount of work planned by Gaslini, the director decided to prepare two very selective³⁰⁷ public examinations in order to enlarge the original staff.

Gaslini explained that the aspirants to the Study Office should have had both a sound historical knowledge and a good understanding of current international affairs. As a matter of fact, the exam was composed by different subjects such as economics, law, politics, statistic, finance, geography as well as history and foreign languages. The president would be Giacomo De Martino «a man with an impressive culture and a direct human attraction³⁰⁸».

At the end of 1936 the Study Office was composed by Giovanni Mira, Bruno Pagani, Giovanni Loviseti, Silvio Pozzani, Enrico Bonomi, Angelo Tamborra and Francesco Cataluccio.

Mira represented an important reference point for the young scholars of the Office, teaching them an effective method and attitude towards international issues. Giovanni Loviseti stated that

under his [Mira] subtle guidance, strict as well as paternal, the young scholars from the Study Office were initiated on the path towards the research and the understanding of the world political scene and they were put in a position where they could have contributed effectively to the cultural and scientific activity of Ispi. It was also thanks to Mira if those young people met with personalities [such as] Luigi Salvatorelli, Ferruccio Parri, Ugo La Malfa, Filippo Sacchi, and Mario Vinciguerra [all] *sui generis* figures compared to the general climate at that time³⁰⁹

A fair number of political and cultural figures who, as Bruno Pagani claimed « although they did not create an organized opposition within Ispi, they were harshly critical of the regime³¹⁰».

An atmosphere which seemed to continue even after Italy came to war in 1940: Tommaso Carini, Ispi's librarian and later a militant of the Action Party (Partito d'Azione) described the climate inside the Institute as

a singular one: financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was a sort of free port, not only because of the activities which took place, but also for the members who participated to the life of the Institute. What characterized Ispi was that it was officially tolerated. And in this way Ispi became the place where figures from different backgrounds met together, all antifascists mostly sympathizers of the Action Party. A phenomenon of large proportions³¹¹.

As Montenegro observed Ispi would become: «a research center and a reference point for experts in international affairs [which] resulted in a call for the collaboration of intellectuals, without regard to ideological prejudice and stressing the scientific contribution requested». The strategy put in place by Gaslini was fruitful, as a lot of scholars with an interest in Italian foreign policy accepted to participate to the cultural agenda developed by the Institute. As a matter of fact, given the prestige and the very special skills of those intellectuals, it would be better and more correct to say that there was a permanent compromise between Ispi's agenda and the cultural program put in place by Gioacchino Volpe, Francesco Salata, Federico Chabod, Carlo Morandi and "Benedetto Croce's right-hand man" Adolfo Omodeo.

³⁰⁷ Gaslini stated that «all in all it will be a tough examination, but we will have at the Office excellent elements, who could be useful also for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs» », IASISPI, II.1.1. Presidenza Ispi (1935-1945:Alberto Pirelli), busta 7, «Pierfranco Gaslini», 1935.

³⁰⁸ G. Loviseti, *I 60 anni dell'Ispi*, cit., p.89.

³⁰⁹ A. Montenegro, *Politica estera e organizzazione del consenso*, cit., p.79.

³¹⁰ Bruno Pagani, *Testimonianza di un mediatore culturale in La libertà dei contemporanei*, «Biblioteca della libertà: notiziario del Centro di ricerca e di documentazione Luigi Einaudi», XVII, 1980, n.76, pp.89-97.

³¹¹ Tommaso Carini, *Il Partito d'Azione*, Roma, De Luca 1960, p.19 in A. Montenegro, "Popoli": un'esperienza storico- geografica negli anni della guerra fascista, «Italia contemporanea», ottobre-dicembre 1981, p.21.

Ispi as a publishing house

Alongside with the work of the Study Office which involved the preparation of the journals «Rassegna di politica internazionale» and «Relazioni Internazionali», a series of specific publication such as «l'Annuario di politica internazionale», the «Manuali di politica internazionale» and the «Documenti di politica internazionale», Ispi would sustain, as publishing house, further initiatives. Ispi's editorial policy would develop towards a significant reorganization of historical study, promoted in particular by Giocchino Volpe and his School for Modern and Contemporary History. The School was formed by «that group of young historians which would set the tone for the historiography of the next decades: Walter Maturi, Carlo Morandi, Nello Rosselli, Ernesto Sestan, Delio Cantimori and Federico Chabod» and represented a broader trend in the field of historiography which was «an increasing interest [...] for the most recent history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries³¹²».

The School for Modern and Contemporary History known also as the Roman School was born in 1925 with «the duty to publish those sources starting from XVI century onwards [...] wanted by people like Fedele, Salata, Volpe, Gentile», an initiative that wove political as well as «technical-scientific»³¹³ logic:

Volpe in the Italian context of the early 30s [...] had an eminent position [...] which was guaranteed not only because of his political fortune, rather it was his scientific seriousness alongside with an acute sensitivity for problems and horizons to which further historical research was needed [...] so that it was obvious that the best of the young historians were looking at him, whatever their cultural or political positions were. This was even more stressed by the fact that the School of modern and contemporary history was the only institution which could guarantee them a serious avenues for research [...], united with economic reasons, and that Volpe didn't undertake political or cultural discriminations for the admission to the school, but he was interested only in their skills³¹⁴

It was this group of intellectuals that from the second half of the 30s until the deposition of Mussolini would find in Ispi a benevolent environment ready to follow their cultural/political initiatives. In 1937 was started a series titled «Documenti di storia e di pensiero politico» directed by Volpe in which some of the young students at the Roman School were able to publish their volumes regarding «the most important documents, related to a specific historical problem or to a specific political strand. These books were addressed to high school as well as university students. The series had a wide dissemination among universities and high schools, so that in 1941 out of eight published texts, four of them had been already used in almost every Italian university³¹⁵».

Always in 1937, Volpe directed another series titled «Storia e Politica» where one could have found volumes written by Luigi Salvatorelli, Pietro Silva, Francesco Cognaasso and Volpe himself³¹⁶ which dealt with diplomatic history. Examining the names of the members of the Institute, it seems that the peculiar way in which Ispi promoted the studies in international politics contributed to create a sort of neutral side in which scholars with different political and historiographical cultures could have work together with the aim of imparting a strong development in this area of study.

³¹² R. De Felice, *Intellettuai di fronte al fascismo*, Bonacci, Roma 1985, pp.190-191. All these historians, Rosselli excluded, would collaborate with Ispi.

³¹³ Ivi, p.191.

³¹⁴ Ivi, pp.206-208.

³¹⁵ Ibidem.

³¹⁶ Ibidem.

³¹⁶ Salvatorelli wrote *Storia d'Europa dal 1871 al 1914 e La Triplice Alleanza, storia diplomatica*; Volpe, la *Storia della Corsica italiana, la Storia del movimento fascista, Il popolo italiano tra la pace e la guerra* and the III edition of *Il Medioevo*; Silva wrote *Il Mediterraneo dall'Unità di Roma all'Impero italiano, Figure e momenti di storia italiana, Fasi di storia europea*; Cognaasso contributed with *I Savoia nella politica europea*, riportato in Montenegro, *Politica estera e organizzazione del consenso*, cit., p.807.

Why did Ispi represent such a peculiar position? Does it mean that Ispi was able to lure a variety of scholars using them in order to gain consensus for the fascist regime and its policy? Was it even the case that every scholar was prone to follow a “fascist attitude” when they were involved with foreign policy themes? Or, on the contrary, did Ispi represent a place in which the members were left with some degree of liberty to express their visions and to conduct their research?

The issue is indeed quite complex, but a general recognition of the way in which this generation of scholars was understood by historiography and its assessments regarding the series of studies these experts undertook during the 20s and the 30s can be helpful in determining the roots of the problem. First of all, the collaborators of Ispi were part of a new “generation” in which the first world war exercised a decisive influence in their way of understanding foreign policy, public opinion and the very link between historiography and politics. Until now it had been highlighted, rightly, the relationships between a certain generation of masters (in particular, Mosca, Pareto, Croce, Volpe, Salvemini) and their disciples (Chabod, Morandi, Maturi at the top of the list) and the fact that they were affected by the image of a world in constant transformation, in which ruling classes and entire political systems could have been turned upside down at any moment and in which they assisted in the unfolding of nationalism and internationalism as well as the recurrent prophecies of a European decline or rehabilitation. Indeed, this new “generation” would take their reference points from there³¹⁷. With this research it is possible to add new actors and networks that if on one hand were part of that “new historiography” which was born after the first world war, on the other hand they participated in the foundation and development of international relations as an academic subject in Italy. If one thinks about the members it is clear that a peculiar mix of historians, economists and political scientists were present in Ispi, so that it seems that the practice of studying international relations and its historical perspective were developed together in those circumstances and the Institute constituted a perfect laboratory to experiment new themes and approaches. In this perspective, Ispi represented a sort of national platform from which scholars from different backgrounds and interests gathered together, driven by the desire to deal with those international problems that were plaguing the interwar period, a point of reference which had been lacking in Italy until then. Therefore, the expansion of the sphere of international relations and the study of its history might be taken as that file rouge able to link historians and political scientists in order to discover the complexity of international life, which was structured by those themes more connected with the long-standing issue of Italy’s peculiarities: from the problem of a fairly recent unification to the place that Italy should have started to occupy in relation with other nation-states, in Europe as well as in the entire world. This new “generation” was indeed particularly affected by the idea of nation promoted in nationalistic circles and endorsed by the foreign policy of the fascist regime which was guided by a desire to expand Italy’s influence in Europe and in the colonial sphere. While the continuity with nationalistic themes was quite clear, as those issues were the product of a longer intellectual heritage that had upheld the necessity of Italian expansion in the Mediterranean and in Europe since the liberal era, the scholars who emerged after the First World war desired, at least at the beginning, to sink all the legacies with the former liberal Italy, taking the fascist regime a possible reference point.

These reflections lead to questions about the role played by Ispi in the birth and development of a study of international relations: did it favour a specific direction to be taken by scholars in the study of foreign policy and international affairs? What was the relationship between the Institute and other bodies involved in the study of analogous issues such as the Faculties of Political Science and those Institutes that somehow represented a challenging competition such as the above mentioned Ipo and Ipeo. Moreover, what was its relationship with those bodies that agreed to collaborate with the Milanese Institute, in particular with the Roman School of Gioacchino Volpe?

³¹⁷ See, *Federico Chabod e la “nuova storiografia” italiana (1919-1950)*, edited by Brunello Vigezzi, Jaca Book, Milano 1983.

As a matter of fact, the study of a body like Ispi allows one to pick up the issue of the birth and development of international relations as an academic subject in Italy and to contribute to the specification of its general traits from a different point of view. Did Ispi constitute that peculiar environment in which different traditions and different standpoints meet each other with the effect of establishing an Italian tradition of international relations?

Indeed, if one looks at the assessments made by the same “disciples” about the studies in foreign policy and international relations during the interwar period, the image could be quite ambiguous. Delio Cantimori judged that a «corporation of historians», who were developing a new interest in contemporary issues during the 20s and the 30s under the fascist regime, as a group of scholars affected by the irrationalism of those years. This created a problematic experience in which the illusion of being able to follow the flow of events highlighted the most visible features, such as the initiatives of the regime against other nation-states in the international field, contributing to the support of nationalistic action of Italy in Europe³¹⁸. As a consequence every attempt made by those scholars to interpret the historical events of the Italian nation and its relations with Europe lost any real value. His reflection would constitute the hard core of a further interpretation which saw in the relationship between Volpe’s Roman school and the activities of Ispi the cornerstone for an Italian historiographical tradition vitiated by a series of nationalistic presumptions which were characteristic of Volpe’s work: the primacy of foreign policy and a history of international relations profoundly marked by diplomatic history. Albeit with different accents, within this frame we can find Angelo Montenegro who didn’t change the dominant traits of this interpretation in his understanding of Ispi³¹⁹. As a matter of fact, according to the author the real watershed was represented by the economic crises of 1929: from that year a slow but inexorable process of politicization, regimentation and centralization touched also historical studies. In this perspective Ispi was a mere reflection of this political strategy which was trying to make intellectuals speak with one voice, supported by a certain degree of “consensus”. As a consequence, the studies promoted by Ispi were all functional to the fascist power policy: the “value” of an entire tradition of studies developed during the interwar period was to foster a peculiar fascist culture. While this interpretation has the merit of pointing out the role played by the study of international relations during the fascist regime, demonstrating both the link between institutions and culture and the effectiveness of the fascist cultural organization, it took fascism as an implied assumption in order to explain everything. In this perspective, Italian nationalism which was, indeed, one of the most shared features of these historians, it was represented as a solid and permanent trait of fascism rather than the product of a more complicated path.

Another tradition was that one represented by the diplomatic school with Mario Toscano: according to him only a precise and thorough analysis of diplomatic documents can guarantee an effective understanding of States and their governments. As a consequence Toscano tended to leave aside the underlying criteria from which every scholar drew their inspirations. According to the Italian scholar the new diplomatic history found its origin in the new wave of nationalism during the Libyan war in 1912 and the fascist regime gave it a suitable context to develop «all in all the period which was concluded by the second world war offered, from the standpoint of the development of the studies in history of international relations, a positive assessment. Italian scholars, despite the lack of sources and the unfavorable atmosphere for impartial research, they were able to work hard and to start a tradition of study which was new for our country»³²⁰. Toscano agreed with Cantimori,

³¹⁸ See, *Federico Chabod e la “nuova storiografia” italiana*, p.422.

³¹⁹ A.Montenegro op.cit. *Politica estera e organizzazione del consenso*.

³²⁰ M.Toscano *Gli studi di storia delle relazioni internazionali in Italia in La storiografia italiana negli ultimi vent’anni*, Milano 1970, vol.II, p.842. Even here Toscano didn’t explain well how it was possible to have a nationalism which on one hand is the key positive element for the birth of international relations and on the other hand it contributed with the actions of the fascist regime to create «an unfavorable atmosphere for an impartial research». In order to find a deeper analysis of the relationship between the fascist regime, taken as an historical object, and the ways in which foreign policy was conducted we have to wait until the beginning of the 1950s when Toscano started to problematize his adhesion to nationalism.

claiming that the history of foreign policy was one of the most typical fruits of nationalism and then fascism, but at the same time he wanted to isolate his diplomatic history saying that if properly applied it can provide historians with the right key to interpret the relationship between States.

This two interpretations were really influential and they helped historical research to improve searching for new themes and points of view. At the same time they were not able to offer a compelling framework for the origins and the role played by the history of international relations as well as its connection with a broader history.

Another interpretation was related to a book thought and partially made with the help of Ispi. It is the famous *Storia della politica estera italiana dal 1870 al 1896* written by Federico Chabod and his *Premesse*. Chabod's work clearly showed the link between the different elements which compose a foreign policy and that those aspects were linked with the life of a whole society.

At the beginning, the book was thought within what would have been the most ambitious work undertaken by the Institute, that was the preparation of a *History of Italian Foreign Policy from 1861 to 1914*, which had to be realized under the direction of Gioacchino Volpe, with the contributions of Federico Chabod, Walter Maturi, Carlo Morandi and Andrea Torre. The work should have been structured in four volumes with the use of documents from the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, until then unavailable for scholars.

From the documents it is possible to suggest that it was Gaslini's idea to construct and develop the work. The first projects were thought and developed by Ispi from 1935 following the criteria of a more classic diplomatic history. During a meeting of the Management Board held in Rome on July 1935, Pirelli supported the initiative to prepare a *History of Italian foreign policy* from the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy. At the beginning was Francesco Salata who pointed out the criteria to follow for the preparation of the work and he invited the Board Committee to sketch out a plan. The inclusion of Volpe as the director of the work and its Roman School had the effect to slightly change the approach with a sharper interest for a foreign policy included in a broader political context. A letter from Pirelli to Salata on 21st March 1936 showed the personal interest of Mussolini in respect of the project. Pirelli cited a meeting held in Rome with Mussolini in order to define the collaborators and to start the work: «the Head has confirmed that [the work] has to be based on the documentation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the meeting were present Bevione, Volpe and Ercole». It was decided to publish the work in four volumes with the distribution of the subject according with the proposal made by Gaslini, and that the first part would be dedicated to a comprehensive [estesa] introduction, including an overview of the Italian States' foreign policies before the establishment of the Italian Kingdom. The project would prove to be difficult to achieve: on one hand there wasn't a shared idea about the character of the work between the director who wanted a sharp and agile history and the authors who were more inclined to respect the length of time required for a historical work, with the addition of new documents. The board committee was formed by four members: Alberto Pirelli, Francesco Salata, Giuseppe Bevione and Gioacchino Volpe. As Montenegro stressed:

The project of the opera, with which it was wanted to free Italian scholars from foreign studies as well as to give prestige to the national historical culture [...] represented the most relevant result of the attempt to reorganize historical studies which started in parallel with the rise of fascism, with the work of renovation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' apparatus as well as with the introduction of those novelties, all oriented [...] to make the domestic situation more efficient – to grant consensus, to improve the preparation of officials and to provide the system with a more rational information service on international affairs – in order to fulfil both the objective of becoming a world power, as well as the imperialistic policy of the regime³²¹

In 1936 the project was approved by Mussolini: together with Chabod Maturi Morandi, it was chosen at the beginning Pietro Silva; the latter would refuse to collaborate as he became aware

³²¹ Ivi, p.804.

of the fact that his name wasn't supported by the regime and at the end the choice went for Augusto Torre³²². While this documentation confirms the central role played by Volpe, it can be seen the substantial differences with the final version of the *History* published by Chabod in 1951. The novelties of this work was recognized by another collaborator of the Institute Luigi Salvatorelli. Salvatorelli was a *sui generis* intellectual figure: historian with a pronounced interest for current affairs he was able to mix in a satisfactory way academic education and an intense journalistic experience. He represented a singular coherence within the framework of an anti-fascist culture and during what was defined by himself as a "20-years period of patience [ventennale pazienza]", Ispi constituted one of the few institutions which allowed him to write and being paid under the fascist regime³²³. Salvatorelli was really far away from Volpe: his "coldness" preserved him from being too responsive to the misleading needs of the Italian political environment and this was one of the element that marked the distance between him and the romanticism of the Roman School³²⁴. Precisely because of this peculiarity, Salvatorelli's assessment on the *Storia della politica estera italiana* acquired a special meaning, stressing the novelty of the work and its methodology showed in the *Premesse*: «Chabod [...] gives us an overview of things and men, an [...] ideological and psychological portrait of the ruling class, an identification of the various streams, a representation of ideas and sentiments of Visconti-Venosta, Lanza, Sella, Minghetti, Crispi and of other protagonists [...]»³²⁵. The volume was an introduction to foreign policy and it dealt with the assumptions and bases on which Italian foreign policy was built: as A.J.P. Taylor revealed «it is a contribution to the history of ideas rather than to diplomatic history strictly interpreted; and the spirit of Meinecke broods over it. Moreover, to devote almost 700 pages to a discussion of what men felt about foreign affairs in 1870 is also in the Meinecke tradition»³²⁶. The review traced the major points touched by Chabod: what did the occupation of Rome represent for Italy? A national unity or a center for a federation of free people? Did the legacy of the new capital impose to Italy a "sacred mission" which meant a new Mediterranean empire with Rome as its center and to play a leading part in the Eastern Question? All these questions represented the questioning of the thorniest issues along which the new Italian state would have developed its foreign policy: what was Italy? A liberal nation-state natural ally of England and France or a more conservative one, ready to accept the principles of Metternich? The second part of the Chabod's work described the material status of Italy: a poor country with a fragile army and a general political apathy. According to the Italian historian, the masses were indifferent to foreign affairs, and even the ruling class was not much better: what Italy should have done? Should it avoid foreign entanglements or should it force greatness on an unwilling people? All these questions could have been answered only if there had been a bridge between diplomatic history and a broader political history able to show the major forces which acted beyond the acritical exaltation of Realpolitik. If there was a general consensus to consider Chabod's book as an important novelty for the historical studies, on the other hand every review tended to stress a particular aspect or inspiration which characterized the research, with the result to produce a partial interpretation, separating the book from its context. A relevant example was Pierre Renouvin's assessment who if on one hand pointed at Chabod's work as representative

³²² Letter from Salata to Pirelli on 24th March 1936 in which Salata supported the initiative: «Maturi, Morandi and Chabod are the best that the historians' market has at its disposal [...] between Silva and Torre I would prefer the former, even if also the latter has a good preparation for the period preceding the Great War». Even if Salata showed to be really interested in the work he preferred to procrastinate his full collaboration as coordinator saying that it would be better to organize a further meeting between the Committee and the authors to fix the timing of and the method for, the consultation of the documentation of the Archive. Because of the Salata's commitment with other initiatives (he was also director of the Italian cultural Institute in Vienna) his collaboration would cause a slowdown for the preparation of the work. Finally, even if the research work was continuing from 1936, the whole initiative never seen the light of the day.

³²³ For further details on Salvatorelli during the fascist regime see Gabriele Turi, *Un intellettuale attraverso il fascismo*, «Passato e Presente», a.XXIII (2005), n.66

³²⁴ See, Vigezzi, *Federico Chabod e la "nuova storiografia" italiana*, op.cit., p.433.

³²⁵ L.Salvatorelli, *Idee e uomini della Terza Italia*, «La Stampa», 22 aprile 1952.

³²⁶ A.J.P. Taylor in «English Historical Review», 1953, p.105.

of one of the most important trends in the study of international relations³²⁷, on the other hand it had the effect to consider the book as the masterpiece of a single author without any reference to the particular background from which this understanding emerged.

For sure, alongside with these series which were able to offer a scientific outlook in support of a clear cultural as well as political program, there were works which were clearly apologetic in respect of the regime and its politics, such as the two volumes of Francesco Belforte, alias general Biondi Morra head of the historic office of the high command, on *La Guerra civile in Spagna*.

When the war started with a subsequent hardening of the international situation, Ispi, paradoxically, multiplied its initiatives, both as a centre of international studies and as a publishing house concerned with political and historical topics. As a matter of fact, if on one hand the directives of the regime and the roles imposed by the Ministry of Popular Culture together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs affected the activities of Ispi³²⁸, on the other hand the peculiar position occupied by the Institute straddling the cultural and the political sphere as well as at the confluence of private and governmental area, it provided Ispi with new opportunities of development.

It was then that the peculiar relationship between historiography and politics showed the fullest effect. The series edited by the Institute were all under the guidance of an historian: Chabod was the director of «Uomini e avvenimenti del nostro tempo» which consisted in foreign books concerning international affairs and translated in order to allow Italian publics to know what were considered key volumes to interpret the global dynamics³²⁹. Then «La Diplomazia Italiana³³⁰» and «Storia e civiltà³³¹», directed by Carlo Morandi, «Documenti di storia e di pensiero politico» under the guide of Gioacchino Volpe, up to Adolfo Omodeo with his «Biblioteca Storica³³²».

³²⁷ During the tenth international congress of historical sciences held in Rome in 1955 Renouvin declared that there were three main ways of approaching international relations: diplomatic history which focused on state and government's actions and their reciprocal negotiations concerning their safety, power and prestige; a history which was concerned with *forces profondes* that influenced diplomatic history, dear to *Les Annales*; finally, Chabod with his history of mentality, ideas and sentiments.

³²⁸ A change that one can also notice in the composition of the Administration Board: at the original group (Giuseppe Beviere, Raffaele Mattioli, Gino Olivetti, Francesco Salata, Giovanni Stringer and Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata) were added Alessandro Pavolini (minister of Popular Culture) and Gioacchino Volpe (director of the School for modern and contemporary history in Rome).

