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The Matter of Being a «Foreign Agent»: the Political Complexity Behind the Cooperation between Italian antifascist Leaders and Anglo-American Strategic Services during World War II¹

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Abstract

The history of the relations between the Anglo-Americans and the Italian antifascist Resistance has one of its main chapters in the cooperation between the antifascists and the Anglo-American wartime strategic services. The establishment of channels of cooperation with the Italian underground Resistance was in fact one of the objectives of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Many Italian antifascist leaders who left their native country to escape political persecution, as well as the ones who remained in Italy, sought the support of the OSS and the SOE to reach their political goals, which were, in some cases, strictly connected with their military involvement in the liberation war. At the same time, the participation of Italian antifascist leaders in the activity of the Anglo-American strategic services was often perceived, in the same antifascist circles, as unpatriotic. The great divergencies within Italian antifascism contributed to such criticism. This article will focus on the complexity and the political choices behind the cooperation between Italian antifascist leaders and Anglo-American strategic services through the comparison of three case studies. The first is the individual enrolment of Max Salvadori in the British SOE. The second is the failure of Randolfo Pacciardi's project for the constitution of an Italian legion supposed to fight alongside the Allies. The essay's main sources will be the two protagonists' memoirs and personal papers, in order to analyze the representations which they gave of their own experiences, both at the time and afterward, as well as the OSS and the SOE papers which help reconstruct the events.

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¹ I would like to thank Dr. Roderick Bailey for guiding me through the SOE Max Salvadori's papers. His help and his work allowed me to have a more complete understanding of Salvadori's wartime experience, which was crucial for writing this essay.

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Introduction

During World War II, the experiences of Max Salvadori² and Randolfo Pacciardi³ had many aspects in common. Both were antifascist exiles and men of action who wanted to play a role in the war of liberation of their homeland, Italy. In their condition as exiles, Salvadori and Pacciardi sought Anglo-American support for their plans and found their main supporters in the wartime Anglo-American strategic services, namely the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The two men, however, took different approaches to their cooperation with the Anglo-Americans. Salvadori placed military action above politics. Therefore, he enlisted in the British Army to be deployed to Italy in the ranks of SOE, the British wartime strategic service that depended on the War Office. Pacciardi, who had led the Garibaldi Brigade in the Spanish Civil War in 1936, considered himself a military leader and believed that his role should have been that of leader of an Italian legion of volunteers fighting with pride for the freedom of their homeland. For Pacciardi, then, military action was closely linked to politics. Although Pacciardi's and Salvadori's experiences were very different, both of their relationships with Anglo-Americans were complex, full of misunderstandings, and perceived as controversial within Italian antifascist communities. This complexity, analyzed through the case studies of Salvadori and Pacciardi, is the focus of this article. Before

² Massimo (Max) Salvadori Paleotti, born in London in 1908, grew up in an antifascist family of landowners. His father, Guglielmo Salvadori, was a philosophy professor and wrote several articles against fascism for the British public in the 1920s. When he was persecuted by fascist squads, he decided to go into exile in Switzerland with his family, where Max completed his studies. Salvadori held British citizenship, as his maternal grandmother was British. This biographical information is significant because the fact of possessing dual citizenship, Italian and British, will earn Salvadori the accusation of not being loyal to his Italian homeland. After the war, Salvadori obtained an academic position in the United States. He ran for the Liberal Party in the Italian elections of 1946 but was not elected.

³ Randolfo Pacciardi was born in 1899. In 1917 he fought in World War I. In 1915 he had tried to enlist as a volunteer, although he was still too young. In 1926 he was imprisoned for antifascist activities but managed to escape and left Italy. He was a staunch Republican and in 1933 became leader of the Italian Republican Party in exile. He fought in the Spanish Civil War at the head of the Garibaldi Brigade against Franco's troops. After World War II he was Minister of Defense from 1948 to 1953.

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turning to the two case studies, we must briefly outline the context in which Salvadori's and Pacciardi's ties with Anglo-American intelligence emerged and developed during the war.

The relations between Italian antifascist exiles and Anglo-American strategic services represent one of the main chapters in the history of the relations between Italian antifascist Resistance and the Allies. Even before the landing in Sicily in July 1943, the British SOE and the American OSS needed to establish reliable connections with the Italian antifascists, in order to coordinate their future activities in Italian territory.⁴ Antifascist exiles' communities in France, Switzerland, and the United States were, therefore, a useful source both of contacts and information on the Italian internal situation, through which one could find supporters for the strategic services' strategy of action in Italy, which included local recruiting, intelligence collection, sabotage, and guerrilla operations behind the enemy lines. On the other hand, Italian antifascists tried to exploit such relations to reach political and personal aims related to their antifascist struggle and to their condition as exiles. Since OSS and SOE agents were the main Anglo-American interlocutors for the antifascists, it was through contact with them that the latter tried to be recognized as representatives of a democratic Italy, an alternative to the fascist regime.

In the historiography about the Italian antifascist exile in the United States, there are several cases of Italian refugees who collaborated with American and British wartime strategic agencies with the goal of defeating fascism.⁵ Most of the Italian political figures involved in such collaborations belonged to the Mazzini Society,

⁴ On OSS activity in Italy see P. Tompkins, *L'altra Resistenza*, Milano, Il saggiatore, 2005; M. Corvo, *O.S.S. in Italy, 1942-1945: A Personal Memoir*, New York, Enigma books, 2005; T.Naftali, 'Artifice: James Angleton and X-2 Operations in Italy', in G. C. Chalou, *The Secret War: The Office of Strategic Services in World War II*, (Inserire la città di edizione) DIANE Publishing, 1995, pp. 218-245. On SOE activity in Italy see D. Stafford, *Mission Accomplished: SOE and Italy 1943-1945*, London, Vintage, 2012; R.Bailey, *Target Italy. The Secret War against Mussolini, 1940-1943: The Official History of SOE Operations in Fascist Italy*, London, Faber & Faber, 2014.

⁵ The most comprehensive English reconstruction of the antifascist exile environment in the United States is James Miller's *The United States and Italy*. Although the book does not focus specifically on Italian exiles but more generally on relations between Italy and the United States from 1940 to 1950, it describes both American policy toward Italy and the attempt by Italian antifascists in the United States to shape it. Antonio Varsori's works on the Mazzini Society