³²⁹ «six American, English and German works have already been translated and they will be published in the following months», », IASISPI, II.1.1. Presidenza Ispi (1935-1945): Alberto Pirelli, «Pierfranco Gaslini», 1941. Of particular importance the list of the volumes transmitted to MinCulPop for the necessary approval: Hallman Hans, *La Spagna e la rivalità anglo-francese nel Mediterraneo (1898-1907)*, Langer William L., *La diplomazia dell'imperialismo (1890-1902)*, 2 voll. and *Alleanze e allineamenti in Europa*, David H. Miller, *Miscellanea*, Wegerer, *Lo scoppio della Guerra mondiale*, Lady Cecil, *Vita di Lord Salisbury*, Webster, *La politica estera di Caslereaigh*, David H Miller, *Diari*, Gooch, *prima guerra mondiale*, Halperin, *Italia e Vaticano in guerra*, Hermann, *Italia, Triplice Alleanza*, *Duplici Intesa*, Seton Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone e la Questione Orientale*, Wolfgang Windelband, *Bismarck e le grandi potenze europee*, R.B. Merriman, *The rise of the Spanish Empire in the Old World and the New*, Nolde Boris, *L'alleanza franco-russa. Le origini del sistema diplomatico d'anteguerra*.

³³⁰ It was a collection of ten volumes with the aim of organizing the most important reports written by former ambassadors of Italian States to their governments. The belief was that if the young students would have read this publications «they would learn which were the traditions of Italian diplomacy», *Ibidem*.

³³¹ Among the volumes collected in this series: Giulio Caprin, *Epiloghi europei*, 1941; Alfredo Passerini, *Condottieri romani*, 1942; Agostino Saba, *Martirio e trionfo del cristianesimo*, 1942; Leo Pollini, *Il padre della patria*, 1942; G.Lega, *L'epopea delle camice nere*, 1942; Ettore Fabietti, *I Carbonari*, 1942; Vittorio Emanuele Bravetta, *Marinai d'Italia*, 1942; M.Baratelli, *Vita operosa d'Augusto*, 1942; Renato Simoni, *Cina e Giappone*, 1942, Filippo Sacchi *Australia e Città*.

³³² Just to mention a few, he published *L'età del risorgimento italiano*; Gabriele Pepe, *Introduzione allo studio del Medio Evo latino*; Tucidide, *La guerra del Peloponneso*, Teodoro Mommsen, *Disegno del diritto pubblico romano*, baronessa de Stael, *Considerazioni sui principali avvenimenti della rivoluzione francese*, Alexis de Tocqueville, *Frammenti storici sulla rivoluzione francese*, Joseph Alexander von Hubner, *Nove anni di ricordi di un ambasciatore austriaco a Parigi sotto il Secondo Impero (1851-1859)* intr. e transl. from Alessandro Galante Garrone, Clementina Arangio Ruiz, *Conversazioni con i sigg. Guizot e Thiers*, Polibio, *Le storie*,

Indeed, every series was thought to fulfill both political and cultural factors: for instance, «Storia e Civiltà» was designed with the support of the Minister of National Education Giuseppe Bottai, by facilitating its entry in school libraries:

you know [Pirelli] that from the next year there will be a new school regulation with new programs in history and geography. Indeed, these two subjects will have a political orientation. I have entrusted Mr Morandi with the direction of a series of volumes, who implemented that regulation on behalf of Bottai, which could represent the effective contribution of the Institute to the teaching of history and geography in all the schools of the Kingdom [...]. I am confident that this series will be very successful as every class of every school will be obliged to constitute an historical/geographical library in line with educational programs³³³.

Moreover, from 1941 Ispi became the editor of the School for modern and contemporary history as well as of «Rivista storica italiana» both directed by Gioacchino Volpe, who would affect more and more the Institute, imposing his own agenda as well as his “disciples”. In this perspective we can notice how the Institute based its own activities on a multilevel development in which coordination was much more complicated: the relationship with the University of Pavia lost its centrality (even if it didn’t disappear completely) in favor of a “special relationship” with the Roman School and Gioacchino Volpe. The leading figure of the Institute remained Pierfranco Gaslini, who confirmed his central position in a letter sent to Pirelli on 5th May 1941:

Even if, formally, there isn’t a committee which decides on publications, this committee exists in concrete. Every publication of the Institute responds to a political criteria which I use to determine my choices: the evaluation of every publication, the plan for any collection are checked, discussed and examined by myself with the collaboration of Chabod, Morandi, Volpe, Almagià for geography, Suali for oriental subjects, La Malfa from the Study Office of the Commercial Bank for economic matters. Moreover, exchanges of ideas happened with all the professors with whom the Institute is in contact: this broad range of collaborations constitutes a fruitful source of ideas and debates. When a publication is decided, this means that it had been already assessed not only in political terms, which I think it is my exclusively responsibility, but also in scientific terms with the collaboration of academicians. You will be pleased to know that around the Institute there are more than one hundred professors who are working for³³⁴»

Therefore, Gaslini was confident to have commissioned every initiative to the best scholars present in Italy at that time, guaranteeing also a solid and well-made product. Despite the difficult financial situation, which eventually would become unsustainable for the Institute, the Director continued to propose new projects. In particular, Gaslini denounced a lack of in-depth knowledge about the problems which were affecting other states, especially extra-European nations. This was considered unacceptable for an Institute like Ispi which aimed to «give, through an internal specialization, a solid outlook on international affairs to the Italian public». Gaslini stated that thanks to his plan the young scholars of the Study Office were able to specialize in specific themes, acquiring skills «not that easy to find in our country». This is why Gaslini pushed for an expansion of the Study Office, so that to create new specialists in the Asiatic, African and Pacific sector: «in order to realize this program it is needed that the Study Office, which is now composed by eleven members, could be enlarged with other ten elements at least». These members could have been «also women, if we are able to find them, as it is happening in other analogous institutes in the world³³⁵».

To guarantee this development Gaslini pushed for the dismantle of other Italian institutes which, in his opinion, were unable to compete with Ispi, such as the *Istituto dell’Africa Italiana*, the

³³³ IASISPI, II.1.1. Presidenza Ispi (1935-1945): Alberto Pirelli, «Pierfranco Gaslini», 1941.

³³⁴ Ibidem.

³³⁵ Ibidem, with Gaslini and Bassani the staff were composed by Bruno Pagani, Giovanni Loviseti, Silvio Pozzani, Aldo Canali, Giovanni Battista Festari, Mario Giuliano, Enrico Bonomi, Enrico Serra, Emilio Cialdea, Fernando Sebastiani, Luciano Aillaud, Declava, *L’ISPI di Milano e la Francia (1934-1943)*, cit., p.746.

Istituto del Medio ed Estremo Oriente, the Centro Italiano di Studi Americani and the abovementioned Ipo and Ipeo. According to the director of Ispi, all these institutes were only bad copies of the Milanese Institute, which, even if it was founded later, it took the lead: Ispi «will never debate about the place or how high wages should be. Honestly, I can say that our Institute has worked hard and the results are evident. [It will be implemented] a kind of erosion of other institutes, nailing the lid on their coffins which were created by themselves with their lack of activities as well as their insufficient dynamism. Ispi [...] will publish on areas which has been neglected in order to block any initiatives from other institutes. I may add that it will be the government itself, especially in respect of African studies [...]».

From these short notes it is possible to grasp the insatiable appetite of Gaslini in order to develop the Institute and to link the Institute with as much experts as possible. He was tireless in his willingness to promote new initiatives as well as new aspects to develop: one of them was cartography. This new field of action undertaken by Ispi has to be understood in the new context of the war: the dependence of Italy towards other nations for the acquisition of maps was considered dangerous at least. So that, Gaslini thought it would have been a good move to create a little but efficient cartographic office in order to produce a complete set of maps with the systematic collaboration of prof. Almagià.

The other issue regarded the editorial question, considered by Gaslini as a crucial aspect in order to establish the institute at national as well as international level. The director justified his choice to privilege historical studies because:

Every volume [...] wants to be a real contribution to national culture rather than a random hotchpotch of dates and speculations of a single scholar, even if authoritative. At the same time we have published some of the most brilliant works of Italian historical culture: works which will last for a long time and that will guarantee a secure income for the Institute [...] I have balanced works easy to sell with volumes which represented a passivity from the beginning, but alone justify the contributions from the State and from individuals [...] no one had the courage to deal with work similar to our own [...] *the Institute ensured by buying them – if I may put it like this – as you can buy a racehorse or a player for a football match the most influential authors*³³⁶, suggesting them initiatives, series, encouraging them in their more secret ambitions and linking them for a long period of time³³⁷

Regardless of their political ideas, Gaslini was able to attract young as well as well-established scholars with the aim to “exploit” their scientific works in order to increase the prestige of the Institute.

Montenegro stated that:

Gaslini was a publicist with well-developed skills as promoter [...] the organization of consent among intellectuals, realized by a series of collaborations and networks, was understood by Gaslini on the basis of the prestige of the Institute, which was considered by him as his “creature”, rather than as a broader project of regimentation into an organization of the regime. Whether this framework was realized *in practice* and that strand of cultural policy looked like an achievement of the regime the exact moment that the regime entered in its period of most acute crisis, this is a different matter³³⁸.

Indeed, Gaslini didn't possess a remarkable political soul and his ambition was linked to the development of the Institute as a research center as well as publishing house able to monopolize every kind of initiative related to the growth of political culture in Italy. In the «historical collection» were published among others the works of Volpe, Salvatorelli, Rota, Omodeo, simply because they represented the best Gaslini could have had in Italy at that time: «I have obtained the collaboration of Benedetto Croce's right-hand man Adolfo Omodeo, who is considered one of the

³³⁶ Emphasis added.

³³⁷ IASISPI, II.1.1. Presidenza Ispi (1935-1945): Alberto Pirelli, «Pierfranco Gaslini», 1941.

³³⁸ Montenegro, *Politica estera e organizzazione del consenso*, cit., p.811.

most important Italian historians alongside with Salvatorelli. A fierce polemicist, Omodeo doesn't get along with Volpe, Ercole, and in general with the historians of the previous century, but young scholars like Chabod, Morandi etc. have a great admiration for him». Again, Gaslini showed that his main concern was to make Ispi one of the most renowned "think tanks" in Italy and in the world. On the other hand, he continued to pressure those figures who occupied important positions in the decision-making process in order to obtain the green light to consult archives still closed or to gain from the government the necessary funding to produce qualitative works in line with the activities of the most important Institutes of International Affairs of the world. An interesting example was represented by the special relationship between Gaslini and the head of the historical office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Francesco Salata. The correspondence between the two demonstrate the level of cooperation between Ispi and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the role of Salata in determining certain initiatives of the Milanese Institute³³⁹. From the beginning Gaslini and Pirelli pushed for an active collaboration of Salata, who was convinced to enter in the Administrative Board: «an invitation which comes from you [Pirelli] and for a work supported by the head of the government, cannot be refused³⁴⁰». Pirelli in another letter described the functions of the Institute as follows: «this Institute, unique of its kind in Italy, has the task of studying and disseminating international issues which increasingly affect Governments and Peoples: it undertakes a work of high political education through a series of publications, conferences and other activities. The Institute is not an official body, but its initial success is a guarantee for future developments³⁴¹».

At the beginning, even if Salata accepted to participate in the development of the Institute, he didn't show a particular interest for Ispi giving priority to his duties as director of the Italian Institute of culture in Vienna. That would involve a certain delay for the projects promoted by the Milanese Institute, in particular for the preparation of those works for which a documentary research in the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was fundamental for their success. Therefore Pirelli pressed Salata for a meeting in order to discuss about the preparation of the *Storia della politica estera italiana* «the line of the work, the choice of the authors and the financial plan all relied upon the way in which the consultation will be organized, under your guidance, for the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is not that our work has to be only documentary [...] but it is necessary to draw from the examination of the documents those which are the most important, as well as new documents which thanks to their originality could make a difference between this publication and others. Needless to say, nothing will be published without your consensus». Pirelli claimed that Mussolini and Suvich were already aware of this initiative so that «I have the impression that you have all the necessary keys, but if there is a need for a further authorization I think it will be easy to obtain». Pirelli was really aware of the important role played by Salata for the activities of Ispi and he asked for a personal meeting with him³⁴². Nevertheless, Salata continued to procrastinate where and when to meet with Ispi's Administration Board for the necessary arrangements, so that in March Pirelli sent to him another letter in which the president wrote that «the Head has confirmed his interest and he agreed to produce a work based on documents». At the meeting were present Bevione Volpe and Ercole and it was decided «to approve the publication of the work in four volumes» as well as to appoint an executive board formed by Volpe, Ercole and Salata himself.

In spite of everything, the project kept getting stuck: in April Pirelli sent to the senator a new letter in order to push him saying that everything was ready to start and that the collaborators were waiting for his guidance among the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Salata was also the director of two series published by the Institute «Interessi naturali del popolo italiano» and «Guerra e pace con giustizia», but also those initiatives were languishing because of the senator «who, as always, took initiatives too easily and then he doesn't follow

³³⁹ Asmae, fondo Salata, Ispi-corrispondenza generale 1935-1945

³⁴⁰ Letter from Salata to Pirelli, 8th April 1935, Asmae, fondo Salata, Ispi-corrispondenza generale 1935-1945.

³⁴¹ Letter from Pirelli to Salata.

³⁴² Letter from Pirelli to Salata 7th January 1936.

them³⁴³». If the relationship between the president of the Institute and Salata went cold during the years, on the other hand Gaslini tried to create a more solid link with the Italian historian. As a matter of fact, after the Anschluss Salata went back to Rome and became one of the editors of «Rassegna di politica internazionale» proposing themes and materials to the Ispi's journal. His activism from 1938 grew, and Gaslini relied upon him as he was a «father». On an almost daily basis, the director sent working documents as well as personal impressions about the international situations and the task that Ispi should fulfill. On 17th May 1940 Gaslini wrote by his own hand a letter to Salata saying that he felt like if the events were running «if we don't public those documents [Tunisian diplomatic documents] right now, I don't know why we have to wait. Well, dear father Salata, you had the luck to assist to some of the most important events, so that you should try to please your young friend who maybe will be lying under the ground delighted to have had fulfill his Italian duties, but also anguished (I will tell you in confidence) to have left an old mum alone. Here, we are working very intensively, in Milan the fever mounts³⁴⁴».

It was clear that Gaslini and Salata were working fully in line: Salata acted as editor, director of series as well as advisor for the Institute, playing the role of political-cultural referent between Ispi and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The director relied upon Salata even when, at the beginning of 1941, he was the object of a disciplinary action from the Federal Secretary and the subsequent referral procedure to the disciplinary commission: «dear Excellence, yesterday was a painful [experience]. The Federal Secretary of Milan has announced to me and Pagani the withdrawal of the card [of PNF] and our referral to the disciplinary commission for the accident occurred with Relazioni. Even the president was shocked and he wrote to the duce. See if you have the possibility to talk to Anfuso [...] clearly there is a misunderstanding and an exaggeration. Today I have presented a memorandum, together with the documentation of my activity related to Relazioni Internazionali. I will attach it here. You can image my state of mind and that of Pagani, born in the fascism». A few days later the accident was dismissed and the two could go back to an activity that was becoming even more intense and expensive. Gaslini was apt to start with a new *Enciclopedia diplomatica*, which was thought as work capable of replacing the famous diplomatic dictionary made by the Diplomatic National Academy of Paris: «it will impress abroad, as this is the first time that Italy seeks to do something similar». The same comment for the *Enciclopedia Coloniale*: «even here no one has never done something like this, not even abroad». Then the *Dizionario della storia d'Italia*, directed by Volpe, Chabod and Ercole where «the most important Italian historians are working on it» and the *Collezione dei grandi trattati politici dalla antichità ai nostri giorni*, directed by Leonardo Vitetti and Chabod: «each volume will involve the text of the treaty and some of the most relevant documents which help to contextualize the origins and the developments. An introduction will provide with an historical framework». Among others, endless projects there were a *Storia politica della Chiesa* left to Luigi Salvatorelli and *Il Mediterraneo dall'Unità di Roma fino ai giorni nostri* written by Pietro Silva. Finally a set of new projects involving an *Atlante storico d'Italia*, *Atlante storico d'Europa*, and an *Atlante per le scuole e le persone colte*, together with some publications prepared by the School of modern and contemporary history.

What about the situation of the journals of the Institute?

«Relazioni Internazionali» was improving with an average of 30.000 copies sold which would allow to the journal to conclude the year with a net profit, while Gaslini attributed the passivity of 1940 with the few copies sold (10.000) and because of the publication of a series of colored books, not to mention «the Polish white book already printed but not for sale because it was censored».

The director was more pessimistic about «Rassegna di storia e politica internazionale³⁴⁵»: «this review will always constitute a considerable passivity for the Institute. The sales are non-

³⁴³ IASISPI, II.1.1. Presidenza Ispi (1935-1945): Alberto Pirelli, «Pierfranco Gaslini», 1941.

³⁴⁴ Letter from Gaslini to Salata 17th May 1940.

³⁴⁵ The journal was a by-monthly and it replaced the monthly «Rassegna di politica internazionale».

existent for three reasons: 1) because the journal has no interest; 2) because it never comes out regularly; 3) because it is distributed among members». According to the director it was Salata's own fault for not having edited the journal with the proper attention, leaving all the tasks to Gaslini himself. On the other hand the same members consider the journal «a brick [...] I don't know what to do». He also mentioned a new editorial initiative constituted by the biweekly «Popoli», a journal with historical and geographical interests, made with the purpose to link a solid scientific work with a willingness to disseminate and educate a broader public. The aim of the two directors of the journal, Federico Chabod and Carlo Morandi, was to establish a hinge between high culture and general culture: a special standpoint from which it could have been possible to disseminate the results of historical and geographical research³⁴⁶. Gaslini wrote that «this journal has the specific aim to contribute to the historical and geographical knowledge in the most general sense [...] about this new publication I have had flattering assessments, above all that one from the duce, transmitted by Polverelli [...] for once the pure science will adapt to meet the needs of the public». As Delio Cantimori wrote, the journal «resembled Morandi's mark, with his taste for cultural dissemination outside elite circles³⁴⁷», as well as Chabod's style. The collaborators were chosen by competence and professionalism rather than by ideological concerns. Morandi believed in the autonomy of culture, as a consequence he refused too much unilateral methodologies and interpretations in favor of the «complexity which characterized the historical process³⁴⁸». The journal would host historians with different political and cultural personalities «called to illuminate the different aspects (economic, political, geographical etc) of the complex historical process within a broad space-time horizon³⁴⁹».

«Popoli» was linked with another series titled «Storia e Civiltà» and together they were meant to constitute a specific cultural plan dedicated to the world of school. Morandi pointed out that the scholastic programs focused on the value of reading «which is an essential moment of the educational process» exactly because of its «didactic efficacy³⁵⁰».

As it was showed, even if geography continued to remain on the sideline, and its relationship with the historical domain appeared sporadic, the historiographical part hosted a broad list of collaborators which produced a solid eclecticism³⁵¹.

The journal was composed by a series of didactical sections which involved *Figure ed eventi* (presentation of the document with some clarifications in order to help the reader to contextualize it) *Sguardi sul mondo* and *Meridiana* which aimed at dealing with historical figures as well as with the geographical and economic lives of people. The final sections titled *In biblioteca* and *Fra libri e riviste*, remarked the pedagogical function of «Popoli» given the fact that they didn't review new publication, rather classical volumes but considered to be a high added value in educational and cultural sphere. What is more «in order to facilitate the reading of the articles every number had a little dictionary, which occupied the last pages of the journal, so that the reader could have some information about more specific terms, places or figures³⁵²».

Even in this case, the students of the «Roman School» played a central role: we can find Morandi, Chabod, Maturi, Sestan but also younger historians like Ruggiero Moscati, Wolf Giusti, Paolo Vitale, Paolo Brezzi, Federico Curato, Franco Valsecchi and Carlo Zaghi.

³⁴⁶ About «Popoli» and its special character which regards the timing of publication and the remarkable qualities of the collaborators, see A. Montenegro, «Popoli»: un'esperienza storico-geografica negli anni della guerra fascista, «Italia contemporanea», ottobre-dicembre 1981, pp.3-37.

³⁴⁷ Delio Cantimori, *Storici e storia*, Einaudi, Torino 1971, p.265.

³⁴⁸ Montenegro, «Popoli», cit., p.13.

³⁴⁹ Ivi, p.14.

³⁵⁰ Carlo Morandi, *Una collana dell'ISPI per le scuole medie*, 1941, estratto conservato tra le *Carte Morandi*, in Montenegro, «Popoli», cit., p.9.

³⁵¹ Beyond Omodeo there were many other antifascist intellectuals: Luigi Salvatorelli, Umberto Morra, Gabriele Pepe, Mario Praz, Giorgio Falco, Delio Cantimori.

³⁵² Montenegro, «Popoli», cit., p.15.

Nevertheless, the journal stopped being published from April 1942: to some this happened because of some articles, which resulted to be critical of the regime, so that Popoli was a victim of censorship³⁵³; for other the journal stopped because of the unsustainable financial situation of the Institute. In my opinion both the hypothesis should be taken into consideration given the fact that the funds to sustain the journal arrived from the MinCulPop and the Ministry of National Education, so that a suspension of those subsidies meant to condemn «Popoli» to end its activities.

On the other hand, from the documents it can be noted as «Popoli» was marked from the beginning with a heavy passivity, by costing more than 600.000 lire to the Institute³⁵⁴.

The last theme touched by Gaslini's report was the situation of the Study Office: the director showed to be really aware of the importance of those scholars for the Ispi's life, so that he asked for giving them a permanent contract. In this way they could «have a reasonable contribution on the basis of seniority, capabilities, demands of life³⁵⁵».

As it was mentioned above, Ispi tried to influence an even greater public in order to fulfill what it thought to be one of its national tasks: a pedagogical work which had to involve the world of school and education. As a matter of fact, it was Bottai that in 1937 invited the Institute to prepare a series of refresher courses on international problems, dedicated to high school professors. The brochure prepared by Ispi described the Institute as the best suited for those initiatives, and that the figures responsible for the organization of these courses were drawn from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Study Office of Ispi with the aim to «offer an objective and complete framework of the international situation³⁵⁶».

Montenegro pointed out that:

It is possible that from the beginning Bottai followed the activities of the Institutes [...] the reasons of his concern have to be founded not only in his line of political-cultural pursued during the fascist period, but also [...] in the position taken by Bottai during the war regarding the cultural sphere and intellectuals [...]³⁵⁷

And Bottai wrote a letter to Galeazzo Ciano in 1943 in which he agreed with the Minister of Foreign Affairs that in order to save Ispi from its financial crisis it was essential to create a

financial body like that one established for *Enciclopedia italiana*. I think that the idea is optimal as it would guarantee to the Institute the necessary vitality and autonomy [...] other solutions could conduct to a paralysis of the Institute making it difficult its work of fusion between different Italian intellectual groups, as well as its positive activities promoted in favor of the educational sphere. It is for these reasons that I support the abovementioned solution, in the certainty that, thanks to your concern, it will be realized³⁵⁸

In order to attain the objectives of the program, Gaslini requested increasingly important sources of finance, especially to the presidency. Pirelli at the beginning was willing to help the director but he changed his attitude when he discovered that Gaslini exceeded the allocated budget for the Institute. Pirelli made himself clear about this point: «the direction of Ispi shall be responsible to the Presidency and the Committee for the limitation of expenses and their

³⁵³ In particular the article of Mario Manlio Rossi written «in order to exalt the english Cecil Rhodes to the detriment of the Boers.

³⁵⁴ IASISPI, II.2. Consiglio, «Verbali del Consiglio Direttivo n.1 dell'Ispi», 1943.

³⁵⁵ IASISPI, II.1.1. Presidenza Ispi (1935-1945): Alberto Pirelli, «Pierfranco Gaslini», 1941.

³⁵⁶ IASISPI, II.1.1, Presidenza Ispi (1935-1945) Alberto Pirelli, «Giuseppe Bottai Ministro dell'Educazione Nazionale», 1937

³⁵⁷ Montenegro, *Politica estera e organizzazione del consenso*, cit., p.812.

³⁵⁸ The letter was sent to Ciano between 3rd and 6th of February 1943 and it shows a stamp from the Ministry of National Education. Montenegro claimed that, given the tone and date, the letter has to be attributed to Bottai, who left that office in the same days, «Joint Diplomatic Research Section», microfilm n.1195, doc.095222 in Montenegro, *Politica estera e organizzazione del consenso*, cit., p.812.

sustainability [...]. For my part I will do my utmost in order to obtain more funding from the government, because I believe in the relevance of the Institute's work and I am honestly keen to see it rewarded through the continuation and, if possible, the expansion of it³⁵⁹».

Nevertheless, it seemed as if Gaslini couldn't stop the complicated mechanisms which was put in place by the director himself: a tangle of initiatives, projects as well as contracts both concluded and promised contributed to put the institute into bankruptcy. Even if Pirelli continued to suggest to the director to give up with some initiatives and to find a more efficient way of working, Gaslini continued to venture in new deals without bothering to verify if the budget had allowed him to do so.

As a matter of fact, Pirelli continued to pressure Leonardo Vitetti as representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in order to gain new funds: the Milanese industrialist stated that «even in these days I have provide the Institute with the funds, but there are lines that I can't overtake³⁶⁰». Then, he submitted a memorandum to Mussolini in which he showed the budget of the Institute which was at a loss: all in all the deficit was represented by the journals of the Institute, in particular «Relazioni Internazionali», the “flagship” of the Institute, was losing L.193.000, not to mention administrative expenditure which amounted to L.350.000.

Moreover there were also «expenses for the major project approved by Your Excellency “Storia della politica estera italiana dalla costituzione del Regno al 1914”, work to which four excellent authors are working on [...]»³⁶¹.

Pirelli stated that if the situation didn't change, Ispi was in danger of being closed down. At the same time the President showed a real interest to save the Institute, stressing the fact that it deserved to be kept alive for the efficiency as well as the effectiveness demonstrated: all in all in view of the results of the Institute, its expenses were fairly limited.

Mussolini, maybe also persuaded by Pirelli's memorandum, decided to raise the level of the annual contribution in favor of Ispi from L.100.000 to L.200.000. In the memorandum appeared also a program with a series of manifestations planned by the Board Committee: refresher courses for high school professors; a second national symposium of foreign policy, in the wake of the great success of the first one held in 1936; a use of radio in order to inform about the initiatives of the Institute; a series of conferences, especially directed to the participation of foreign personalities, as well as some public meetings in which experts would talk about a specific theme of foreign policy in front of an audience. Moreover, for members it was thought to increase the library, to offer a more efficient examination of journals and newspaper from all over the world as well as a database with all key international events.

The decision to organize a national symposium of foreign policy was really important for the prestige of the Institute, and it offered a further instrument to keep one's finger on the pulse of Italian foreign policy during the second half of the 30s as well as how it changed from the first national symposium organized in 1936³⁶² and the second one held in 1938.

Given the great success of the first national conference, a further meeting was organized on June 1938. Both opened by Ciano, the meetings were followed by a large number of political, diplomatic and cultural personalities. The interesting thing was that, given that the two conferences dealt with topical issues, they were criticized by the same fascist authorities which sustained the

³⁵⁹ IASISPI, II.1.1, Presidenza Ispi (1935-1945) Alberto Pirelli, «Pierfranco Gaslini», 1937

³⁶⁰ IASISPI, II.1.1, Presidenza Ispi (1935-1945) Alberto Pirelli, «Leonardo Vitetti, Direttore Affari Generali, Ministero degli Affari Esteri», 1937

³⁶¹ IASISPI, II.1.1, Presidenza Ispi (1935-1945) Alberto Pirelli, «Benito Mussolini», 1937.

³⁶² The symposium was authorized by Mussolini and it was held by Ispi from 15th October to 17th October 1936. It dealt with the following topics:

- Italian interests in the eastern Mediterranean
- Italian-Hungarian-Austrian agreement as a solution for the Danube issue
- The League of Nations: its structure and reform
- Relationship between Italy and Latin America
- The issue of the distribution of raw materials

initiatives. It was written by Loviseti « the two meetings took place with the approval of the fascist hierarchies [...] but in the course of some relations and in the final discussion appeared positions and points of view which didn't go with the fascist official positions³⁶³».

This atmosphere became more problematic during the second national symposium in 1938 when appeared anti-German views, which caused the angry reaction of Ciano and Starace. In Ciano's diary there is a specific description of this event:

The speech was fine. Even if it was not easy to heat up that environment of old monarchists [vecchi malvoni]. Retired ambassadors, retired generals, retired admirals, and other retired brains constituted for the most part the audience. As a consequence, people which were willing to applaud a conservative speech which could lead Italy in a pacifist line, possibly collective. Pirelli, at the station, told me, without hiding his satisfaction, that during the discussion on Balkans there was an anti-German atmosphere. I told to Starace to put all the speakers under control, and to consider some disciplinary measure. Pirelli was terrified, and he tried to come up with some excuses which had the effect to get the situation worse [...] I don't like these conferences [...] these old men meet together and they recall the Chamber which they were used to, the immortal principles and the lodge. And in this psychological situation they forget that they were hiding under the black shirt a green apron³⁶⁴.

This fact was recalled also by Pirelli who in a note he wrote: «Conference of foreign policy inaugurated by Ciano. With my permission some anti-German attitudes emerged. Wrath of Ciano and Starace. They told me to name names but I refused»³⁶⁵.

The result was that Mussolini prevented future conferences such as organized by Ispi: «I report to the Duce some impressions on the conference. He agreed that this will be the last one³⁶⁶». «These were the first signs against the attitude and the principles which inspired Ispi's work, nevertheless they did not affect, for the moment, its activity³⁶⁷»: to the extent that the war was approaching, the work of study and dissemination became even more difficult and Ispi lost many of its prerogatives.

Nevertheless, the positive outcome of the national symposium attracted favorable comments from «Regime fascista» which in 1938 published an article about the success gained by the Milanese Institute: a body which developed a noteworthy activity in the field of study, achieving a national and international recognition. The article was quite clear in its positive assessment: «it is sufficient to look at the list of the publications to understand the usefulness for the entire nation of a private initiative started by a bunch of young people and that became an attractive place for numerous intellectuals and politicians³⁶⁸».

A peculiar expansion between debts and censorship (1940-43)

The expansion of the Institute had to deal with two kind of limits: the first one was represented by censorship which would become tighter as Italy entered into the second world war on 10th June 1940, especially in respect of its most important journal «Relazioni Internazionali»;

³⁶³ G. Loviseti, *I 60 anni dell'Ispi*, cit., p.89.

³⁶⁴ G.Ciano, *Diario 1937-1943*, a cura di R.De Felice, Rizzoli, Milano 1980, p.145.

³⁶⁵ IASISPI, Organismi, II.1.4. Promemoria, «Promemoria circa le attività e le caratteristiche dell'ISPI», 1945.

³⁶⁶ Ciano, *Diario 1937-1943*, cit., p.145.

³⁶⁷ Loviseti, *I 60 anni dell'Ispi*, cit., p.90.

³⁶⁸ IASISPI, IV.5 Rassegna stampa e rapporti con la stampa, busta 94, 738«Articoli sull'attività dell'Ispi», 1934- 1944.

secondly the Institute had to cope with a financial crisis due to the reckless editorial decisions made by Pierfranco Gaslini.

Actually, the censorship of the regime acted against Ispi for the first time on August 1937 when

on the recommendation of Ciano, the minister of Popular Culture Dino Alfieri intervened about an article dedicated to the Iraqi situation, because Ispi was accused to having endorsed the interpretations of the British Press [while] in November 1939, because of a complaint made by the press secretary of the German Embassy in Rome to the Minculpop [...] the publication in *Relazioni Internazionali* of the British White Book on German concentration camps was blocked³⁶⁹

When Italy entered to the war the possibilities to publish foreign documentations were really small, and «*Relazioni Internazionali*» increased its sales because «continuing to publish foreign sources [...] the journals met the increasing anxiety of trying to understand how things were going³⁷⁰».

Loviseti considered the function of the journal as an important source for the Italian people capable of an in-depth information «at that time [...] the reader had the possibility to maintain contact with the reality of things³⁷¹».

As a matter of fact, the journal hosted war reports of all the great powers, the complete speeches from leaders of belligerent countries as well as news and comments dedicated to international meetings, treaties, agreements which accompanied the various phases of the conflict. It has to be stressed, for instance, that Ispi published, after a translation in Italian, the complete texts of the so called colored books. They were volumes in which diplomatic acts were collected in order to illustrate the origins and the causes of the war, or particular issues linked with the war. «*Relazioni Internazionali*» published, between 1936 and 1941, the entire series: all in all 16 volumes for 400 pages.

Taking into account the difficulties, in those years, to find foreign news and to get information out of what was offered by national press, which was under the control of the fascist regime, it was natural that the readers of *Relazioni Internazionali* increased. This is confirmed by the progressive elevation of the sells which from an average of 2.600-2.900 copies reached between 1940 and 1942 an average of 20.000-25.000 copies, with a peak of 40.000³⁷²

That situation lasted until «the axe of government bans washed over *Relazioni Internazionali*³⁷³».

Particularly serious was the accident happened on December 1940 when the journal published in its entirety the speech of Metaxas (head of the Greek government) to the Greek people on 23rd November, just a few days before the Italian invasion of Greece. It was a harsh attack against Mussolini, who was depicted as the anti-Garibaldi who fought for the Greece's independence in the former century.

Loviseti pointed out that:

The reactions from Rome were severe. Pavolini gave the order to withdraw Gaslini's card, to fire Bruno Pagani, editor of the journal and he answered with an outright no to the request of Gaslini to be received in order to have some directives. On the other hand Adelchi Serena, secretary of the Fascist Party,

³⁶⁹ Decleva, *L'ISPI di Milano e la Francia (1934-1943)*, cit., p.747.

³⁷⁰ Ivi, p.746.

³⁷¹ Loviseti, *I 60 anni dell'Ispi*, cit., p.94.

³⁷² Ivi, p.94. «14.000 copies in January 1940, 18.000 the following month [...] even 43.000 in January 1941 [...] about that date we have also the specification of sale city by city: Rome 8-9.000, Milan 5000, Naples 2000, Genova 1800, Florence 1000, Palermo 900, Bari 250, Venice 500, Trieste 470» data reported by Decleva, *L'ISPI di Milano e la Francia (1934-1943)*, p.746.

³⁷³ Loviseti, *I 60 anni dell'Ispi*, cit., p.94.

wrote to Pavolini: “if the director of *Relazioni Internazionali* doesn’t change the content of the journal, by removing every news coming from enemy countries I will intervene against him with severe disciplinary measures” [...] thanks to the intervention of Pirelli who talked with Mussolini the Metaxas issue was forgotten³⁷⁴

In January 1943, the ministry of Popular Culture denounced the fact that in *Relazioni Internazionali* had appeared some French articles: «six French articles are too much!³⁷⁵».

And on 29th March of the same year Minculpop wrote to Gaslini a harsh letter:

I am surprised to observe that your promises about the prohibition to public a section dedicated to enemy personalities were like sailor’s promises ... you deserve the seizure of the journal, which I will apply next time if it is needed. I await your assurance written, formal and definitive³⁷⁶

But at that point the fascist regime was about to come to terms with the prospect of a defeat which would destroy all its illusion: «with the number 36-37 of September 1943 on the eve of the termination of Ispi’s activities due to the German invasion, *Relazioni Internazionali* suspended their publications³⁷⁷».

At the same time, the Institute had to deal with a serious financial crisis due to the adventurous editorial policy made by Gaslini as well as the new expenses related to the new headquarters of the Institute which moved to Palazzo Clerici from August 1942.

The audacity with which Gaslini undertook his initiatives revealed all the dramatic consequences if one looks at the accounts of the Institute. If on one hand Gaslini was able to provide a flow of funding to the Institute both from the private sector (Pirelli and the General Confederation of Italian Industry) and from the government (Mussolini, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Minculpop), on the other hand he wasn’t able to create a more permanent financial bases which could have sustained the Institute in a systematic way. This was the main factor of instability for Ispi: Gaslini was confident that in one way or another the President or the Head of the government would have found the money to sustain a series of initiatives that for the director were instrumental not only for the development of the Institute but also to fulfill the aspiration to transform Italy in a great power.

From the documentation it is clear that Gaslini was enthusiastic to have the opportunity to undertake new cultural initiatives: the general impression that Italy was lagging behind in respect of the creation of specific cognitive tools in international relations such as specific collections of diplomatic documents, a database with all the necessary information, a systematic publication of maps and books with which Italy could have made its voice heard, all of these elements boosted his confidence in what the Institute could have done in order to close this gap. As a consequence, Gaslini would launch an ambitious as much as incoherent program which would have the effect to dilate the duties of the Institute up to put it into bankruptcy.

Pirelli, for his part, tried to contain the situation, asking for increasingly sums to the Administration Board as well as directly to Mussolini. The correspondence of his presidency shows the efforts made by the Milanese businessman in order to persuade financial institutes and companies to make contributions to Ispi. Even if Pirelli obtained some results, it looked like if the machine put in place by Gaslini couldn’t stop growing: the new funds were used in the payment of a former debt or to finance a new initiative of the director.

That is why Pirelli, who adopted a very liberal policy towards Gaslini, requested a clear and precise budget of the Institute. On the other hand, the director seemed not to understand the seriousness of the situation: the continuing requests of clarification were contrasted by the director

³⁷⁴ Ivi, p.95.

³⁷⁵ ACS, *Ministero della Cultura popolare*, b.33, fasc.439, sottofasc. «*Relazioni Internazionali*», appunto 14 dicembre 1940 in Decleva, *L’ISPI di Milano e la Francia*, cit., p.750

³⁷⁶ Ibidem

³⁷⁷ Loviseti, *I 60 anni dell’Ispi*, cit., p.95.

by showing the high value of the publications, the prestige gained by the Institute through the organization of conferences and seminars as well as the important national and international personalities that were invited to speak.

The querelle between Pirelli and Gaslini started on 26th January 1938: «I receive the budget of 1938. You know that I recognize you many merits, but I believe that you have an insufficient sense of responsibility for what about the administrative field and, sadly, the budget which you have sent to me demonstrate this». Pirelli referred to the deficit which was L.175.000 and «a significant increase of the entry “wages” [so that] there are two solutions: or we have to increase the income or to decrease the expenses³⁷⁸».

Gaslini answered that he couldn't reduce the costs and that an increase of the wages of the members of the Study Office was needed otherwise there were the possibility that they got away; even the national examination in order to find other scholars produced no results because the Institute couldn't assure an adequate remuneration. Finally, the director shared the concerns of his president:

The situation is really distressing for the direction, not only for the material responsibility but also for the moral one, for an Institute that has conquered its own prestige at the national and international level, and that it is impossible to stop in its development [so that] or from Rome we have at least four times the actual sum or the Institute becomes like the other institutes, giving up on its periodical publications as well as its internal equipment [...] I have to add that someone wants to weaken the financial basis of the Institute with the aim to remove it or to incorporate it into the sections of some roman body³⁷⁹.

The President seemed to support Gaslini's actions and he sent a letter to Mussolini in which he listed the activities undertaken by the Institute and its financial crisis:

I think that the Institute has carried out an intense activity according to the directives of the regime, both in the field of political studies and in the dissemination of a broader political conscience among Italian people [and] as a center of research it claims, through its publications, the Italian point of view on international affairs. The Institute performs this activity together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while avoiding to look like an official or unofficial organization³⁸⁰

Pirelli pointed out the various initiatives in collaboration with the Minculpop and the Ministry of National Education: «all of this requires a considerable financial effort, also considering that the Institute has an efficient internal organization and the labor cost its relatively low³⁸¹».

In conclusion, or the regime undertook to ensure more funds or the Institute would have to dismiss a lot of initiatives. Mussolini answered in a positive way and he doubled his contribution from L.100.000 to L.200.000 per year, but this sum would not be enough for the needs of the Institute. On 1st May 1941 Pirelli wrote another letter to his director saying, once again, that his initiatives should have met the available budget of Ispi:

It is nice to be able to encompass always new bodies of knowledge, but he didn't know the laws of physics that poet who wished that birds could fly in a vacuum so that they could fly lighter. At the same time, we have to take into account economic laws and I am referring to two issues here: that which regards the economic situation of the Institute and the other one which involves the Treasury.

The most critical point for Pirelli was the status of the Treasury: «I have to say to you that here you made a mistake». According to the president, Gaslini would have spent the sum of L.500.000, allocated by the duce for the refurbishment of the new premises of the Institute at Palazzo Clerici, in editorial activities. Moreover

³⁷⁸ IASISPI, *Organismi*, II.1.1. Presidenza ISPI (1935-1945) Alberto Pirelli, «Pierfranco Gaslini», 1938.

³⁷⁹ *Ibidem*

³⁸⁰ IASISPI, *Organismi*, II.1.1. Presidenza ISPI (1935-1945) Alberto Pirelli, «Benito Mussolini», 1938.

³⁸¹ *Ibidem*

You have exceeded, behind my back, the sum allocated at the Credito Italiano and you have signed checks to an account which didn't exist. You are not a businessmen and I know that you did this in good faith, but you put me in a bad position towards the Credito Italiano which, now I hear, have contacted me for an extension of the guarantee.

As a consequence the president decided to monitor closely the actions of Gaslini and he obliged him to produce a monthly budget of the Institute with the assistance of the auditor Corridori and then examined by Pirelli himself. He wanted to put the Institute in the right direction and to consolidate the fiscal situation as soon as possible «we need to return within the limits of our possibilities³⁸²».

The answer of the director seemed to acknowledge the difficulties of the situation because the Institute, at full capacity, required more or less L.400.000:

So that the only decision which could allow the Institute to go back to normality is to suspend the publications ... I will resolve the contracts for publications [...] I have put a padlock on all the expenses [...] these criteria have to be considered as permanent so that the financial situation of Ispi is causing me a real physical and moral distress³⁸³

At the beginning of July Pirelli replied that those choices were inevitable:

You have overplayed your hand with the aim to develop the Institute [...] it was a mistake to launch an excessive number of publications and to take upon the Institute the corresponding obligations. Now, however, it could be wrong to go to the opposite extreme, making the impression that the Institute is trouble³⁸⁴.

In the meanwhile Pirelli sent another request for financial assistance to Mussolini, by proposing to increase the contribution to L.1.000.000 per year³⁸⁵.

The “misunderstanding” between Pirelli and Gaslini seemed to end there, but the issue opened again shortly after, becoming increasingly dramatic.

In April 1942, Pirelli wrote to the director for having continued to launch initiatives which were no longer under his authority³⁸⁶. The poor administrative management revealed:

A lack of programmatic discipline as well as a serious organization [...] the institute holds a huge debt with banks and creditors and it is involved with authors and collaborators. Despite the previous letters which were asking to reduce expenses and initiatives, and your approval, you didn't do anything to resolve the situation; in fact, the situation has further deteriorated³⁸⁷.

The debt of the Institute, according to Pirelli, was about L.3.000.000 in the face of a situation in which the warehouse was full of unsold copies and further publications were awaiting to be printed:

as far as the economic situation is concerned, with the staff increase without the prior consent of the presidency [...] the increased number of collaborations, with the devaluation of its copies kept in stocks, with the increase of the library, with the unfortunate initiative of «Popoli» that I didn't know about, we have reached the painful outcome of the budget of 1941 [...] all of this, dear Gaslini, doesn't make me forget what your merits are. Few others could have achieved a success like you did; but, didn't you feel the concern of having pushed the Institute too far? I agree [...] with your willingness to increase the prestige of the Institute, both as a publishing house and as a center of research; but you

³⁸² IASISPI, Organismi, II.1.1. Presidenza ISPI (1935-1945) Alberto Pirelli, «Pierfranco Gaslini», 1941.

³⁸³ Ibidem

³⁸⁴ Ibidem

³⁸⁵ IASISPI, Organismi, II.1.1. Presidenza ISPI (1935-1945) Alberto Pirelli, «Mussolini», 1941.

³⁸⁶ It is worth it to remember that, even if the financial situation was out of control, Gaslini decided to give the green light for the new editorial adventure of «Popoli».

³⁸⁷ IASISPI, Organismi, II.1.1. Presidenza ISPI (1935-1945) Alberto Pirelli, «Gaslini», 1942.

need to have also the ambition to maintain the Institute within a rigorous line where the relationship between means and ends is planned in advance³⁸⁸

Gaslini answered at the end of June offering his resignation: according to the director the economic conditions of the Institute were so serious that it was impossible to return to normal conditions, especially now that he wanted to get married and «and live a normal and quiet life». If the problem had not been solved at the root with an increase of funds, the Institute would never have been put in the condition to fulfill its tasks, as a consequence he preferred to live. Nevertheless a few days later on 6th July 1942, probably after a conversation with the head of the historical office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Francesco Salata, Gaslini found new enthusiasm and he suggested a reorganization of the Institute to Pirelli. The director envisaged a division of the Direction into two branches: «a technical-organizational section with duties in the cultural and editorial fields» which Gaslini thought for himself and «an administrative section which should be given to a person to be appointed». The two directors should be responsible only towards the president. Moreover, specific rules should be introduced in order to specify the duties of the two new directors. According to Gaslini:

The technical Director would be in charge of the functioning and development of Ispi under the organizational, cultural and editorial aspects according to the directives of the president. He would maintain contacts with the authorities, authors, printers etc.. and he would have under his authority the Study Office, the library, the Editorial Office and those offices which are involved in specific publications [...] the head of the administrative services would take care of the general administration of the Institute, including funding and he would be responsible for the contacts with banks, payments, the administration of the staff as well as for the recruitment of new personnel, except for the recruitment of the members of the Study Office which would remain a prerogative of the technical director³⁸⁹.

Pirelli answered in a negative way: according to him the direction should have been managed by a single person alongside with a «head of administrative services» and that every decision which implied a financial burden for the Institute it had to be taken with the sign of the president, or the head of administrative services. At that point, the main concern of Pirelli was to control Gaslini, avoiding that he could start again with his reckless behavior. Nevertheless, the situation of the Institute was too compromised to be saved:

In the editorial field the budgets follow each other swelling up and contradicting each other [...] I said, not only once time, that you shouldn't have signed checks beyond the approved sum: you promised me that you never would have done that again but you didn't respect that commitment (in fact right now the Italian Credit told me that you requested new loans and that you had my authorization, which I don't³⁹⁰

Once again, Gaslini had a conciliatory tone and he assured the president that all the things he did for the Institute he made them in good faith. He admitted his moral and material responsibility, consequently he was ready to resign if this was the will of Pirelli:

To me only two things are important: the continuity of Ispi and His serenity. My work is not so important [...] I try to work hard in the dark, giving up any rewards in favor of the people who work with me. I am satisfied only on one thing: to have been able to assure to the Institute skilled young scholars, capable of managing the Institute in the future, even if I would not be the director. I am confident that they would be more cautious than I am, and that they would not take the responsibilities which I took, they would be really devoted to their president.

Having said that, Gaslini renewed his resignation.

In November Pirelli, Gaslini, Giuseppe Dotto who was the manager who coordinated the renovation work of Palazzo Clerici, the three auditors Giuseppe Corridori, Mario Braschi and Giovanni Beccario met together in order to take stock of the situation which, if possible, was worse

³⁸⁸ Ibidem

³⁸⁹ Ibidem.

³⁹⁰ Ibidem.

than that denounced by Pirelli a few months earlier and the latter pointed out Gaslini and Dotto as the only responsible.

In response, Gaslini informed Pirelli of his impending marriage and his willingness to move from Milan in order to take care of his mother. The president, despite the huge debt left by the former director, wanted to congratulate him even if he didn't hide a strong sense of bitterness: «you behaved as [...] a son to interdict».

The epilogue, at least as far as Gaslini was concerned, was the official decision taken by the Administrative Board of Ispi to elect Pirelli as the Commissioner of the Institute: he summarized Gaslini's actions which led to the financial crises of Ispi, especially the fact that he continued to hide for months the real budgets, so that the president wasn't able to realize the severity of the issue. For instance, for what concerned the editorial activity «the commitments of that nature amounted to 250 works» with a final expenditure around «L.20.000.000». Gaslini informed Pirelli only about those initiatives which went well, neglecting to mention all the other as his commitments with a company for the publication of geographical, political, historical and economical maps. A lot of works were simply beyond the functions of the Institute «thus indicating Gaslini's tendency to transform the institute in a big publishing house in contravention of the fact the body couldn't afford that kind of activity». Finally, Pirelli explained his choice to put Ispi under his compulsory administration in order to better deal with that thorny situation,

Now Gaslini takes a hostile attitude against the Institute: not only he left the Institute without clarifying contracts and agreements which he personally took with authors and other institutions, but also he wants his benefits as if he was fired, while he actually resigned from the Institute³⁹¹.

In order to try to save the Institute Pirelli lent one million to the Institute and he took personal responsibility towards the Italian Credit to which Ispi was exposed for L.7.000.000. In the meanwhile he convinced the General Confederation of Italian Industry to finance the Institute for L.4.500.000 and other two million were allocated by the government.

Finally, Gaslini finished his experience as director of Ispi just when Italy was about to sign the armistice with the Allies and Pirelli founded more convenient to mothballed the Institute waiting for a better political context.

The director if on one hand left the Institute “in ruins”, with a huge debt and a proliferation of contracts to be fulfilled, on the other hand all his work was directed towards the prestige of the Institute, putting a lot of intellectuals and scholars in a situation where they could work and implement their own projects. It is no accident that one of the masterpiece of Italian historiography *Storia della politica estera italiana dal 1870 al 1896* written by Federico Chabod began with a recognition to the merits hold by the Institute for Studies in International Politics and its director Pierfranco Gaslini³⁹².

³⁹¹ IASISPI, Organismi, II.2.Consiglio, «Verbali Consiglio Direttivo n.1», 1943.

³⁹² «the origins of this work lie far back in the past. In 1936 the Institute for Studies in International Politics, on the initiative of its president Alberto Pirelli, the director Pierfranco Gaslini and Gioacchino Volpe handed the task of writing a *History of Italian Foreign Policy from 1861 to 1914*, to the late lamented Carlo Morandi (to whose memory my thoughts turn), Walter Maturi, Augusto Torre, and myself. I assumed the portion of the work covering the period from 20 September 1870 to March 1896. The Institute gave us precious assistance in every way, and I wish here to express my worm gratitude to Alberto Pirelli, Alessandro Casati, Gioacchino Volpe, Pier Francesco [Pierfranco] Gaslini, and Gerolamo Bassani [...] above all it was this assistance that made it possible to obtain free access to the historical archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to explore it fully, during the course of more than six years of research between 1936 and 1943. Thus one indispensable condition was guaranteed to our work from the outset: it was grounded on the primary documents. Without this access, the project would not have been conceived in the first place» Chabod, *Storia della politica estera italiana*, cit., p.7.

III ISPI'S OUTLOOK ON INTERNATIONAL SITUATION: THE AUSTRIAN ISSUE AND THE ANSCHLUSS IN «RASSEGNA DI POLITICA INTERNAZIONALE» AND «RELAZIONI INTERNAZIONALI».

The “historical” mission of Austria

The Anschluss and more generally the German policy of power assumed in Europe a breakthrough when Hitler took the reins of the government in January 1933, and in particular after the assassination of the Austrian chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss during an attempted coup made by Nazi conspirators on 25th July 1934.

«Rassegna di politica internazionale», right after the tragic event published an article written by Fritz Grossmann³⁹³, which showed an outright condemnation of the Austrian Nazi putsch, giving voice to the “independent” movement which was trying to find support in Italy and in Europe. The assassination of Dollfuss was represented a clear attack made by Nazi organizations against the independent Austria:

Dollfuss' government was from the begging against Hitler [he] wanted to constitute an independent state, catholic [...] maintaining strategic links with those states which were part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Hitler was willing, on the other hand, to subjugate the Austrian territory to Germany, maybe the first step towards a complete German dictatorship on Europe³⁹⁴.

The author considered Hitler's book *Meinkampf* as a «war declaration of Germanism towards the rest of the world» and the positive resolution of the Austrian issue was understood as instrumental in order to defeat that threat. He stressed the fact that what happened in Austria that 25th July was «a unique case in the modern history³⁹⁵» and that the only chance for Austria to maintain its independence was in the hope of an active support from Italy and the other European nations: «the friendly relations between Austria and Italy, the adherence to the Mussolini pact, the Austro-Italian-Hungarian Protocols, all of this can give a sense of Dollfuss' foreign policy: and common political will with Italy means common political will with Europe, as Mussolini's policy tends towards a European peace³⁹⁶».

Nevertheless, even Grossmann thought that Hitler could have been “domesticated” through a political bartering solving «the Austrian question with the Saar issue, [in this way] it could have been possible to calm the bête noire of Nazism [...] first condition to ameliorate the political situation³⁹⁷».

He believed that the new chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg would follow Dollfuss' policies but «Europe has to help Austria in order to guarantee a pacific domestic situation, obliging Germany to give up its terroristic policy³⁹⁸». Indeed, The Austrian question was considered as a European problem, with regard to which Italy, France and England had the duty to find a common

³⁹³ Fritz Grossmann was an art historian who had a strong friendship with the Vienna-School art historians for London after the Anschluss. In December 1938, as a result of the Anschluss, Grossmann of Jewish ancestry had to leave Vienna for London where he lectured extensively on art history.

³⁹⁴ Fritz Grossmann, *Dopo i recenti avvenimenti in Austria*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934, p.317.

³⁹⁵ Ibidem.

³⁹⁶ Ibidem, p.318.

³⁹⁷ Ibidem

³⁹⁸ Ivi, p.319.

solution, above all after the political success obtained by Hitler in the issue of Saar. The plebiscite held on 13th January 1935 gave an overwhelming majority in favor to the return of the Saar in the German territory. An important result «even for the German domestic policy. Saar's population is one hundred per cent German and in normal times there would be no doubts about the results: but the fact that in Germany there is a Nazi government, and the way in which the question was posed, have ensured that the plebiscite was not pro or against Hitler». The fact that Saar returned to Germany was a positive news for peace but the real question was «what kind of influence will it have on German policy?³⁹⁹». In particular «Rassegna» highlighted the aggressive attitude of Germany in the Danube sector: «Will Germany use the political success on Saar to provide other countries with some concessions, or the result will be that of a further hardening of German claims?⁴⁰⁰».

But this was only a misplaced hope: as early as March Hitler decided to reintroduce the conscription. For Ispi's journal this was not a surprise as everyone was aware of the fact that Germany was rearming, rather the way in which it chose to do it. Indeed, there had been discussions among great powers in order to allow Germany to restore part of its army but, and this was the key point, it could have done it only in exchange for some concessions which should have limited its rearmament, the acceptance of the Danube Pact and the Oriental agreement as well as the legitimation of the League of Nations and its normative power. In this perspective, Hitler's decision was a severe blow not only to the Versailles Treaty but also to the effective influence performed by other great powers on Germany. Hitler demonstrated that national interests could have prevailed if a leader was strong enough to impose his policy. Moreover the journal stressed the fact that in spite of everything, John Simon the British foreign secretary, didn't cancel his visit to Berlin, a sign that the Great Britain was willing to find a compromise. In general, this series of political events denounced the weaknesses of the League of Nations: «basically [...] the German act was a slap in the face to all those who sustained the principle of the non-violation treaties, and England was one of them». As a consequence Simon's journey to Berlin was considered a negative move both because it had the effect to divide England from France and Italy and because left Germany with the feeling that the policy based on a *fait accompli* was more profitable than a collaborative one. Nevertheless the journal stressed the importance of Franco-Italian agreements, also known as Mussolini-Laval agreement, signed two months earlier as a new opportunity to reorganize the sphere of international affairs: «the Italian-French agreements represents a firm point for the European policy, around which could be clustered those states which want to keep the peace on the continent⁴⁰¹».

But by then Hitler won another trial of strength and Simon had to come back to London without any concrete results.

International political balances were changing and the German rearmament was «the first juridical *vulnus* which strongly affected Peace Treaties»; the situation required an international meeting between the winning powers of the first world war in order to elaborate a common answer against German violations. On 11th April 1935 the representatives of France, England and Italy gathered in Stresa, but from the so called united front revealed a lot of internal contradictions: basically «it left the three powers [...] free to continue their own actions [...] with the aim of promoting national interests which had little to do with the problem of collective security, rather with the old tradition of power politics⁴⁰²».

Nevertheless, «Rassegna» interpreted the outcome of the Conference in a positive way: at the end of the day the three powers were able to find an agreement for defending the independence

³⁹⁹ *Orientamenti*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», n.2 1935, p.66.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰¹ *Orientamenti*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», n.4 1935, p.8.

⁴⁰² Ennio Di Nolfo, *Storia delle relazioni internazionali 1918-1999*, Laterza, Bari 2003.

of Austria as well as to announce «a further conference among all the interested parties, in order to reach a deal about Austria and the Danube Europe⁴⁰³»

Having said that, the journal showed a divergence of views about the general interpretation of the meeting held in Stresa: in “Orientamenti”, the section of the journal in which were reproduced the positions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Conference was considered a success in so far as the solidarity among the three European powers didn’t mean a more connected action in the field of international affairs, leaving to every nation the possibility to decide and to implement its own foreign policy.

On the other hand, Latinus, alias Pietro Quaroni⁴⁰⁴, tried to frame the situation into a broader perspective, stressing both the necessity to safeguard the independence of Austria to «free up the Austrian population from this *feeling of doom*, so that they could decide [...] in perfect freedom» as well as to implement the discussion for a new Danube Pact. According to Quaroni, the Pact was essential to fix the socio-economic situation in the Danube area with a positive effect also for the Austrian question. The aim of reinforcing the Danube area was seen as the best antidote against both the policy of power pursued by Germany as well as to the political projects performed by the French government through the so called Little Entente, an alliance formed after the war by Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia in order to prevent a Habsburg restoration. In order to do this it was essential to take seriously the Hungarian revisionism as Italy did «in other words, nobody is asking them to give up to their policy principles: they are asked to maintain this policy within the legal limits of what we can call of good neighborliness⁴⁰⁵».

Finally, he admitted that a solution was difficult to find because of two types of problem: on one hand the latent distrust between Danube states, on the other hand there was Germany with its shameless policy of power, which seemed not ready to put limits on its international action. Nevertheless it was important to seriously try because the conclusion of a Danube Pact would have produced a positive atmosphere and «many of the issues that now seem insoluble could, in a more mutual understanding, find an easier solution⁴⁰⁶».

In the meanwhile the journal was trying to deepen the Austrian issue with a focus on its capital, Vienna. It was Italo Zingarelli, at that time a young foreign correspondent from «La Stampa», who wrote an article about the function of Vienna in which he stressed the difficult situation of the Austrian capital in exercising its economic and cultural tasks, by including it in the broader question of Austria independence⁴⁰⁷. According to the journalist, Vienna had exercised a powerful influence and it had been able to deal with the pan-German ambitions thanks to the enormous geographical area on which it ruled, but after the Peace Treaties it was reduced to a small area, by depriving it of those instruments which were essential to the stability of the region. Moreover, its neighboring countries didn’t have any interest to help the Austrian capital, because they were scared by a possible restoration of the Hapsburg monarchy. This situation favored pan-Germanism which was trying to lure Vienna «we will give you a chance to once again become what you were⁴⁰⁸». In addition to this, Zingarelli stressed the fact that Germany was trying to dismantle the cultural position of Vienna, swallowing its academic and artistic world into the German one. The solution could have been to appoint Vienna as the headquarters of the League of Nations so that it could have performed its natural role of observatory to central and Balkan Europe «becoming

⁴⁰³ *Orientamenti*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», n.5 1935, p.4.

⁴⁰⁴ Pietro Quaroni was an important Italian diplomat and politician who was appointed president of RAI (Radiotelevisione Italiana) from 1964 to 1969. Because of his critical view of the way in which Italian foreign policy was conducted, Mussolini appointed him as ambassador in Kabul, Afghanistan. Quaroni collaborated with the Institute from the beginning: Ispi in 1935 published an important book *L'Italia e I problemi internazionali*, in which he attempted to summarize the international situation and the issues which Italy would have faced in the coming years in line with « the jealous preservation of national interests».

⁴⁰⁵ Latinus, *La conferenza per l'Europa danubiana*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», n.5 1935, p.9.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p.18.

⁴⁰⁷ Italo Zingarelli, *La funzione di Vienna*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», n.5 1935.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p.22

the capital of the world [...] showing to the other governors its artistic heritage». Basically, Zingarelli pointed out that it would have been the duty of the winning powers to guarantee the political and military aspects of an independent Austria as it couldn't do it by itself.

In June, «Rassegna» reported a speech made by Mussolini in which it was possible to recognize some changes in his attitude towards Austria: he said that the Austrian question had to be involved the whole Europe and not only Italy:

The last 25th July, when Austria seemed having to suffer an invasion of Nazis, Italy was the only country which [...] had the courage to do something concrete. Vienna [...] preserves its strategic position in the Danube area [so] once Germany would occupy Vienna, in a short time [...] it would be the hegemonic power in Central and Balkan Europe, as a consequence it would be the final arbiter of the whole Europe. So the fact to guarantee to Austria a place from which it can become again a cultural and trade center [...] it is an essential guarantee for the European equilibrium. Now, it is true that Italy has in Central and Balkan Europe a series of political and economic interests but when the European hegemony is at stake, it is clear that the interest of Italy, which is not an hegemonic power, is without any doubts of a lower degree compared to that of other nations.

In short, Italy was willing to defend Austria only if it was supported by the other great powers, since it didn't want to give up to «any other possibilities to expand [...] all over the world. in this perspective, Italy would be in the forward areas⁴⁰⁹».

This was a very important statement as Mussolini seemed to shift from an unconditional defense of Austria to a more nuanced position: for sure, this didn't mean to leave Austria to its fate but it stressed that the period of bold and unilateral action to save Austria was finished. This change in tone was strictly connected with the renewed colonial ambition of Fascist Italy, especially with Mussolini's plan to invade Ethiopia.

The second point of his speech was exactly about Italian interests in Ethiopia: «Italy [...] wants to be left alone to judge what is the best for its interests. Above all Italy wants that the Ethiopian question represents the touchstone of other powers' friendship to her. Solidarity constitutes a general attitude: it is not possible to be supportive on one point and to be at complete odds on another one, especially if this point is, for a given country, a vital interest⁴¹⁰».

The speech presented a quite clear dichotomy: on one hand Mussolini considered the issue between Italy and Ethiopia as a colonial question, so that Italy could have decided for itself what was the right thing to do; on the other hand the Austrian independence represented a European problem, and in this case it could have been useful to bring out the old principle of balance. Basically, for Mussolini a cooperation between nations meant to have a free hand in the African territories and at the same time to be able to reach a shared solution for European issues «if this is not the case, soon or later the front would be destined to crumble and everyone should have thought about the best way to defend its own interests⁴¹¹». The center of gravity of Fascist foreign policy was moving from Eastern Europe to the Mediterranean area and its hostility against the League of Nations as well as those powers which seemed to control it (Great Britain and France) grew accordingly.

In the next number of «Rassegna» the section *Orientamenti* hosted an analysis of the speech held by Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons about the controversial international situation, stressing his willingness to consider the Austrian question as a European issue. This statement appeared to satisfy the Italian representatives even if it was reaffirmed the refusal to gain the British involvement in Austria as a counterpart on the Italian withdrawal in Ethiopia: «England is a satisfied country, it can sustain the League of Nations as it is [...] it is like the situation of a rich man, well-fed and philanthropic, who can wait patiently for social reforms. But, is it certain that other nations, which need those reforms, are still so patient? This is the Italian situation before the

⁴⁰⁹ *Orientamenti*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», n.6 1935, p.12.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibidem*

⁴¹¹ *Ibidem*, p.13.

League of Nations [...]»⁴¹². The attitude of the journal with regard to the international situation sustained Mussolini's directives: proposals for greater collaborations or threats of rupture with Anglo-French forces have to be understood as tactical moves in order to fulfill the most important goal of Mussolini foreign policy which was the international recognition of the Italian annexation of Ethiopia.

On the other hand there was still some degree of distrust about German foreign policy: the journal denounced a pretentious attitude of Germany which tended to take a step backward as regards its commitments made to the Oriental and Danube Pact, confirming a potential imperialistic policy in those territories.

All in all, «Rassegna» closed 1935 with a number in which was stressed the Italian-Ethiopian conflict as the crucial event for Italian foreign policy: « to overcome this situation, to prepare from the Italian-Ethiopian conflict the basis for a solution which takes into account Italian dignity and interests [...]: these are the impeding tasks for international politics in the coming year⁴¹³». As a matter of fact, 1936 would have been a period of full development for Ispi. Pirelli's speech for the inauguration of the new cultural year of the Institute⁴¹⁴ was really confident:

Our library has been enriched, specialized in historical and diplomatic books, and it is increased the number of foreign journals and newspapers [...] our headquarters are becoming an interesting cultural center too. Our publications were widely accepted by the general public. Conferences will be limited but more useful [...] I have the feeling that the Institute has found a large correspondence to those spheres which are eager to increase their culture and to wisely follow the development of the international questions. The Institute has contributed to broaden everyone's horizons and this is for the country an expansion of its intellectual ruling class. Historical culture is instrumental to offer those basis for any good interpretations of international dynamics, on the other hand woe to those who prefer to study the past without any connections with contemporary matters. We are and we have to be men of our time. The Institute has a twofold aim: to follow latest events in light of historical insights as well as to contemporary political patterns⁴¹⁵.

Moreover, the journal reported a token of appreciation made by the secretary of the fascist party Achille Starace: « [...] I am following with great interest the activity of the Institute for Studies in International Politics. Its noble goals and its work of political education deserve to be praised⁴¹⁶». The first conference of the year held by Federzoni on the Mediterranean issue marked the shift which was mentioned above from a foreign policy more concerned with a search for an hegemonic influence in the Balkans and in the Danube areas, finding a positive equilibrium in Europe to international directives which gave priority to the Mediterranean area, pushing for a settlement of the colonial issue. Federzoni stressed the fact that the major problem for Italy was the hegemonic action implemented by the English Empire in the Mediterranean which was starting to disturb the political plans of fascist Italy

as long as Italy was harnessed by domestic crises as well as by the paralysis of the Parliament, London wasn't concerned with Italian prerogatives in Libya, Dodecanese [...] but now that Italy has been reborn thanks to fascism and its military and political power restored, London tends to modify its traditional policy in the Mediterranean areas [...] this is why it opposes our legitimate demands in Ethiopia, an opposition that is the clear reflection of English concern⁴¹⁷

His understanding of the League of Nations was linked with the feeling that the latter was, in principle, against every new political force which was trying to fulfil its own aspirations «it is

⁴¹² *Orientamenti*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», n.7 1935, p.5.

⁴¹³ *Ivi*, p.10.

⁴¹⁴ To mark the occasion it was organized a conference held by Luigi Federzoni, senator and president of the Royal Academy of Italy on «the Mediterranean issue».

⁴¹⁵ *Vita dell'Istituto*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», marzo 1936, pp.136-137.

⁴¹⁶ *Ivi*, p.136.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p.138-139.

impossible for a State to enjoy its own independence if it doesn't have the possession of its shipping routes, unless that it could benefit from a full economic autarchy, which is not the case of Italy, lacking in raw materials and closed within this sea⁴¹⁸». Federzoni's speech would have inaugurated a new leitmotiv in the pages of the journals of the Institute: a strong critique against British foreign policy in the Mediterranean sea, which was blamed as it was not able to recognize «the vital interests of Imperial Italy».

Alberto Pirelli in a speech held as president of Ispi on 27th February 1936 at the American Club of Paris was quite clear in his argumentation in favor of the Italian action against Abyssinia. Even Pirelli stressed «the need for expansion by Italy» a problem which was «urgent and it is a crucial issue». The president referred in particular to the demographic problem: «Italy is densely populated: 140 inhabitants per square kilometer» and if in the past it could have solved the problem through emigration, this was no longer possible in those days in which a series of anti-immigration laws appeared first in the United States and then in the rest of the world. Pirelli listed all the achievements made by the regime, from an increment of the agricultural and industrial production, to the modernization of the educational system which led to a «natural increased trade⁴¹⁹». Then, there came a protectionist policy:

how is it possible for a country with an increasing population, with a lack of raw materials to deal with a limitation in its migration as well as trade policy? Is it not the expansion in the colonial field the obvious, even if partial, substitute for these outlets which now are missing?». Pirelli went up to denounce Hoare's proposal as insufficient to meet Italian needs, also considering the fact it was made by a country which «has considered vital to secure for its people the political hegemony of the broadest colonial territory⁴²⁰».

On the other hand, according to the president, all the great powers agreed that Italy was unfairly treated in the field of colonial compensations:

one of the reasons why Italian public opinion feels offended is that the largest opposition comes from those nations which were the first to conduct a policy of colonial conquests obeying, however, to a respectable needs to expand as well as to a civilizing mission [...] now Italy is doing what other nations did before it [...] in a time in which Italy couldn't participate in the race [...] it is the long-standing issue about the contrast between the right of barbarian peoples to independence and the right of most developed nations to extend to them the benefits of civilization, putting in value, for the good of all, the untapped resources of those areas⁴²¹.

The mission to which Italy was called exceed the "legalism" of the League of Nations, especially when the Geneva institution was suspected of being the *longa manus* of British and French interests, an international body which was unable to be impartial: «I read about English bishops and priests who speak of the just war against Italy [but] why is it the Covenant no applicable in Asia or in Latin America, and instead it is valid for Africa? Justice on geographic basis?». According to the Italian businessman the League of Nations didn't have the necessary legitimation to act as an international court, not only because of a lack of credibility and means, but also for a more ontological reason: «it can't exist a judgmental body which is not hand in glove with vested interests [...] even if it is true that some directives in foreign policy assume constant characters, however experience shows that very often they are affected by the changing political conditions of every nation [...] the repercussions of these fluctuations on the function of the League as an international court could take away that guarantee of objectivity which constitutes the

⁴¹⁸Ibidem.

⁴¹⁹ A.Pirelli, *Considerazioni sul conflitto italo-etiopeico*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», March 1936, p.141.

⁴²⁰ Ibidem, 144.

⁴²¹ Ibidem, 145.

foundation of the judgment [...] *the reality is that the League of Nations is a political body so that it has to adapt its actions to the political reality of the time*⁴²²».

It is important to notice that Pirelli considered the foreign policy conducted by the fascist regime up to that time as evidence of «heartfelt support» towards the policy of the League of Nations, including its attempts to promote collective security and a stable European system; even the Mussolini pact was interpreted by the president of Ispi as «the last attempt to apply in Europe the League's principles [...] Italy gave a large contribution to the solution of the Saar issue [...] even today we show a sincere will to collaborate with the League, despite the unfair treatment we had to bear. Why should we confuse this policy of peace conducted by Italy with a colonial enterprise?». Pirelli fully legitimized Italian penetration in Abyssinia, pointing out that Italy had special prerogatives in those territories for decades through religious missions, commercial exchanges, the occupation of Massua and the Ucciali treaty. He kept saying that all the controversies were born out of ignorance about the real terms of the issue and that, exactly for this reason, Ispi would have prepared a volume to dig deeper into this subject: «I can guarantee you that what Italian public opinion found profoundly unfair was the fact that the League of Nations the last September proposed to put Abyssinia under the tutelage of a collective mandate instead of giving it to Italy, which would have been the most suitable solution in terms of geographical, historical and political conditions». Actually there would be two books published by Ispi in 1936 about the Ethiopia issue⁴²³. One of them, *Il conflitto italo-etiopeico. Documenti. I vol: dal trattato di Ucciali al 3 ottobre 1935*, was considered the most updated instrument regarding Italian-Ethiopian relationship available to scholars as it linked treaties, conventions, diplomatic notes, speeches of key international figures, Parliament and League of Nations' debates. The introduction written by Giulio Caprin «clearly shows what a great mistake was to include a colonial operation in a wider European controversy». The documentation which goes from the Ucciali Treaty to the beginning of military operations «was collected with a historical criteria and the volume can be considered a history book for itself, a comprehensive volume of the history of Italian-Ethiopian relations, that is nowadays the foreground event of Italian political life⁴²⁴».

What about the decision of the League of Nations to apply a series of economic sanctions to Italy? Even in this case Pirelli was very clear: «or we can find a quick solution or there will be a war [...] it is unacceptable to consider Abyssinia as equal as my country» and he was sure that a historian of the future would judge in favor of Italy this issue because of «its needs for expansion, the unworthiness of Ethiopian conduct, the series of legitimate treaties, the background of colonial history which shows the control of the most civilized nations over barbarian territories which are unable to progress by themselves». All in all, Pirelli's speech was an evidence of a general way of thinking which was shared by the members of Ispi: the sanctions were considered as the result of a misunderstanding in which legalistic procedures overcame political-historical factors: «Italy wants security in Africa and peace in Europe».

Still in April there was a shaky international situation, with the willingness of the British government to keep implementing sanctions against Italy, failing to recognize the Italian intervention in Abyssinia as legitimate. An attitude which was judged by the journal as detrimental for the maintenance of peace in Europe: «sanctions have the effect to isolate Italy, excluding it from the circuit of international forces. This act is quite naïve: in a situation such as that in Europe which is chronically unstable [Italian weight] can't be deleted by a Geneva decision⁴²⁵».

The declaration of the Italian Empire on 9th May 1936 was welcomed by the Institute with open arms, echoing the expressions of delight and manifestations of collective exaltations made by

⁴²² Emphasis added, Ibidem, 148.

⁴²³: *Breve storia del conflitto italo-etiopeico attraverso i documenti* 173p., and *Il conflitto italo-etiopeico. Documenti. I vol: dal trattato di Ucciali al 3 ottobre 1935*, intr. Giulio Caprin, 550p. «Documenti di politica internazionale».

⁴²⁴ *Le pubblicazioni dell'Ispi*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», April 1936, p.324

⁴²⁵ *Orientamenti*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», April 1936, p.239.

the fascist government and the Italian people. According to this, «Rassegna» opened with an introduction in which triumphalism, rhetoric and admiration for the duce and his work coupled with the feeling to have accomplished that long-standing national mission which was undertaken by Italy from its formation: «on 9th May [...] Italy participates in the international game with its weight and prestige of Imperial Power, winning, on its own merits, against a coalition of 52 states⁴²⁶».

The victory of Italy in Ethiopia and the remilitarization of Rhineland constituted the most important events in the international scenario of 1936 and their consequences would have led to a further restatement of the balance of power in Europe. According to the journal, Italy with its colonial possession had shown «a great military power and its formidable energies of growth [...], it has the strongest aircraft, one of the largest Navy and it had in Africa crucial strategic positions [...] so that it can follow resolutely its own interests⁴²⁷».

In this perspective, «Rassegna» continued to blame the British foreign policy, stressing the unequal treatment accomplished by the “perfidious Albion” in dealing with international matters: on one hand the English government preferred to take a wait and see attitude as regards the Rhineland issue, on the other hand it was pressing for a stricter action as regards Italy. The Italian government chose to use the German aggressive policy to negotiate a new Stresa front: as a matter of fact, for the journal it was clear that in order to unlock the Rhineland issue the support of Italy was fundamental, given the vulnerability of the European balance. The collapse of the Locarno system and the continuation of an unstable international situation allowed «Rassegna» to recognize the roots of the crises in the failure of Western democracies, judged unable to resolve the situation exactly because of their too anachronistic and slow to meet the needs of a changing world. Germany was no longer playing within the legal framework created at Versailles and the British government, with its attitude to shape foreign policy directives according to «the popular mood», wasn’t able to cope with the situation. Even when France demanded to be sustained by Great Britain in order to produce a harsh response to the continuous violations made by Hitler, it didn’t get any results. Also here, the journal was very clear in offering Italian help in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. On the other hand «Rassegna» strove to show how the newborn Imperial Italy was growing stronger day by day. For instance the Danube protocols of Rome «developing previous agreements [allowed] to the Austrian, Hungarian and Italian governments to join in a group with a permanent advisory body [...] in this way there is a single guidance which guarantees the compactness of the new organization [...]»⁴²⁸.

In the meantime, «Rassegna» hosted a series of contributions in which it is more likely to detect if and to what extent the journal had its own agenda: the pages which followed the section “Orientamenti” gave the opportunity to dig deeper into a specific international problem and, in some cases, to highlight points of view which gave different shades on the themes treated by Italian foreign policy. In the first place, it is useful to note that the journal gave a lot of space to the Austrian issue. As a matter of fact, it was hosted an article written by the successor of Dollfuss, Kurt Von Schuschnigg in which he stressed the twofold mission of Austria «to be a bulwark against the new ideas which put in danger the European cultural heritage as well as to be a mediator between several neighboring cultures⁴²⁹». It was meaningful that after the clear intention of Mussolini to consider Austria nothing more than a border, «Rassegna» hosted an article by the new Austrian Chancellor in which it was reaffirmed the will of Austria to exist as an independent nation, stressing both its role as a mediator and as a barrier against the “Slavic threat”. Another peculiarity of the Austrian nation was to be a synthesis between Catholic and German traditions: «the new Austria believes that [...] it can fulfill its traditional responsibility: through a bilateral collaboration between states which goes beyond nationalities it could serve a new European ideal⁴³⁰».

⁴²⁶ Introduction in «Rassegna di politica internazionale», May 1936, pp.325-326.

⁴²⁷ *Orientamenti*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», May 1936, p.331.

⁴²⁸ *Ibidem*, p.343.

⁴²⁹ Kurt Von Schuschnigg, *Ideologia della nuova Austria*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», maggio 1936, p.351.

⁴³⁰ *Ibidem*, p.359.

Indeed, articles were also directed to the question of sanctions. In June «Rassegna» identified a further diaphragm between Italy and the League of Nations because of the victory, in France, of the radical leftist movements which allied themselves in the so called Popular Front. The new head of the government Leon Blum was considered by the journal as an anti-fascist who would do anything to hinder the new Italian imperial policy. These changes in French domestic policy would have done nothing but accentuate English intransigence towards Italy:

the head of the government, Mr. Eden, took responsibility to call the Ethiopian [l'etiopico] to the Council [in Geneva]. The Italian response was immediate [...] our delegation left the Council, withdrawing its collaboration with the League of Nations [...] the Council decided to maintain sanctions⁴³¹.

According to the journal, in this way the League of Nations was in danger of losing an important member of the Council, giving up to the possibility to organize a system of collective security. The Rhineland issue was there as evidence of the current state of crisis: Germany began to build fortifications, showing no signs of stopping its policy of power; on the other hand « [...] it is the very principle of collective security which was seriously wounded by the contrast between European great powers. Locarno guarantees are vanished and the Rhineland crisis is far from being solved⁴³²». The dialectic of the Italian government followed the same line, stressing both the inability of western democracies to find a viable solution to Hitler's aggressive policy, as well as Italy's key role to determine the new European balance. Visions of permanent conflict prevailed also regarding the Little Entente: each of the three states had different concerns, Romania was against Hungary, the Czechs were against Germany, Yugoslavia had some issues against Austria and Italy.

To feed this international disorder contributed the problem of rearming those Danube States which lost the First World War. In particular, «Rassegna» chose to follow this issue focusing on Austria. From the pages of the Ispi journal, Italo Zingarelli declared himself in favor of the action took by the Austrian government to reintroduce the universal military service in order « to give all citizens the feeling to defend their national independence, being Austria destined to be, by its geographical, political and strategic position, the center of the European nervous system⁴³³».

The governmental official view on foreign affairs was revived by the journal through an interview made by Mussolini for the Daily Telegraph at the end of May. The duce listed the goals of Italian foreign policy: «Italy has to fulfill those responsibilities derived from its victory in Ethiopia. This doesn't mean that Italy should slow its partnership for peace; indeed, security and order of the continent are Italian interests. Italian action could be more effective and impartial as it doesn't have hegemonic aims in Europe, and also because it has no reason to be wary of the other European states⁴³⁴». On this occasion, Mussolini stressed the common objectives between Italy and England, which represented the two counterweights of the European balance, the only guarantee of a return to the «Locarno spirit». A scenario which, according to the duce, could have been possible only if England and, as a consequence the League of Nations, would withdraw both the sanctions against Italy and its fleet stationed in the Mediterranean sea: «until this act is not made any involvement of Italy is excluded⁴³⁵». Within this argument there was a strong conviction that those ideals which contributed to defend the League of Nations and its ideals of peace as well as to organize the international system around the principle of collective security, they lost all meaning: the growth of the anti-sanction movement was seen as a transition «from abstract principles to a more solid ground represented by imperial interests⁴³⁶».

⁴³¹ *Orientamenti*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», June 1936, p.447

⁴³² *Ibidem*, p.449.

⁴³³ Italo Zingarelli, *Il riarmo dell'Austria*, June 1936, p.468.

⁴³⁴ *L'intervista al Daily Telegraph*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», luglio 1936, p.511.

⁴³⁵ *Ibidem*, p.512.

⁴³⁶ *Ivi*, p.517.

A sign of this new trend was identified with the return of Samuel Hoare to positions of power, as he was considered to represent the clear affirmation of imperial interests over idealistic positions. As a matter of fact, the pacifist positions appeared «utopian and dangerous⁴³⁷». Hoare was near to Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who «in a speech defined a “typical example of heat wave madness [pazzia canicolare]” the attitude of the President of the League of Nations Union, who sustained the necessity to increase sanctions in order to defend Abyssinia independence⁴³⁸». Chamberlain highlighted the failure of the sanctions policy «which was not able to prevent the war [...] if we still have a little common sense we need to admit that we have imposed to the League a responsibility which it couldn't take [...] the time has come to limit the functions of the League as they can meet its effective power⁴³⁹». It was clear that the British government showed a change of attitude and that the success of the Italian invasion in Abyssinia had had its effects: now the priority was to reconstruct a common front against Hitler's policy, so that the issue of sanctions had to fall soon.

Regarding the Danube sector «Rassegna» backed Schuschnigg's efforts to follow the Roman protocols and at the same time to maintain normal relations with Germany. On the other hand it was noticed the difficulties of the Little Entente: the Czechs and Romania were directed towards an agreement with the Soviet Union, while Yugoslavia, particularly linked with Germany, couldn't accept that situation. According to the journal «Berlin has made Yugoslavia as the base of its political and economic penetration in the Balkans⁴⁴⁰».

Nevertheless the League of Nations continued to host the Ethiopian delegation within the Assembly, maintaining the sanctions against Italy. As a consequence «Rassegna» wrote pungently about the Geneva institution: «an irresponsible assembly [in which] the deserter Tafari made a speech deeply offensive for our country and our soldiers», while Italy's behavior was considered «constructive⁴⁴¹».

The situation partially changed on 15th July when the League of Nations voted unanimously for the withdrawal of sanctions and the journal welcomed the event as a return to a «healthy political realism», while it appeared more problematic the plan to reform the Geneva institution. As a matter of fact, the fascist regime undertook a determined strategy in order to erode the idea of collective security, proposing a series of bilateral pacts which were thought to be functional to the Italian hegemonic policy in the Danube area and in the Balkans.

Once again, it was the international context to modify the political agenda of every single nation, mapping out new scenarios in which the various states had to test their room for maneuver and their alliances: in July 1936 nationalist forces guided by general Franco carried out a military coup against the Republican government in Spain, starting a long and brutal civil war. What was the journal's attitude towards the conflict?

As noted above, the section *Orientamenti* reflected the informal position of the government from which it may be observed how Mussolini emphasized his detachment from the Anglo-French front and his steps in the process of alignment with Nazi Germany, thereby facilitating the *Anschluss*. As a consequence, the journal took a firm position in favor of the principle of non-intervention in the Spanish civil war, so as to ensure the conflict wouldn't take an international proportions. In fact, this formal position didn't prevent Mussolini from sustaining Franco's cause to defeat the Republican front. Indeed, this misconduct regarding international agreements was not recognized by «Rassegna» which, in turn, criticized the French government as it tried to help the Spanish Republicans: «while the civil war was continuing with all its horrors, it was object of universal admiration the humanitarian attitude of fascist Italy. Concerning about our fellow citizens safety the Duce ordered to move some of our warships in Spanish waters, rescuing thousands of

⁴³⁷ Ibidem, p.518

⁴³⁸ Ibidem.

⁴³⁹ Ibidem, 519.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴⁴¹ *Orientamenti*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», August 1936, p.57

Italians [...]»⁴⁴². The machinery put in motion by the fascist regime in order to sustain Franco's forces had a decisive impact to the Austrian issue: the danger was that Italy and Germany «could reach an agreement at the expense of Austria and its independence». This hypothesis «developed when it seemed clear that Italy started to soften its position in the relation to German foreign policy»⁴⁴³.

In this perspective, «Rassegna» highlighted the positive rapprochement between Germany and Austria marked by the German-Austrian agreement signed on 11th July in which «Austria guaranteed its alignment to the Reich's policy»⁴⁴⁴, judging the agreement as a further element of stability and a recognition of Austrian independence, even if there wasn't a clear rejection of the Anschluss from Hitler.

As a result of the Austrian-German agreement [...] every point of contrast between the fascist regime and the Nazi one vanished, it is envisaged a new and solid order of the Danube area and in front of a policy stubbornly anti-Italian and anti-German promoted by “the block of democracies” it was opposed a solid Italian-Austrian-German-Hungarian friendship

Towards a Europe of opposing blocks

At that point «Rassegna» raised the specter of a Europe divided into two opposing blocks in order to boost the aims of Italian foreign policy: concerned with this possibility

England assumes now towards Rome and Berlin a more flexible attitude [...] the agreement between Austria and Germany, the new friendship between the latter and Italy as well as the direction impressed to the British foreign policy by the Foreign Office constitute after a long period of tensions, the first signs of an improvement of the international situation»⁴⁴⁵.

The optimistic analysis hosted in «Rassegna» betrayed the pride of having won a tug of war against what was considered the *primus inter pares* among Great powers, a success which hid the disastrous consequences for the international system as a whole: on one hand a lack of understanding about Hitler's policy of power and on the other hand an ideological overestimation about the real Italian capabilities didn't allow to reveal the impasse towards which Mussolini was conducting the Italian nation.

Nevertheless another way was possible as illustrated by undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fulvio Suvich: he put the independence of Austria as the *condicio sine qua non* for a good relationship with Germany, and the only scenario from which it would have been possible to develop an Italian hegemonic policy towards the Balkans: the Anschluss would have meant an uncontested development of Germany towards the Eastern area. According to Suvich:

sacrificing Austria would be [...] a big mistake [...] it would be a dangerous illusion to believe that Germany once arrived to Brennero it will stop there without trying to cross it [...] it means not to be aware of the history of Germany and to ignore the mentality of the German people to think that Germany won't do everything possible to reach the Adriatic sea [...] Germany in Vienna means Germany in Budapest [...] Italy will have to withdraw from its position in the Balkans [...] this is the true aspect of Anschluss [...]»⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴² *Orientamenti*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», September 1936, p. 645.

⁴⁴³ Enzo Collotti, *Fascismo e politica di potenza. Politica estera 1922-1939*, La Nuova Italia, Milano 2002, p.301.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p.305.

⁴⁴⁵ *Orientamenti*, cit., p.584.

⁴⁴⁶ Collotti, *Fascismo e politica di potenza*, cit., pp.305-306.

According to Suvich the German move should have been read more as an imperialistic attempt to enlarge its sphere of influence rather than as a national reunification.

Nevertheless, «Rassegna» and more generally the work of Ispi was not limited in reflecting official positions, as it was demonstrated by an article written under a pseudonym towards the end of the year. The author *Sabinus* focused on the theme of a new Locarno: admitting that the former agreement was dead, he tried to rethink the entire issue starting from a new standpoint which emphasized the attempt to bring Germany back in the international system. According to the author, the new hot spot of the international scenario was in the Eastern Europe rather than in Rhineland: a context in which «Germanism and Slavism return to clash [...] while the League of Nations has lost its effectiveness and its prestige. The system of French alliances is crumbling [...] the Little Entente is blocked by divergent interests [...] Germany broke its isolation and it resumes its march eastward⁴⁴⁷». As a consequence, he thought that the international system should have remolded its line of actions according to those objective changes in terms of power and prestige. This was even more urgent given the fact that France was considered to have brought forward a complicated alliance system (see for example the agreement with Russia) in which it found itself «wrapped». Indeed, according to *Sabinus* the international issue can be summarized in a «tenacious struggle between Germany and France. The former wants to exclude Russia from international collaboration, the latter is doing the opposite thing. England seems to sustain the French action; Italy has made it clear that the conversations must be limited to those nations interested in rebuilding Locarno⁴⁴⁸. The article concluded claiming that the only possible solution was to renew the Locarno treaty removing the prohibition of the remilitarization of the Rhineland. In this case, alongside a series of fierce attacks against the League of Nations and the movement pro-sanctions there was an attempt to restore the balance in Europe, after the disarray made by the Italian-German actions: a proposal which aimed at recovering the Locarno Treaty updating it in parallel to the new international events.

It was in this international atmosphere that Ispi organized the first National Congress on Foreign Policy, held in Milano in the magnificent setting of Sforza castle. 1936 was a positive year for the Institute which was able to expand its study and editorial activities. A note from the first page of «Rassegna» pointed out that the Institute was really active «after just two years after its birth, it produces a solid organization of study, in which a group of young scholars work with enthusiasm and perseverance, able to draw into its sphere a lot of Italian intellectuals. From a systematic examination of international events to a series of documentary collections, from the publication of journals to the elaboration of historical essays, from specialized monographies to “popular” works : all of this is produced by our laboratory, with a clear division of labor but with a conscious unity of purposes and ideals⁴⁴⁹».

Pirelli inaugurated the Congress before an audience formed by diplomatists, hierarchs, officials, academicians, students «men of thought and actions, mature and young men, indeed people of diverse profession and preparation⁴⁵⁰» and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Galeazzo Ciano:

Our Congress which is organized in order to examine some of the most important Italian foreign policy's international issues, it meets in a crucial time for the entire world [...] this year is ending with a restless and distrustful international situation, which is casting an ominous shadow over Europe, while every State is trying to rearm itself for defensive as well as offensive purposes [...] the duce [...] has given to our country an international prestige which is one of its main indices of its new power [...] to be worthy of the position conquered in the hierarchy of nations and of its international mission, Italian people must therefore

⁴⁴⁷ *Sabinus*, *Conversazioni per una nuova Locarno*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», October 1936, p.703.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p.708.

⁴⁴⁹ *Nota introduttiva*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», ottobre 1936, p.693.

⁴⁵⁰ I° Convegno Nazionale di politica estera, *Mediterraneo orientale, i protocolli di Roma, Italia e America Latina, Le materie prime, Società delle Nazioni*, Ispi, October 1936 Milan, p.387.

broaden its cultural preparation in the field of foreign policy studies as to guarantee to the duce the conscious participation of all the vital elements, who have to be aware of the future of the Nation⁴⁵¹.

Pirelli pointed out that in those last years there was an increase of political studies in Italy not only in institutes of culture or in academic environments rather in certain «specialized journalism» and that Ispi was part of this new wave. Through its activities, Ispi was trying to perform the task of collecting and inform with sound materials the Government and its foreign policy, acting as a new and more efficient analysis tool to understand the increasingly complex international dynamics be able to reach the most appropriate solutions. The president was confident that the Congress would have demonstrated the usefulness of such initiatives, hoping that «the eco of this Congress would be heard abroad, in those Institutes similar to ours, where [Ispi] can contribute to develop the understanding of Italian thought».

Pirelli added that «the activities of Institutes such as Ispi which aim at giving their contribution to this work of studies and information, it can be different, depending on who they talk to: elite circles or masses of the Nation», so that the Institute consciously adopted a double register in which specialized analysis had to go hand in hand with “educational” writings: «not without those features of propaganda, if necessary»; «education and information [...] avoiding both an incomprehensible specialization and amateurish approaches».

Indeed, the dual mission of the Institute was reconfirmed:

[...] we have to distinguish the desire to spread among the upper classes a greater interest in the studies of international politics and to create a public opinion objectively informed and conscious of the needs of our nation even in the field of foreign policy and, on the other hand, the tendency which is present in democratic countries to leave the directives of foreign policy in the hands of vested interests or by public opinion perceptions⁴⁵²

The task was to create a public opinion fully informed about what was happening in the world and at the same time fully aware of the needs of the Nation understood «as a whole»: this had to be gained by a rigid discipline and by an active support of the Italian population.

Even here it may notice the latent contradiction between the willingness to inform in terms of a realistic and detailed analysis, «woe to mistake wishful thinking for reality», and the increasingly ideological nature of fascist foreign policy.

This contradiction seems even more problematic if it is taken into consideration all the efforts put in place by the Institute in order to better understand the international environment. In particular, the degree of depth with which Ispi took the relationship between history and political analysis: the best way to understand the foreign policy of each state was to realize its historical line of conduct, «contemporary history and international politics constitute two subjects so intimately linked that end up being one». Moreover, it was important to be aware of the continuous «interweaving of each wire»: this was the primary responsibility of the Institute according to Pirelli. Indeed, this is quite revealing about the broader historical context in which Ispi was developing its activities: the first was to consider the importance of public opinion as a fact; secondly, scholars didn't consider “embarrassing” to work for an Institute which claimed to promote objectivity and scientific research and at the same time it was emphasizing the necessity to orient the masses, to create and guide more than to inform public opinion; thirdly the continuous legitimation of fascism as an ideological element capable of directing foreign policy goals, chanting slogans such as the imperial role of Italy and its sacred mission to civilize the rest of the world as well as to save European civilization; the fourth element to take into consideration is that foreign policy was linked with a broader set of expectations and forces. All these wires seem deeply intertwined to each other and they contributed to insert the development of foreign policy into a new perspective. Against this

⁴⁵¹ *Vita dell'Istituto*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», November 1936, pp.847-848. See also I° Convegno Nazionale di politica estera, cit.

⁴⁵² *Ibidem*

background, it is important to understand the role played by the Institute within the fascist regime. On one hand it is clear that the original combination between the diligent study of international dynamics and the firm belief to use those “scientific” results to sustain the directives of the fascist regime constituted a powerful tool of legitimation for Mussolini, on the other hand it was exactly its degree of specialization and expertise which led the institute to play an important role in the decision-making process of the fascist regime, considering that the members of Ispi had the abilities and the authorizations to analyze, collect and publish documents which were quite sensitive. As a consequence, the publications of Ispi represented an important source of information as well as an essential analytical tool for most of the specialists in international relations, including members of the government. The acknowledgment of this double function, which is to be a powerful tool of the regime’s legitimacy and, at the same time, to constitute, at least potentially, a distinctive part of the decision-making process of the fascist government, has to be used as the interpretative key to understand the peculiar development of the Institute within the fascist regime and the degree of freedom it enjoyed. When the international situation became more rigid and the choices of Mussolini and his collaborators determined a dead end for Italy and its foreign policy, Ispi inevitably saw its activities decrease, no longer able to publish documents of enemy nations. At that point the very *raison d’être* of the Institute declined, until it was compulsory mothballed in 1943.

Nevertheless, in that speech made by Pirelli these contradictions were far from being brought to the surface. The leap forward made by Italy within the hierarchy of nations, attributed to the work of Mussolini, had to be maintained and developed by younger generations: «this is the magnificent responsibility which has been imposed by the duce to the younger generations, after an epic diplomatic battle and a military initiative without precedents in the colonial history, he has made Italy in a position of strength and imperial prestige.

Then it was the turn of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Galeazzo Ciano who stressed the importance of Ispi as «one of those cultural institutions of the regime that best meet the needs of the imperial Italy⁴⁵³». In this perspective the journal and more generally the members and collaborators of the Institute represented a solid support to the aspiration of the “Italian Empire”, which would have the task to defend its own prerogatives acted as a barrier against the hegemonic aims of Germany as well as France in those territories that included the Balkans and the Danube area. The strong position of the Italian nation was considered as a hard fact, giving the firm belief that Italy could have been one of the cornerstone of this new international order.

The topics of the Congress were the usual one, such as the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, raw materials at the conference, what changed was the way in which they were discussed, reflecting the new “imperial” outlook of the Italian nation. First of all there was a clear attack against the British power system in the Mediterranean, which had to be reformed in light of the increased Italian political weight on the region. Virginio Gayda⁴⁵⁴, a prominent fascist journalist who was editor of «Il Giornale d’Italia», dealt with the Danube issue, pointing out the success of the Roman protocols and the significant help offered by Italy to Austria and Hungary. He was confident that around these agreements it could have been created a solid basis of actions capable of attracting the other states of the region, especially those which constituted the Little Entente. Italy, in his words, should have been «free to carry out its action as a Great Power concerned in promoting a political and economic balance in order to stabilize the European system⁴⁵⁵».

The congress continued with a report made by Gioacchino Volpe about the economic, political and spiritual relations between Italy and Latin America and a following session chaired by Giorgio Mortara about the thorny issue of the distribution of raw materials. The closing session of

⁴⁵³ Ibidem.

⁴⁵⁴ The figure of Virginio Gayda will be treated afterwards as he was, among other things, the editorialist of «Relazioni Internazionali».

⁴⁵⁵ I° Convegno Nazionale di politica estera, cit., *Relazione generale del Dott. Virginio Gayda*, 135-150.

the meeting, held by Claudio Baldoni⁴⁵⁶, concentrated on the League of Nations, describing its functions and some viable solutions in order to reform the Geneva institution. The latter was considered a conservative Institute, hostile to «the principle of evolution», which was not able to avoid the division of Europe into two hostile ideological blocks.

The closing speech was given to Pirelli, who wanted to highlight the syncretic function carried out by the «Nation» which was considered as the last resort of every person, capable of reducing to a positive unity the multitude of interests and actions of the Italian society: «our Congress has collected men who came from a variety of environments [...] but at a certain level of social life and in the interest of the Nation, professional specialists are mixed fueling that general virtue of intelligence, character, experience and culture⁴⁵⁷». Nevertheless, the president pointed out that after every session it was possible a free debate so that «the original thought and the personality of each of the participants had free expression⁴⁵⁸». The discussions reflected the *modus operandi* of the Institute, mixing politics, economics, international law with a historical perspective as well as weaving together the interests and points of view of those foreign policies taken into consideration.

All in all, the key note of the Congress was identified in the «new awareness of the importance of Italy in the world and the resulting responsibilities», a restored national prestige in international circles «rediscovering the joy of being envied⁴⁵⁹».

A further focus on the Danubian sector was provided by Stefano Bethlen, former prime minister of Hungary, in the first number of «Rassegna» in 1937. Bethlen signed a Treaty of friendship with Italy in 1927, maintaining a close alliance with Mussolini, but, on the other hand, he was one of the few voices in Hungary actively opposed to an alliance with Hitler. Bethlen firmly believed in a sort of affinity between his country and Italy, trying to suggest what would have been the responsibilities of imperial Italy in the Danube area. The latter was considered as a strategic area for Italy, first of all it constituted a defensive system: after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the subsequent formation of small successor states continuously fight to each other, there was a vacuum of power in Central Europe towards which Germany and Russia «cast menacing glances beyond Poland and the Danube valley⁴⁶⁰».

What would have been the future of these small states? What would have been the new order imposed to Central Europe, and, to conclude, what kind of relationship did they have to maintain with the former «owners»?

Bethlen was concerned with the effective independence of Hungary: «since the world began, the great powers have always tried to subject to their influence the smaller peoples which are situated along their borders and so increase their forces [...] examining the historical events of three centuries, I can say that the independence of the small states in Central Europe was destroyed by a policy of partition performed by the Leaders of two great nations⁴⁶¹». This is why he warned about a very real possibility of the Anschluss: in order to avoid what was considered a natural attitude of the German nation, Bethlen suggested to support and implement the role played by Austria as mediator between Germany and the Danube area, without insisting that Austria had to join an anti-German coalition: «a situation which was well understood by the duce⁴⁶²».

⁴⁵⁶ Claudio Baldoni was born in 1904 in Ancona. He graduated in Law at the University of Rome in 1926, and a few years later he obtained a second degree in Political Science at the University of Padua. He became a recognized expert in international law, especially on themes like the territorial sea and the legal status of warships in foreign territorial waters (he thought a course on this theme at the Hague Academy of International Law). He was a brilliant university professor: he taught in Urbino, Cagliari, Pavia and Bologna. He died tragically in 1939: he drowned trying to rescue a swimmer in danger in Fregene.

⁴⁵⁷ I° Convegno Nazionale di politica estera, cit., p.387.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibidem.

⁴⁵⁹ *Vita dell'Istituto*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», November 1936, p.857

⁴⁶⁰ Stefano Bethlen, *L'avvenire del bacino danubiano e l'Italia*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», January 1937,

p.5.

⁴⁶¹ Ibidem, p.9

⁴⁶² Ibidem, p.13.

On the other hand, he was aware of the fact that Germany would never be ousted by the Danube area (the volume of commercial traffic between the two areas was too significant), the important thing was that this interest for the region didn't turn into an hegemonic desire, but in a friendly cooperation. From this analysis, Bethlen claimed that a strong Hungary, which has agreements of friendship with Germany and Italy, would be the better solution to have a counterweight in the Danube area. In this perspective, Italy should have played a role of pacemaker in order to guarantee peace as the former Austro-Hungarian empire had done in the past. The former prime minister was referring primarily to the Russian threat and to the unfortunate possibility that the latter would impose a slavification of the area: «it is needed that Italy takes the historical task performed by Austria-Hungary [...] she is the first great power to be interested so that a balance could be found in the region and that no other nation could establish an hegemonic predominance [...] a new organization of the Danube area around these principles it is the best guarantee that the Balkans not become a danger for Italy⁴⁶³». As a consequence the Italian-Hungarian alliance seemed to be instrumental for the interests of the two nations, a cooperation which could have guaranteed, at least according to Bethlen, a more solid order in the Danube area preventing the risk that a foreign nation could attract the entire area into its sphere of influence.

The Danube issue was also addressed by another collaborator of Ispi, Alberto Moscheni who started to think about the problem from the dissolution of the political system put in place by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to the author, this fact was the most important turning point for the European system causing new political as well as economic issues. First of all, the system created by the monarchy guaranteed a series of commercial outlets for the Danube economy both domestically and internationally towards the Adriatic sea. Politically the Empire acted as a barrier «between Germanism and Slavism, building a bridge between East and West⁴⁶⁴». Since the dissolution of this massive political system the fragmentation of the Danube area became a thorny issue: the solution was complicated and it had to pass through an agreement with Germany, placing at the same time constraints to the Hitler's actions. In this perspective Italian role was instrumental in order to balance the scale and to defend its own interests as the *Anschluss* «would definitely undermine the trade between Trieste and Fiume⁴⁶⁵». On the other hand, he considered in a positive way the Austro-German agreements of July 1936, writing that the German participation in the political and economic reorganization of the area was inevitable: this is why Italy would have to make its weight felt in order to reach a good compromise, assuring to the Italian harbors placed on the Adriatic shore the traditional volume of trade which was implemented by the Roman protocols in 1934. As a consequence the Austro-German agreements were not perceived as a threat for the Italian nation, rather as a further integration of an area which was finding stability and prospects: the pact «creates a new economic and political context, in which Germany added its own friendly collaboration to the previous agreement between Austria, Hungary and Italy⁴⁶⁶».

One of the key elements of this political project was the presence of a proactive Italian foreign policy in the region given that «Italy [would be affected] from a Danube crisis more than any other country⁴⁶⁷». A new order which had to be based on a *do ut des* policy, with an eye for equity, in order to «avoid undue enrichment at the expense of Danube countries and to favor those foreign nations which offer them the best terms». Again, it was repeated the leitmotiv that Italy could have managed the situation giving its new status of Imperial Power.

In March the Study Office published an article in «Rassegna», trying to sum up the lines of Italian foreign policy during 1936: the establishment of the Empire constituted the key element for

⁴⁶³ Ibidem, p.20-21.

⁴⁶⁴ Alberto Moscheni, *Gli accordi di Roma e la ricostruzione danubiana*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», January 1937, p.56.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibidem, p.64.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibidem, p.68.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibidem, p.69.

Italian security, «allowing to begin an imperial policy, that is autonomous⁴⁶⁸». The latter was guaranteed by the new territories passed under Italian control from which «it was expected the influx of those products which are missing in Italy». Moreover the Empire was not thought only as a tank of raw materials, rather a cornerstone of the Italian security, because of the strategic importance of those territories which were under its control: in a world in which the liberal values, especially free trade, were experiencing their worst moment of crisis, the fact that a national political system would seek to securing its traffics, increasing the supply of raw materials and ensuring new markets was seen by the Institute as a meaningful leap towards a strengthening of the Italian nation both domestically and internationally. The dramatic changes that were taking place at the international level gave incentives the fascist government to take an increasingly assertive tone, condemning the view of the “conservative” powers, which «relied upon the myths such as the League of Nations, democratic values, pacifism». Pushing for a collective security was considered by the regime as a harmful political stance which would have the effect to give more credit «to a dangerous alternative [...] that is the formation of opposing blocks [...] The faith in collective security has collapsed and, despite contrary statements, we are witnessing a return to the particular alliances⁴⁶⁹».

On the other hand «Rassegna» stressed the will of Italian government to conduct a «peaceful and autonomous» policy, hoping for a period of peace as well as avoiding any ideological war. Again, those were clear contradictory statements, which took an even more controversial meaning in the light of the decisions taken by the fascist foreign policy in the Spanish Civil War, with the intention to create an anti-Bolshevik front in order to fight against the Republicans and the international forces arrived in Spain for the most part from France and Moscow.

Beyond rhetorical declarations, the international situation was actually changing with a progressive process of incommunicability between those nations which felt dissatisfied with respect to the international political system guaranteed by the Peace Treaties and, on the other side, nations more likely to support it. Italy was in a situation to say the least peculiar as it was a nation which *de facto* won the Great War, but on the other hand it was more and more convinced that, in order to fulfill its national interests, was necessary to sustain revisionist claims. As a consequence the specter of the division of Europe in two blocks if it was not given for final, nevertheless it appeared more and more frequently in the pages of «Rassegna».

The “inevitability” of the Anschluss

The new tendency to emphasize the elements of division among the nations which participated to the Stresa agreement as well as to sustain a progressive approach between Italy and Germany, it was expressed from Virginio Gayda, editor of «Il Giornale d'Italia», who was chosen from the government as editorialist of the new weekly journal of Ispi «Relazioni Internazionali». The latter was born as a monthly journal in 1935 in order to counterbalance the more scholarly «Rassegna di politica internazionale» with a more dynamic journal, trying to disclose the facts of international politics to an even wider audience. From the beginning of 1937, Gaslini decided to transform «Relazioni Internazionali» from a monthly to a weekly journal, even if in that case it would have been necessary «to have an article from Rome, in order to comment and orient on international issues⁴⁷⁰». In this perspective, Gayda was appointed exactly to fulfill this political necessity, becoming the trait d'union between the government circles and the Institute.

⁴⁶⁸ Study Office, *L'Italia e la situazione internazionale nel 1936*, «Rassegna di politica internazionale», March 1937, p.172.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibidem, p.177.

⁴⁷⁰ IASISPI, II.1.1. Presidenza Ispi (1935-1945) Alberto Pirelli, «Attività dell'Istituto», 1936.

Nevertheless, «Relazioni Internazionali» would acquire those peculiar features which represented the trademarks of the Institute: a propensity to unite scientific publication with strong pedagogical aims as well as to promote a high degree of specialization in the analysis of international relations. As a matter of fact, the journal made use of both the skills of the members of the Study Office as well as the information derived from foreign correspondents. Moreover the journal used to hire special correspondents in order to tackle special international events or a special area of interest. So that if on one hand articles were wrote from specialists, on the other hand the ultimate aim was to cast them for a broader public, making them more agile and engaging. «Relazioni Internazionali» would take an increasingly important role in the activities of Ispi, up to become the favorite son of the Institute, overshadowing «Rassegna»: this is why, in order to follow Ispi's outlook on international events from the beginning of 1937 up to the Anschluss, it seems more relevant to take into consideration the articles written in «Relazioni Internazionali».

Gayda dedicated his first editorial on the Gentlemen's agreement signed by Italy and Great Britain in January. Gayda's remarks on the rapprochement between the two nations pointed out that if on one hand Italy was satisfied by the mutual guarantees granted so that the regime seemed to move steps forward towards a new legitimation of its foreign policy, on the other hand there were no reasons to speculate about a return of the Italian nation in the Stresa front, thus jeopardizing the friendship with Germany interpreted as a «new central-European front, which is gaining more and more weight on the continent⁴⁷¹». The Italian journalist presented this maneuver as a clumsy attempt to bring Germany to the negotiating table together with England and France, restoring a new Locarno and isolating Italy: «Stresa is definitely dead [...]»⁴⁷². The editorial concluded with a harsh attack to the French foreign policy conducted by the government of Leon Blum, who was blamed as he favored an increased influence of Bolshevism in the European continent and in particular in the Spanish territory. Such critics offered a further opportunity to confirm a sort of harmony between Italy and Germany: «when sanctions were in force Germany refused to give its collaboration to Geneva, and it defended the autonomy of its foreign policy with a fair approach to the legitimate rights and interests of Italy [...] the political and economic collaboration with Germany constitutes the foundations of Italian foreign policy and it cannot undergo variations⁴⁷³».

It was clear that the editorial had the function to soften the political consequences of the gentlemen's agreement, making it clear that Italy was willing to preserve its autonomy in foreign policy and to meet with the previous allies only on the basis of new agreements. To what extent the words of Gayda were followed by the articles written by the members of Ispi's Study Office?

In this perspective, it is worth analyzing the article, written by Francesco Cataluccio, which followed Gayda's editorial. The article dealt with the same issue and even if Cataluccio showed to share some of the points emerged from Gayda's editorial, such as the right of the Italian foreign policy to develop an imperial outlook with an effort to renegotiate previous balances both in the continent and in the world, on the other hand he abandoned the rhetorical tension which characterized Gayda's editorial, bringing out a more complex picture. More than this he perceived the agreement as a first step to a further rapprochement between the two nations, and the positive attitude of the British which showed to recognize the change of status of the Italy. According to Cataluccio the Gentlemen's Agreement demonstrated that «Anglo-Italian interests are not antagonists rather complementary⁴⁷⁴». The author believed that the agreement would have guaranteed solid basis in order to develop a «a fruitful discussion of all the problems that will arise [...] in an atmosphere of understanding, trust, conscious responsibility, when it will be necessary to act there will certainly be an effort to harmonize mutual interests⁴⁷⁵».

⁴⁷¹ Virginio Gayda, *La verticale Roma-Berlino e la collaborazione europea*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 2 January 1937 n.1, p.1.

⁴⁷² Ibidem.

⁴⁷³ Ibidem.

⁴⁷⁴ F.C. (Francesco Cataluccio), *Verso l'accordo italo-britannico*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 2 January 1937 n.1, p.2.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibidem, p.3.

In the following months «Relazioni Internazionali» returned to focus on the Austrian issue, in particular about the Austrian-German agreements of 11th July 1936. It was demonstrated above as even within the government circles there were some differences over the interpretation of these agreements. Figures like Suvich, who claimed the crucial role played by an independent Austria for the Italian interests on Eastern Europe, suggested a less conciliatory policy towards Germany; on the other hand the mainstream view of the regime tended to consider the rapprochement between Germany and Austria as a further development to help stabilize Danube area. Nevertheless, Italo Zingarelli, who also worked as correspondent for Ispi, took an intermediate position: on one hand he considered the agreements between Austria and Germany as a positive step towards a normalization of relations between the two countries, on the other hand he was still skeptical about the success of this attempt because of the different specific weight of the two nations: «we shouldn't forget neither the disproportion of forces existing between the two nations [...] nor the latent desire of Germany to gain important political and economic positions in Austria». Zingarelli stated that even in the touristic field «there is some evidence of the German desire to couple economic with political aims: the heads of the Nazi party warn that when German citizens go to Austria they should showcase their Nazi flags, refrain from attending any places or people hostile towards Nazism. Moreover [Germans] would like amnesty for those convicted in Austria for crimes related with Hitler's propaganda [...] that Austria should follow the guideline of German foreign policy, to accept in theory and in practice antisemitism and to eliminate from public life all those people who are against National Socialism⁴⁷⁶». Nevertheless the Austrian government headed by Schuschnigg was well decided to strengthen Austria independence: «[he] didn't hesitate to declare Nazism as one of three enemies of Austria [...]»⁴⁷⁷.

Zingarelli's articles were trying to analyze all the complex aspects of the Austrian issue, a problem far from being solved and responsive to further changes. A thorough reflection which tried to dig deeper than the optimistic façade put in place by the rhetoric of the regime.

In the meantime, Gayda's editorials continued to sustain to the bitter end the Italian-German agreements with the effect to create an even more consistent barrier between Italian interests and the Anglo-French attempt to mend the international situation. This approach was not devoid of contradictions: following the stages of the Spanish civil war, the argumentative strategy of Gayda's editorials tended on one hand to heavily affected domestic policies dynamics saying that Italy would never accept a communist government in Madrid, but on the other hand he declared that the conflict would not have to assume the features of an international clash, ready to give his support to guarantee an effective international neutrality in favor of Spain. In this perspective, the author, who just a month earlier was concerned to underline the differences between Italy and its former allies, claimed that «fallen all the divisions between Italy and England thanks to the Gentlemen's agreement, now it is possible to create a premise for a political collaboration between the two nations⁴⁷⁸». As a consequence, Gayda didn't exclude a priori a political understanding between Italy and Great Britain, provided, however, that the latter was willing to recognize the new imperial status of the Italian nation and the changes occurred in the international system which required a new set of agreements to make through a logic of *do ut des* instead of insisting with collective security promoted by the League of Nations. Another factor of instability was represented by role which Russia would have played within Europe: should it have entered in the European system or should it have been isolated from it? Gayda choose to sustain Hitler's position who thought to create a new European order without including Russia being communism the real element of European division: «because of France, with its French-Soviet agreement, communism was included in the mechanism of European foreign policy». Moreover, the League of Nations, considered as the *longa manus* of the conservative international approach of the British and French governments, represented another dividing factor between Germany and the two European

⁴⁷⁶ Italo Zingarelli, *Gli accordi austro-tedeschi e la loro applicazione*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 9 gennaio 1937, p.25.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁷⁸ Virginio Gayda, *Il viaggio di Goering e il momento europeo*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 23 January 1937 n.4, p.49.

democracies. Gayda praised the German approach writing that «Germany retains all his political positions whit the objective of achieving well-defined results⁴⁷⁹».

On the other hand «Relazioni Internazionali» seemed to contain more nuanced positions, reserving space for speeches and opinions which highlighted a different approach towards the two “old” democracies France and Great Britain. For instance, the journal reported, in the section *Foreign opinions*, a speech «translated exclusively for Ispi» made by A.Tardieu, former prime minister and a dominant figure of French political life during the interwar period, as «it will help the Italian reader to stay informed about international opinion⁴⁸⁰». The speech openly criticized the whole German foreign policy «complications could only come from Germany [...] there is only one European issue and this is about when Germany decides to start another war [...] as to Italy, despite its legitimate fear that communism can be established in the Mediterranean area, it will not break with Great Britain about this point, especially since it reached an agreement with her». Even if Tardieu recognized that the front of Stresa, after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, had to be considered dead, he claimed that « a common threat [a German war] can realize what political wisdom couldn't, and the entente between London, Paris and Rome remains the strongest guarantee of peace for Europe⁴⁸¹».

Nevertheless, in February the first pages of the journal reported a Ciano's speech in which he emphasized the meaning of the Axis: the alliance was presented as «one of the cornerstones of peace», an agreement which clarified «the friendship between our two Peoples beyond a mere commonality of interest in the international field, it represented a value which is rare to find in normal relations between two Powers⁴⁸²».

Germany and Italy converged in a common action «to defend the basis of the European civilization», which meant to fight against «Bolshevism» and those international organizations which helped the spread of this «virus» such as the League of Nations. Ciano stressed the fact that the two nations were capable of understanding each other from the beginning, retracing the various stages of the foreign policy of both powers: the concerns and real fears about Hitler's foreign policy which found a clear expression also in the pages of «Rassegna» they were now dissolved by a narrative that aimed to deliver a harmonious picture of the two nations. Indeed, according to Ciano the Rome-Berlin Axis should not be seen as a diaphragm, prelude to a division into blocks:« far from being inspired by a policy of threatening blocks [...] instead it harmonizes with other constructive collaborations⁴⁸³».

Indeed, this new form of collaboration between Italy and Germany should have taken as «a reference point for a new Europe», in which the willingness to preserve the status quo had to make room for a modification of the European balances in favor of Italian interests. In order to do this, it seemed natural to Gayda, following the guidelines of Ciano, to write a series of editorials in which the Italian journalist was more concerned to justify the German foreign policy rather than to deal seriously with the Austrian question, showing a systematic and unashamed ideological standpoint on international questions which was not traceable in «Rassegna». For instance, on 6th March 1937 Gayda wrote an editorial titled *Il problema della restaurazione in Austria* in which he openly went against a possible restoration of the monarchy in Austria only because he wanted to stamp out the allegations in the French press, which it had given to understand that the Italian government was sympathetic towards this perspective: the prompt reaction was justified by the desire not to compromise the alliance with Germany. Indeed, Gayda wrote that «faced with this attitude of the

⁴⁷⁹ Virginio Gayda, *Prospettive politiche dell'Europa attraverso tre discorsi*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 6 February 1937, n.6, p.81.

⁴⁸⁰ *Crisi spagnola e pericoli di guerra*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 23 January 1937 n.4, p. 57.

⁴⁸¹ Ibidem.

⁴⁸² Galeazzo Ciano, *L'asse Roma-Berlino*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 6 February 1937, n.6, p.95.

⁴⁸³ Ibidem

French press [...] the Italian government had to react with the necessary clarity and timeliness. And the reaction was to declare the danger of any idea of restoration⁴⁸⁴».

The controversy continued by Gayda had the pernicious effect to limit the possible alternatives of the Italian foreign policy, especially as the systematic polemic against the French positions denounced that the relationship between Italy and Germany was posed as a precondition to new international agreements, scratching in fact both the alleged autonomy of the Italian foreign policy and the credibility of the fascist government in defending the independence of Austria. It was preferred instead a more tortuous and dangerous road, which assumed as a reference point a foreign policy agreed with Nazi Germany.

This attitude had its repercussions on the Austrian issue, which went from being considered a vital element for the Italian foreign policy to an international issue like many others: after all, Gayda was remarking the fact that Italy had «imperial responsibilities» and that it could not «be blocked to the Brenner». Indeed, this didn't mean complete disregard for the problem:

Italy imperial policy [...] avoids to polarize and it tends to deal with a series of increasingly broad issues and interests. It doesn't distant itself from the problems of the closest parts of Europe, so that its interest for the Danube area and the Austrian issue is still alive. It is clear that all the facts, which were presented as opposed to the traditional collaboration between Italy and Austria, they are, indeed, useful for its development and for the clarification of that areas which is instrumental for Austria⁴⁸⁵

In the Danube area «Italy pointed out a more dynamic and fair system» in which the various interests at stake had to be balanced so as not to create hegemonic conditions, and where Italy and Germany had to be the two reference points.

The editorialist of «Relazioni Internazionali» continued to reiterate his ideological narration of the facts, that led him to consider the Austrian-German agreement of 16th July 1936 as another piece of that political and economic plan put in place by the fascist government with the Roman Protocols, that was «a recognition of both the German character of Austria and the respect of Germany for the independence of Austria» as instrumental elements in order to establish a new political framework in which the German nation had to play a role as «balancing force⁴⁸⁶».

According to Gayda, Austria should have felt more secure within the political framework created by the Axis, instead of trying to reach a compromise with the Little Entente, claiming that «nothing, in the Danube area, can be done without the consent of Italy and Germany».

The real balance of power between Italy and Germany was different from how Gayda presented it in the journal. In 1937 «Mussolini was kept under pressure by Hitler: from the visit of Goering in Rome, focused on the inevitability of the Anschluss, the necessity of an even closer friendship was reiterated by all the messengers sent to Rome: they were always ready to use flattery, but also to stress the cliché of the division of labor: Italy in the Mediterranean, Germany on the continent⁴⁸⁷».

Gayda continued with his specious contraposition against British and French press, dismissing as «factious spirit» all those articles stressing a rift between Italy, Austria and Germany. He claimed the vitality of the Axis and the spirit of cooperation in political and economic affairs which emerged from this alliance, especially for the Danube area. But there was more than this: «the parallelism of interests and purposes have been reconfirmed between Italy and Germany even on political problems», especially the detachment from the League of Nations which confirmed the definitive failure of collective security formula. Nevertheless the aim was not to put a barrier between the Axis forces and the Anglo-French powers, rather to put forward a new collaboration system «less ambitiously universalistic but closer to the aims of an international agreement».

⁴⁸⁴ V. Gayda, *Il problema della restaurazione in Austria*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 6 March 1937, p.145.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibidem, p.146.

⁴⁸⁷ Di Nolfo, *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, cit., p.227.

Moreover the Axis «wanted to pose the basis of a new European collaborative construction founded on the recognition of mutual interests concretely assessed and therefore inspired by a healthy realism⁴⁸⁸».

After the failure of Locarno and the Stresa front, the Axis became, at least in Gayda's rhetoric, the cement for a new European partnership, to which England and France had to come to terms. It is within this unspecified and opaque political framework that Gayda inserted the growing German interest in the Austrian issue.

The approach formulated by Gayda didn't seem to have aroused unusual reactions from the members of the Study Office. On the other hand, it is also true that, being the Austrian problem a burning international issue, it was Gayda to analyze nature and contents of the matter, the men chosen by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to offer an officious view from the government. Needless to say, all the most topical international affairs were entrusted to his pen and his editorials. However, it seems that this vision was shared by the other authors of the journal. In an article written by Francesco Cataluccio titled *Von Neurath nei Balcani*, the yardstick by which to evaluate the German foreign policy in the Danube area didn't change: «Italy and Germany have no interest in creating policies which hinder each other. Regarding the Danube and Balkan areas they want to pursue a collaboration capable of harmonizing their mutual interests, which was so fruitful in other circumstances. Italy has repeatedly stated that it is impossible to solve the Danube issue without an active participation of Germany⁴⁸⁹».

However, it was equally clear that some doubts about Germany and Hitler were transpiring. In this perspective it is interesting to examine the articles that Silvio Pozzani dedicated to the German Four Year Plan, a series of economic measures directed by one of the men closest to Hitler, Hermann Goring. The plan started in 1936 and its main aim was to provide a massive rearmament of Germany and to prepare the country for self-sufficiency in four years, from 1936 to 1940. The latter aspect was investigated by Pozzani as he tried to think about the sustainability of this plan in relation of the very concept of autarchy. As a matter of fact, Pozzani started from a definition of autarchy which resumed the work of Friedrich List, understanding it as «system of national economy⁴⁹⁰». According to Pozzani, even if an autarchic system applied to a state was determined by a political and economic willingness to preserve a certain degree of autonomy, on the other hand it was expected that Germany would never be able to produce all the necessary products it needed inside its national territory, with the result of creating a new situation of discomfort between upper classes and lower classes. In another article, entitled more explicitly *Ombre del programma autarchico tedesco*, Pozzani was clearly critical of the German economic plan which could have been summed up with the slogan «more guns than butter⁴⁹¹». A formula which, for the Ispi scholar, was effective at home rather than in the international environment. In fact as a new economic program was justified in order to bring the trade back into balance, which suffered by the lack of investments as well as a chronic debt situation, the government privileged autarchy at the expense of the international economic cooperation in a situation in which «the economic evolution of each state led us to a new context which stands in direct opposition to that before the war: the optimistic idea of an international redistribution of economic activities in relation to the respective possibilities of each state was shattered against the evolution of concepts like independence and prestige of the states, which were realized by the activation of forms of protectionism in agriculture and industry as well as in impediments to the movements of men and capitals». According to the author the solution was not to return to a regime of economic liberalism «even because those nations which delude themselves to be anti-autarchic are those nations which have in their territories all they need to develop⁴⁹²». On the other hand if «the German international trade will continue to be reduced we

⁴⁸⁸ Virginio Gayda, *L'asse Roma-Berlino*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 15 maggio 1937, n.20, p.361.

⁴⁸⁹ F.C. (Francesco Cataluccio), *Von Neurath nei Balcani*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 12 giugno 1937, n.24, p.464.

⁴⁹⁰ Silvio Pozzani, *Capisaldi del piano quadriennale tedesco*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 24 April 1937, p.297

⁴⁹¹ Silvio Pozzani, *Ombre del programma autarchico tedesco*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 1 May 1937, p. 323.

⁴⁹² Ibidem

will have a paradoxical situation in which there will be neither butter nor guns». As a consequence the question was «how can it [Germany] get what it wants?». Pozzani suggested that Germany should have modified its economic plan as it was leading the German nation in a bind which didn't seem to solve the upcoming political and economic issues, otherwise a peaceful development of the situation would have been impossible.

In the meanwhile, the international environment suffered a further shock in the Balkan area: in that sector Yugoslavia was experimenting a more active foreign policy, not in line with the interests of the Little Entente. A fact that Gayda considered quite important:

Yugoslavia publicly declares its political collaboration with Germany, without seeking the prior consent of the Little Entente and France, while Germany is in open political contrast with France and Czechoslovakia and it is in sharp contrast with Russia.

According to the Italian journalist, all the Balkan area was approaching to the Axis policy, that was a policy of bilateral agreements, thus repudiating the policy of collective security applied by the League of Nations as well as jeopardizing the Little Entente. Despite the pervasive rhetoric of Gayda all aimed at promoting the Italian-German alliance, among the pages of «Relazioni Internazionali» it is possible to notice some voices which stood out from the crowd. Critical to the German aspiration towards Anschluss can be found in an article written by Luigi Salvatorelli titled *l'Austria nella storia tedesca*, in which he commented a series of lessons taught by the famous Austrian historian Heinrich Von Srbik⁴⁹³ at the University of Berlin which were developed around a basic thesis that affirmed the undisputed German origin of Austria. According to Salvatorelli, those lessons

Fluctuate constantly between the two poles of Germanism and the Habsburg dynastic politics, without that appear in the middle an Austrian national entity. To what degree the policy of the Habsburgs have favored or thwarted the interests of the German race? Here is the only issue that dominates this booklet [...] the unilateral point of view ends to alter the exact view of the problem. To be honest, it seems that in the conferences taught by Srbik [...] there is a not so small part of mythology. Mythology of race and mythology of space or geopolitics; but the latter is subordinated to the former. He always talks about germanism , German expansion, German culture [...] the *Mittleuropa* according to the Srbik is Germany with a number of countries around it, which constitute the stronghold [...] it is clear that for him the ideal would have been the union between Germanism and the Hapsburg dynasty [...] a union that had to be done under the leadership of the German element. It is strange that after the European war, after 1918, a man of great intellectual stature as Srbik has not realize the utopian character of such a solution. If the Austrian issue is seen only from a German point of view it is as if we renounce to understand it. The problem between Austria and Germany depended on a political issue inside the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which was how to transform the aggregate of the Hapsburg countries into an equal and free association of peoples. This association would entail the definite detachment of Austria from Germany, and the willingness of the Austrian people to participate in the life of the Danube Confederation: this doesn't mean that Austria has to give up its German character. This solution failed so that remained only the dissolution of the Hapsburg aggregate and the reconstitution of its parts based on the principle of nationality and the will of the people, with the protection of minorities⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹³ Heinrich Von Srbik was described as the most impressive Austrian historian of his time and his work was focused on German idealism. «In the years of resurgent German nationalism he was the outstanding spokesman for the so-called all-German point of view and his four-volume work, *Deutsche Einheit*, is the classic expression of this historical conception», Paul R. Sweet, *The historical writing of Heinrich von Srbik*, «History and Theory», vol.9, n.1 1970, pp.37-58. He was acting as a historian but «he could not ignore the siren call from the rushing political currents of the day. In yielding to temptation, in becoming politically engaged, his life gained in drama and pathos what it lost in serenity, and acquired a representative character and an interest as a piece of contemporary history which it might not otherwise have had for us», p. 38.

⁴⁹⁴ L.S. (Luigi Salvatorelli), *L'Austria nella storia tedesca*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 12 June 1937, n.24, p.520.

The article written by Salvatorelli seems to represent more than a mere academic diatribe, or, better, from contesting the ideological way in which the Austrian historian saw the relationship between Germany and Austria the Italian intellectual touched focal points of international politics of the period, declaring publicly and clearly against every instrumentalization of history in order to justify a future Anschluss.

These subtle ripples present inside the journal, if on one hand they allowed to perceive different accents and nuances not in line with the triumphant rhetoric of the fascist regime represented by Gayda as well as to reveal the beginning of a detachment which would become ever stronger, on the other hand they don't have the strength and the weight to move the center of gravity of the fascist foreign policy.

As a matter of fact Gayda continued to enhance the relationship that was established between Mussolini and Hitler. On 25th September when the duce went to visit Germany, the editorialist was ready to consider Fascism and Nazism as «a new way of being of the all national life. The distance between them and the democracies is that of an entire epoch of political and social history [...] Fascism and Nazism are based on common principles» which had affinities both in the field of domestic policy and in the field of foreign policy. In these lines it is possible to recognize a qualitative leap in Gayda's rhetoric: if in a first stage agreement between the two nations was based on a certain amount of political realism and the Axis was thought as a defensive pact capable of both uniting the European states against the "Bolshevik threat" and reaffirming the principles of European civilization, at a later time it was attributed to the pact «an operational task given the fact that between Rome and Berlin there are no more issues to be determined⁴⁹⁵».

This division was even more emphasized by Gayda also in the following editorial:

Two Europes [...] face today. One is the new Europe of Fascism and Nazism [...] the other one is the old Europe of democratic and liberal traditions⁴⁹⁶.

The diaphragm claimed by Gayda was imposing a progressive approach between Italy and Germany: a gradual convergence which, far from creating a new autonomous space for the fascist foreign policy, would have resulted in the partial and then total subordination to the German initiatives. On 11th December 1937 Italy left permanently the League of Nations. Gayda commented the exit as the final crisis of the Geneva system: «it begins the crisis of revelations. And it invests the relationship between the States within the League and the whole system on whose basis the great traditional administrators of Geneva founded their imperial policy⁴⁹⁷».

In order to substantiate his argument, Gayda cited the case of both Netherlands and Switzerland: the latter was claiming its neutrality against every decision of common war against another State, while the Netherlands would have been in harsh contrast which the League of Nations as it was against to «a suspension of economic collaboration with Italy⁴⁹⁸».

He concluded by writing that:

are not the small countries who fear Italy's aggression and that tend to refuse to recognize the fruits of the alleged Italian aggression in Ethiopia. There are certain great powers which are conducting their hostile policy to the Italian right and that now they are imposing to smaller countries their visions, preventing them to defend their national interests⁴⁹⁹

The meeting organized in Budapest on 9th January 1938 between Austria, Hungary and Italy if on one hand it remarked a close economic collaboration between the three countries, on the other hand it pointed out the important role played by Germany for the definitive stabilization of that

⁴⁹⁵ Virginio Gayda, *Il duce in Germania*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 25 September 1937, n.39, p.701-702.

⁴⁹⁶ Virginio Gayda, *Affermazione della nuova Europa*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 2 October 1937, p.717-718.

⁴⁹⁷ Virginio Gayda, *Dopo l'11 dicembre*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 1 January 1938, n.1, p.1.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p.2

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibidem*.

sector. The limits of that meeting were indeed expressed by Ciano who at the eve of the congress wrote:

The Roman protocols are proving less valuable: agreements which rely exclusively on economic basis are less vital [...] they [the Austrians] wanted a declaration in favor of Austrian independence, which I couldn't do because of Germany⁵⁰⁰.

On the other hand, Gayda kept repeating on the goodness of the agreements and the cordial collaboration reached in the Danube area⁵⁰¹. The Axis as well as the new Italian-Yugoslav agreements, the Anti-Comintern pact⁵⁰² and the exit of Italy from the League, all these elements «are linked together in order to point out a clear address to Italian policy. This address corresponded to a new constructive European political approach which links Italy with Germany⁵⁰³».

It was good game, in the dynamics of Italian politics of the time, emphasize all the differences within the League of Nations:

Why do we have a general withdrawal from those nations which believed to see in the sanctions a means of protection? Because they found that [...] sanctions are a dangerous instrument, put in place with the risk of all but only for the interests of few, which are certain big powers⁵⁰⁴.

At this point in Gayda's narrative the League of Nations was a direct extension of the interests of France and England, giving up its universal character⁵⁰⁵: from the day when Italy decided to leave the Geneva body, the League suffered by a significant imbalance. In the meanwhile the Austrian issue and the peculiar interest that «Relazioni Internazionali» had demonstrated until then in respect of the Danube area they disappeared from the pages of the journal. The meeting between Hitler and Schuschnigg on 12th February in Berchtesgaden was reported in an anonym style in the section *Documentazione*.

In the few lines devoted to the event, it was written that:

The cordial discussion on many political issues, which effect equally Austria and Germany, it falls in the line of that policy which has found its expression in the Austrian-German agreement of 16th July 1936 [...] in which the two governments agreed to respect the domestic policy of their respective countries. Austria claimed that, with Italy and Hungary as friends, its policy would be conducted in a realistic way, according to which it considers itself a German state [...] the principles signed in the agreement constitute the basis of its alliances and the premises for a closer collaboration between the two States [...] and this also applies to the Austrian constitution of May 1934, whose fundamental principles must not be affected⁵⁰⁶

Italy gradually disappeared as a key actor on the issue of Austrian independence: the gradual approach to Germany then appeared in all its dramatic aspects as a strategic shift which «pursued the ultimate goal of a total revision of the European balance. In his irresponsible recklessness, Ciano wanted even anticipate the order to set fire to the powder: the shadow of a war did not frighten him⁵⁰⁷». Ciano threw himself headlong into a policy benevolent towards Germany,

⁵⁰⁰ Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario 1937-1943*, p.110-111.

⁵⁰¹ Virginio Gayda, *L'incontro di Budapest e il momento danubiano*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 8 January 1938, p.17.

⁵⁰² Anti-Comintern pact was an anti-communist agreement signed in Rome on 6th November between Italy, Germany and Japan and it was considered as «a cordon sanitaire around the Bolshevik infection centers [...] against communist propaganda, Virginio Gayda, *Il patto anticomunista di Roma*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 16 November 1937, n.46.

⁵⁰³ *Ibidem*

⁵⁰⁴ Virginio Gayda, *Sintomi le giornate societarie*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 12 February 1938, n.7, p.97.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰⁶ *Incontro Hitler Schuschnigg*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 19 febbraio 1938, n.8, p.125.

⁵⁰⁷ Collotti, cit., p.338.

stimulated by the idea of a short-term war and by the illusion that «Italy [had] broken the isolation: it is at the center of the most formidable political-military combination which ever existed⁵⁰⁸».

The intensity with which the regime aligned itself to the requirements of the German foreign policy it was going beyond the original intentions:

If already after the Austrian-German agreement of 11th July 1936 it was clear that the Austrian question was no longer the center of the relation with Germany [...] in the fascist leadership prevailed a kind of resignation to the Austrian annexation by Germany. In that there was a compelling logic; the abandon of any ambitions to influence Austria didn't derive only from a necessity of not open again a conflicting issue with Germany in a period in which the regime was trying to reach more demanding agreements, but also from an ever greater distance from France and England, namely to the front of Stresa, which could have been represented the only element of credible deterrence against any act of force exercised by Germany. Italy's new choices entailed [...] the renouncement of any type of long-range pressure in order to hold Germany from a step that would have radically altered the balance in the Danube and Balkans areas, on which Italy had invested many of its expectations⁵⁰⁹

Gayda's silence with respect on this matter had a lot to do with this taking charge of the German ambitions and the subsequent withdrawal of Italian aspirations in those areas. Confirming this direction taken by the Italian foreign policy, Ciano on 24th November wrote in his diary:

I give Ghigi instructions for his mission in Vienna. He was not very aware of the situation and he seemed a little bit scared. I defined the task of the Italian Ministry at the Ballplatz: a doctor who has to give oxygen to the dying man, without that the heir could notice anything. When in doubt, we are more interested in the heir rather than in the dying man⁵¹⁰.

Ciano lacked the ability to fully understand both the military and economic potential of Germany which would have led to an unashamed political dynamism from Hitler. As a consequence, the alliance between Italy and Germany formalized with the Axis pact was destined to be guided by the German nation, leaving Italy behind to chase. In parallel, Gyada continued to write laudatory editorial in a crescendo of aspirations and claims that, to see them against the light, told many of the idiosyncrasies and distorted myths which accompanied the Italian nation from its birth to the contrasted development. Few days before the Anschluss, Gayda insisted on the leitmotiv of a sincere friendship between Germany and Austria⁵¹¹ as well as a solid alliance between the former and Italy. A concept which was repeated by Hitler with a speech at the Reichstag on 20th February: the German foreign policy «was based on the Axis between Berlin and Rome [...] in every decisive step the German foreign policy coincides with the Italian one⁵¹²». In the meantime, Gayda rejected the accusations of «Western democracies», which criticized the regime for not oppose any resistance to German claims, writing that rapprochement between «the two German nations» was functional to a new and more solid balance in the Balkans and in the Danube area. As a matter of fact, the regime seemed to assume a passive attitude towards the Austrian question, accepting the Anschluss as «an inevitable development of the two countries⁵¹³», even if Ciano reported some temper tantrums from Mussolini as the way in which Germany managed the issue:

The Germans were supposed to warn us: instead not a single word. Then, if instead of stopping on the reached positions, they thought to get the real Anschluss, they would lead to completely different general

⁵⁰⁸ Ciano, *Diario*, cit., p.59.

⁵⁰⁹ Collotti, cit., p.339-340.

⁵¹⁰ Ciano, *Diario*, cit., p.72. Emphasis added.

⁵¹¹ Virginio Gayda, *Il discorso di Hitler*, 26 febbraio 1938, n.9, p.129.

⁵¹² Ibidem.

⁵¹³ Ciano, *Diario*, cit., p.132.

conditions from those in which the Axis was constituted, so that the situation would require a new examination⁵¹⁴.

When German politics took the initiative, clearly emerged the Italian impotence in challenging Hitler's decisions: «what should we do? War against Germany? At our first shot all Austrian would be against us⁵¹⁵». In the meanwhile in Austria the political situation was undergoing a rapid escalation: following the notes that Ciano wrote in his diary it was clear that Schuschnigg was alone in defending the independence of his nation, against an increasingly evident German will to fulfill the Anschluss. When the Austrian prime minister said he wanted to hold a plebiscite, so that the Austrian people could have expressed their willingness about the annexation, German reaction was immediate. Ciano reported that Mussolini was very critical of the attitude of Schuschnigg «he has made his voice without having neither possibility nor the means»⁵¹⁶. While Germans were demanding the resignation of Schuschnigg and the Austrian crisis was reaching its pick, Ciano and Mussolini not only they chose not to expose themselves in favor of Austria, but also they refused starting a consultation with France in order to find a viable solution:

the charge d'affaires in France [Renato Prunas] asks for a meeting with me. I reply that we do not intend to consult with anyone [...] after the sanctions, the non-recognition of the Empire, and all the other meanness that they have made us, they [the French] want to rebuilt Stresa in one hour with Hannibal at the gates? Austria was lost by France and England because of their policies. Even for us this is not an advantage. But in the meanwhile we took Abyssinia⁵¹⁷

On 11th March, Ciano reported that Schuschnigg was forced to resign and that the substitute Seyss Inquart pointed out that Austria was no longer independent.

The editorial of «Relazioni Internazionali» followed the official version of the Italian government:

Facts like the present one has to be understood in its historical essence rather than in its specificity, namely in its fatality [...] two essential facts: the existence of a racial unity between Austria and Germany and the existence of a spontaneous current towards the political union of these two parts of the same nation, they both were at the base of the Italian understanding of the Anschluss⁵¹⁸

In the blink of an eye what was considered to be an essential bulwark of Christianity and Western values with a precise historical mission to accomplish it became a mere appendage of the German nation. As a consequence, the Anschluss was considered a «spontaneous will», namely «a mass force» which was able to sweep an artificial state, which had no reason to exist:

The political unification between Austria and Germany constitutes a new European fact but it is more formal than substantial. This is an official act which sanctions a long-lasting national unit [...] this is also the answer to those foreign commentators who consider this union as a danger for Italy on the border with Brenner [...] Italian politics was held in favor of the right German claims since the early days. It has continued until now with this conscious line [...] Italy believes in friendships and welcomed with full confidence in the words of Germany⁵¹⁹.

A confidence that Mussolini was now obliged to grant: Italy, detached permanently from the League of Nations, in fact putting a barrier between itself and the “the two democracies” of France and England, it could no longer do without Germany, thus depriving itself of every deterrent in

⁵¹⁴ Ibidem, p.135-36.

⁵¹⁵ Ibidem, p.140.

⁵¹⁶ Ibidem, p.149.

⁵¹⁷ Ibidem, p.154-155.

⁵¹⁸ Virginio Gayda, *L'Austria e l'Europa*, «Relazioni Internazionali», 19 March 1938, n.12, pp.205-206.

⁵¹⁹ Ibidem

order to deter Hitler in his imperialistic policy. In fact, Italy's rapprochement with Germany determined both a growing dependence on the Third Reich and it decreed the end of Austrian independence, which was inserted in a system of alliances that stifled any possibility of political support from France or England.

The process put in place proved fatal: at the beginning of 1938 Hitler substituted senior diplomats and military ranks with figures completely loyal to the Nazi regime, thus accelerating his initiatives on the diplomatic and military level. Collotti reports that in the meeting on 12th February between Hitler and Schuschnigg, the Fuhrer was willing to confirm Austrian independence only if Schuschnigg had resigned, giving the Austrian government to the Nazi movement. Schuschnigg was genuinely astonished: «the weeks that elapsed between 12th February to 12th March [...] represented a slow agony toward the end of the first Danube republic but also the end of the Europe thought at Versailles⁵²⁰»

At this point, Ciano unloaded every Italian responsibility, taking refuge in the inevitability of the event: « the fatal event is fulfilled. It was not a pleasure for us: certainly not. But one day the world will realize that all this was inevitable. The duce said it was a misunderstanding removed from the European map. And he listed the further three ones which still exist and that they will have to follow the same fate: Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and Belgium⁵²¹».

The resolution of the Austrian issue was seen as a «liberation and as a tribute to the German unity, which was associated with Italy in the Axis as a bulwark of civilization against the Bolshevik barbarism⁵²²»

⁵²⁰ Collotti, cit., p.346.

⁵²¹ Ciano, *Diario*, p.156.

⁵²² Collotti, cit., p.347.

Conclusions

As its first Charter revealed, Ispi was founded in order to study and disseminate international political affairs. Gaslini strongly believed that Italy needed a body able to shape a new political culture which was the result of interests and political patterns linked to the liberal period, as well as with new aspirations and watchwords which saw the fascist regime as a reliable answer to satisfy them. The director was able to understand the qualitative changes which characterized the sphere of international relations after the first world war and, to some degree, he recognized the necessity of placing a filter between political decisions and the masses. Against this background, the creation and development of Institutes of International Affairs, nation-based think tanks with the twofold aim of providing national and international elites with qualitative works on international affairs as well as creating an “informed” public opinion, provided Gaslini with the push he needed to found a similar body in Italy:

Our institute has been created with the aim of spreading the knowledge of international political problems [...] the same goals are pursued by first-rate foreign institutes: nevertheless they possess features which distinguish them from each other. As a consequence, the London Institute has the character of a Club and it is open only to a few categories of people. The popularization of their studies is reached through the publication of journals and books which have the English characteristic of adhering to reality. They are not theoretical studies but enquires on problems which affect directly the people’s lives: history in the making. It is from the objective examination of the situation that the English Institute draws its conclusions and expresses its assessments. On the contrary, American Institutes are open to all citizen and their aim is to inform. The publications are made by women, and they have no claim to be original: in fact, the activities of these Institutes are marked by a series of lunches followed by debates. Radio is made available for the activities of these Institutes.

The Hungarian as well as the Japanese Institute, according to Gaslini, were undertaking similar activities, while «our Institute was created not only to popularize and diffuse [knowledge] but essentially to study». The ambition was to establish «a center for specialized activities» and at the same time to produce publications tailored towards different categories of people. «This is therefore to mold the public opinion on foreign matters, which has been lacking in Italy». Since Italian people were rather reluctant to take any interest in foreign policy, «it is useful to have a private Institute which, despite being independent, is trying to carry on this work of persuasion in those sectors where the press and the bodies of the regime are incapable of intervening».

Moreover the institute, thanks to its own work, should have been seen as an important body in the political process, as if its standpoint reflected a sort of national point of view regarding a particular international problem. As if that were not enough, Ispi was offering to become a sort of research department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, conducting those enquires which were impossible to pursue in an “official” way.

Ispi, through the publication of specialized as well as general studies on foreign matters, aimed to free «Italian scholars from some foreign works which tend to present Italy and its foreign policy in a biased way. In this way the Institute would play an eminently national role⁵²³».

In this perspective, Ispi was trying to produce an innovative cultural project capable of linking historiography and politics, a study of an “imagined” national past with an in-depth analysis of the international context. The aim was to provide Italy with a more solid political culture in order to help the government both meet the requirements of being a Great Power, and fulfilling what was thought to be an Italian imperial mission. The ambiguous position occupied by Ispi during the fascist regime as well as the contradiction that was revealed at the beginning of this research, which was a claim for the unity of scientific research and propaganda made by Gaslini, can be understood in the relationship that the Milanese Institute established with the liberal Italian past. Ispi didn’t

⁵²³ Archivio Privato Pirelli (APP), ISPI, II Origini e scopi dell’Istituto: note varie 1934-35.

want to make a decisive break with the past, in fact it presented itself as an instrument to achieve that national unity which couldn't be reached in Italy before the First World War: a sort of sacred mission which could have been reached walking arm in arm with the fascist regime. On the other hand there was a break to the extent that parliamentarism was considered as a bad disease, and a new sense of hierarchy and order emerged which couldn't be challenged by "individualism" and more in general by all those "vicious" principles which were considered as an attack against the State and the Nation. Against this backdrop Ispi developed a *sui generis* political and historiographical laboratory that saw the collaboration of a large number of scholars, who differed from each other as regards political and cultural interests, but they participated in the initiatives of the Institute specifically because its cultural projects were able to rely upon a broader basis in respect of the most pressing political aims of the fascist regime. This is why, at least until a certain point, the members of Ispi and its collaborators didn't feel that particular contradiction between a serious and autonomous study of international/foreign politics and a dictatorial environment which, at the beginning, was not so assertive in shaping a coherent and unidirectional foreign policy.

It is clear that within the political and ideological plan of the fascist regime persisted a nationalistic-technocratic strand which cannot be dismissed as irrational or completely diluted in the great cauldron of fascist ideology. There were a lot of intellectual personalities like Alfredo Rocco, Giorgio Mortara, Luigi Amoroso, Alberto De Stefani and Pierfranco Gaslini who were trying to meet specific needs of the Italian state in a "technocratic" way: the issue was to create and develop an autonomous ruling class (civil servants) with the aim of protecting the public interest of the nation. In this perspective, it is easier to understand why an articulated and visionary theory of the corporative state saw its inception and development in Italy as well as other efforts to ameliorate the neuralgic points of the state and the political mechanism which involved the «diplomacy of public opinion». The latter constituted the *raison d'être* of the establishment of Ispi: Gaslini was continuously pushing for the creation of a public opinion fully aware of the aspirations and necessities of Italy in the international field. Oiling this mechanism and adopting effective and efficient tools had to represent the fundamental task of the Milanese Institute, hence the emphasis on the analysis of documents, the concepts of objectivity and scientific research often claimed by Gaslini. Indeed, what kind of Italy and what kind of public interest of the nation did he envisage? In this perspective it is impossible not to link this peculiar nationalistic strand which survived within the regime and the fascist ideology. The majority of the members of Ispi and its collaborators shared a common political and ideological background with Mussolini's aspirations, and it was equally clear that fascism was conceived as the driving force of Italian foreign policy. As a consequence the task was to arouse the interest of the masses for issues of foreign policy, linking them with slogans like the imperial role that Italy had to play in order to save European civilization. In short, on one hand the consensus created by Ispi in favor of the regime was clear; on the other hand it tried to manage a factual situation in which the realm of foreign policy was linked with a series of aspirations and forces which were more influential than in the past. Indeed, the latter represented a new and lively field of action shared by the various European nations: in this perspective the astonishing growth of the Institute of International Affairs' movement in the 20s and 30s can be seen as an absolute necessity of various national establishments to guide or impose a top-down mechanism with the aim of controlling the flow of information to the general public, rather than the expression of a new internationalism. In this perspective, the Italian context was profoundly affected by the "schizophrenia" of Mussolini's attitude: on one hand he was reassuring the other great powers with his unscrupulous although accommodating realism, on the other hand he gave new emphasis to the conduct of Italian foreign policy aligned behind the desire to transform Italy in a great power. Ispi played an important and in some respects autonomous role within this general political and ideological assumption: the members of its Study Office followed all the small movements in international politics closely to offer a complete and comprehensive picture of the context in which Italy had to act, remembering in their articles how dangerous Italy's isolation would have been for peace in Europe. The latter argument constituted a matter of reflection even for

those foreign diplomats who were trying to understand the possible future moves of fascist Italy, pointing out that the fascist movement could have given to Italian nationalism a kind of cohesion which was missing in the past. From this point of view Italy was seen as a potential leading nation, paving the way to overcoming the problems that were threatening European civilization. This is the big picture which constituted the background of the studies that were born in Italy at that time: an articulated relationship between political activity and historiographical reflection⁵²⁴. Against this background, it is clear, as I showed with the analysis of some articles drawn by the two journals of the Institute, that if on one hand it is plausible to place the start of an Italian tradition of foreign policy studies during the interwar period, on the other hand it is equally clear the intimate connection between the sphere of research and political aims.

As a matter of fact, we have a series of interpretations which stressed the importance of the studies in international relations during the interwar period, but at the same time they were not able to link the social, cultural and political general conditions with the authors of these works. What was the peculiar entanglement which characterized the studies in international relations in the 20s and 30s and what kind of role did Ispi play in this complex scenario?

Firstly, a quick glimpse into the historiography of international relations in Italy revealed that there was a genuine interest on the part of historians to connect domestic and foreign policy with the international environment, always keeping in the background a peculiar connection between historiography and politics. On the other hand the members of Ispi, especially those in the Study Office, were experts in international relations who were aware of the fact that in order to produce a meaningful interpretation of Italian foreign policy and its international scenario it was essential to construct a historical perspective which would legitimize the political actions of the nation. As a matter of fact, with the foundation of Ispi and the series of collaborations promoted by Gaslini we assist to the formation of a laboratory of studies which, from the beginning, it was characterized by a marked connection between historians and experts in international relations. Indeed, fascism exacerbated this interest for foreign policy, nevertheless a more sophisticated point of view which might link this attitude with the first world war and its consequences as well as with the prompts and challenges generated by the international environment could be a good starting point to discover new routes.

The fact that Ispi was thought as a centre of research which was dealing with international problems, in general, allowed to mix different perspectives and attitudes. This constitutes a crucial reason in order to understand why very different intellectual personalities and political figures met together in Ispi. Nevertheless, the fact that the Institute aimed at collecting all the most important specialists with an interest in international relations, it didn't mean that Gaslini was able to impose a coherent and logical cultural project to his collaborators. As a matter of fact, as it was demonstrated in the previous chapters, there was a continuous compromise between the directives of the "centre" and the effective work of the scholars involved in this activity, as if this preliminary freedom guaranteed by the Institute had as a consequence a dispersion of forces and an inability to constitute a solid amalgam.

Eventually, this work reveals how Italian specialists conceived public opinion, which was a new and important weapon to use in the field of international politics against other governments: a top-down construction which had the duty to control in every step the exchange of information and meanings from the realm of political decisions and events to an "informed" public. This doesn't mean that Ispi, and the scholars who were working in it, was a passive instrument with a mere function of control and selection. The Institute, especially with the collaboration of the Roman School directed by Volpe, produced a series of historical works embracing various themes but basically focused on a new reflection of the Italian past functional to the political aspirations of their time. In this perspective, it can be said that there was a connection between this new wave of historical studies and the stimulus derived from the political environment.

⁵²⁴ P.Pastorelli, *La storiografia italiana del dopoguerra sulla politica estera fascista*, «Storia e politica», ottobre-dicembre 1971, p.575-581.

Members of Ispi as “cultural mediators” were trying to improve the sector of cultural international relations, supporting a specific idea of Italy which contributed to the formation of those cultural assumptions behind Italian foreign policy during the interwar period. Moreover Ispi might be considered as a body with juridical subjectivity which was developing cultural diplomacy, in order to show a specific image abroad. In this perspective, cultural diplomacy worked together with traditional diplomacy in order to achieve some results, accompanied by considerations of prestige. Given the very nature of Ispi it shouldn't be surprising the fact that it was developing during its first phase (1933-1943), sometimes at the same time, works of scientific value as well as activities of cultural diplomacy and propaganda. It depended on political circumstances and what kind of image of Italy they wanted to emphasize.

As said above, Ispi's work echoed a broader movement of political and historical studies which saw its infancy in Italy after the First World War. Luigi Salvatorelli is an iconic representative of this new historiographical strand. His works offered a new and valid basis in order to better understand fascist foreign policy through social history, ideology, political initiatives and public opinion. Thanks to the amount of study and reflection produced during the interwar period Salvatorelli was ready to publish *Il fascismo e la politica internazionale* and with Giovanni Mira (the director of the Study Office of Ispi until 1937) *L'Italia dal 1919 al 1945*. Federico Chabod is another one: in 1950 he held a series of conferences in Paris regarding Italy from 1918 to 1948, focusing on the links between foreign policy, public opinion and the broader life of the Italian nation. Chabod's works offered a solid reconstruction of the events of Italian foreign policy as he was able both to highlight the role of the individual characters and events as well as to provide his history with a broader contextualization. According to Chabod, it was important to stress the initial difficulties of Italy, a very young state, in a difficult position in relation to other powers. A nation in the process of growth but with an economy which was still based on agriculture. Against this background, with a fragile state which hadn't yet completed its nation-building process, foreign policy was thought to be that field of action capable of developing the nation and make it more cohesive. Chabod stressed the actual independence showed by the Italian state, that *patriottismo* had a deep hold on public opinion, but these elements didn't prevent the success of fascism, rather *patriottismo* played in favor of fascism at least until 1936.

Another example is Mario Toscano: even if his historiographical approach is different, considering the diplomatic document the ultimate source for historians, he was able to put at the center of his reflection the relationship between realism and ideology. In particular he dealt with the issue of the gap between fascism and public opinion, especially in view of the Italian-German alliance.

Salvatorelli, Chabod and Toscano constituted an important part of this type of study of foreign policy and public opinion during the interwar period. It is interesting to observe that the three scholars were part of the activities of Ispi during the 30s and the early 40s, highlighting the possibility of finding the origin of such studies in that period. In this perspective, Ispi constitutes an institutional framework from which to investigate some of the most important specialists in international relations and their attempts to develop their works and analysis in constant relationship with the Institute and the political context. This means that both the members and the collaborators of Ispi were aware of the importance that public opinion was acquiring in those years, so that they tried to shape it with the creation of a series of initiatives with a more “pedagogical” tone.

To be clear, my research considers Ispi as both a member of the political society as well as a member of the civil society. In the first case Ispi was trying to lead the game by setting the terms of the debate and defining the moral and political shape of the country; in the latter one Ispi acted as an active element of pressure, trying to influence the mechanism of power and at the same time gave birth to a new form of diplomacy capable of communicating values and aspirations of a broader élite. This is why, through the reading of the journals of the Institute, it is possible to search for those key words and that reasoning characteristic of a new foreign policy, until those same arguments became part of a mentality, which substantiated specific tendencies and assumptions.

The peculiar way in which Italy was born and its development as a young nation among older great powers such as France and Great Britain lead to a different, and more influential, role played by public opinion in Italy: its historical development showed a continuous confrontation between political and civil society. In this perspective, Ispi applied to be the coveted trait d'union between foreign policy and public opinion, an essential element for the final maturation of the Italian nation. The frenetic activity of Ispi, its eclecticism and the ambition of developing so many various aspects of Italian political culture is a clear symptom of this peculiarity. As a matter of fact, Ispi analyzed documents for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it organized public conferences to inform the "attentive" public about foreign matters and it published a number of books and journals for the same purposes. In particular, with the publication of *Annali di Politica Internazionale*, the development of a series of monographies which brought together a vast range of international events and issues, as well as the appearance of real *instant books* included in the series *Problemi del Giorno*, the Institute was trying to give a voice to Italy in the reconstruction of international dynamics. Moreover, it took up the idea of writing a history of Italian foreign policy in order to construct that national conscience which was considered fundamental for Italy to succeed. As was stated above, Ispi was prompted by the wish to involve more and more people in the field of foreign policy, history and international relations. An example of this can be found in the publication of «Popoli», a journal with the aim of divulging geographical, historical, economic and social processes within national and international contexts. Given all this astonishing variety of studies, actors and themes that one can find in the history of Ispi during the 30s and early 40s, I argue that the Institute represents a meaningful vantage point from which to comprehend on one hand the weaknesses, the limits and ingenuity of a particular class of intellectuals and experts in international relations and their degree of support for the foreign policy of the fascist regime; on the other hand the effort to help the Italian nation to overcome structural defects and deficiencies which the Italian state had not been able to remove is undeniable. In accomplishing this "mission", indeed with different accents and motivations, all members of Ispi shared the belief that Italy had to become a great power and, in their Eurocentric view, they considered the world of international relations as a hierarchical environment in which the strongest nations had to come to terms with each other in order to create a harmonic system with different hegemonic spheres of influence.

In this perspective what was the relationship between the effective policies of the fascist regime and the reflections made by the members of Ispi? First of all, it is necessary to identify a fault line that sits above the Italian military action against Ethiopia in 1935-36. The Ethiopian war represented a "before and after" for the activities of the Institute: if before the invasion of the North African state Ispi, as I reported through the examination of the journals «Rassegna di Politica Internazionale» and «Relazioni Internazionali», was trying to act as a real transnational think tank, involving a wide range of different non-state actors, once Italy had its own empire the ever-increasing activities of the Institute suffered a loss of dynamicity and maneuvering space. As a matter of fact, in the first phase of the Institute (1933-1935), Ispi tried to pursue a multidirectional cultural diplomacy, hosting key personalities from the political and cultural world. It tried to create contacts especially with the British conservative establishment (through the figures of Muriel Currey, Luigi Villari, Charles Petrie) and the Hungarian revisionist front as well as weaving links with analogous foreign institutions. In this perspective the speech made during the inauguration of the new cultural year of the Milanese Institute (12 November 1934) by the Hungarian Consul Tibor de Pozel was iconic. He underlined that

Ispi is destined to play not only a national role but also an international one. The world war demonstrated as the foreign policy of a government has to take into consideration the spontaneous manifestations of national feeling [...] and that the foreign policy in order to be solid has to be based on a unanimous consensus of public opinion and not only on the directives carried out by diplomatic

chancelleries. As a consequence the task of the Institute should be to collect historical material about international issues, but also to wake public opinion, through conferences, publications and the press⁵²⁵.

In particular, De Pozel encouraged the Institute to cultivate relationships with analogous institutions in other countries, so that through the exchanges of publications and specialists, nations would get a better understanding of each other and they would respect the crucial interests of their own foreign policies. Within this game of *do ut des* in which every nation had to be reasonable because no one could have fully realize their national aspirations, war was considered as an act of desperation perpetrated by those peoples who felt to be unable to live and ignored at international meetings: «I wish Ispi could undertake its activities by implementing its contacts with other foreign institutions, which means a mutual rapprochement between nations in order to defend our culture and our civilization in favor of an enduring peace⁵²⁶».

Montenegro in his essay on Ispi stressed a change in the function of the Institute during the period 1939-1943, that was a shift from a body mainly concerned with research into international affairs to a kind of instrument with the function of attracting and organizing as many intellectuals as possible. While the beginning of the Second World War represented a powerful event which affected the activities of the Institute both from a structural point of view as well as in the writings and attitudes of Ispi's members, the impression is that the real watershed in the Institute's life was constituted by the Ethiopian war. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia was revealed as a real turning point in the history of the interwar period, representing the last colonial conquest in Africa capable of calling into question the international balance that had been established after the First World War. The concern of the great colonial empires of England and France as well as the condemnation of the League of Nations caused enormous damage to the fascist government, not only in economic terms but also for the loss of prestige and international status that Italy had known how to build during the 1920s, reaching a peak in the early to mid-30s. During that time, the government had not only stabilized a complex society following the First World War, but it had also managed to shrug off the impact of the financial crisis from 1929 and the increase of unemployment of the early 1930s that market economies across the West experienced. For these reasons, Italy's fascism was perceived with a lot of respect and it seemed to promise answers to questions liberal democracies were still facing. From this perspective, the first International Studies Conference held in 1932 in Milan is a good example of the degree of interest cultivated by some foreign political and intellectual figures regarding the economic policies adopted by fascism. The Italian speakers present at that conference were the representatives of a nationalistic-technocratic strand, which was still developing within the fascist ideology, they elaborated a consistent theory of the corporatist state, pointing out the continuity with the previous liberal period. After the Ethiopian war, the activism which characterized Italy in the former period in almost every international fora as well as its willingness to see its "rights" recognized within the international system built in Versailles, gave way to an increasingly imperialistic conception of the international environment, as though the colonial enterprise had rekindled the aspirations and latent desires of the Italian nation. Indeed, in order to have a general and more complex perspective of the transformation of the fascist foreign policy during the period between October 1935 and May 1936 it is fundamental to look at the geopolitical situation and at the "Game of Empires" which resumed with greater intensity⁵²⁷. My point is that whether it takes into account the more political-ideological side or the diplomatic-geopolitical aspect, the Ethiopian war had resulted in the political and cultural isolation of Italy, making scorched earth of that prestige internationally reached till then. These factors heavily affected Ispi's activities and the previous attempts to create transnational diplomatic channels with foreign intellectual and political figures. Consequently, there was a transformation of Ispi which

⁵²⁵ «Rassegna di politica internazionale», 1934, p.615.

⁵²⁶ Ibidem.

⁵²⁷ See, Eugenio Di Rienzo, «Il gioco degli Imperi». La guerra d'Etiopia e le origini del secondo conflitto mondiale, Società Editrice Dante Alighieri, 2016.

followed the changes of the international situation after the Ethiopian war, from a “transnational think tank” to an institute more concerned with research and divulgation of works related to foreign/international politics, with the desire of developing a political culture on foreign affairs within the national boundaries.

On the other hand Gaslini tried to keep alive the Study Office and a peculiar way of doing research which gave priority to a vast use of documents and a taste for inter-disciplinarity. Rather than stressing the shift from a research center to a publishing house capable of attracting hundreds of intellectuals, I think that it would be more accurate to say that the Institute experienced a stunning development during those years and, bearing in mind the constraints of an increasingly rigid international situation, along with the growth of the editorial sector there was a parallel expansion of the research division.

I think that this interpretation could be useful to frame Ispi in a broader and more complex context which touches on some of the most important aspects of the fascist regime and Italy in those years. In doing this, I tried to compare different historiographical accounts with the attempt to reconstruct, through documents, journals, books, the history of Ispi. Developing the former, I tried to get updates from the most recent studies regarding the role played by the fascist regime during the interwar period as well as the new conceptions which were born during those years about the nature of international relations and their relationship with foreign policy and public opinion. The link between the two, apparently contradictory fields of study revealed an unexpected and meaningful research path capable of putting together the specificities of the fascist regime with the broader international context with which it had to deal, through a series of mutual contacts and exchanges. In this perspective, the history of Ispi has been enriched by linking its birth and development with analogous initiatives outside the country (Institutes of International Affairs, Think Tanks, international organizations for intellectual cooperation), representing a remarkable feature of the interwar period. As a consequence it is important to analyze the role played by these new non-state actors in shaping foreign policy and public opinion, and ultimately understanding if and how they influenced the national and international life. This research points out that in order to better understand what the origins of think tanks in international politics were, how they developed within a specific national environment and what kind of reciprocal influence they received from different contexts, people and aspirations which they had to deal with, it was essential to take into account the case of one of them, maybe the most controversial one, which was the Milanese Institute for Studies in International Politics (Ispi).

Indeed, its history was heavily affected by the fascist regime, and in a broader perspective it assumed a specific physiognomy as well as a peculiar position at the crossroad of political, cultural and propagandistic national concerns. Nevertheless, these specific features didn't confine Ispi to an isolated environment with no contacts or exchanges with foreign institutes or personalities. Suffice it is to say that the very idea of founding a series of Institutes of International Affairs capable of studying and disseminating a more scientific knowledge regarding foreign matters was born out of the Peace Conference of Versailles by some Anglo-American representatives; that almost all the members of Ispi went abroad to complete their education; that Ispi was one of the Institutes which participated at the annual International Studies Conference, whose original name was International Conference of *Institutions for Scientific Study of Politics*⁵²⁸.

This is why I think that this research has made it possible both to find new materials in order to better understand the relationship between culture and politics during the fascist regime, and more specifically to investigate what were the themes, aspirations and interests of Ispi's members and the political directives of the dictatorship, as well as to start a reflection about the development of the Institutes of International Affairs. Investigating both how they treated and exploited international information and what kind of relationship they had with their governments allows to better understand the nexus between international politics, foreign policy and public opinion and

⁵²⁸ Emphasis added.

how it was changing in a context in which «the control of the public mind» was perceived to be one of «the most urgent political problems of the day⁵²⁹».

⁵²⁹ Langer, *A critique of Imperialism*, «Foreign Affairs», vol.14, n.1 (Oct 1935), pp.102-119.

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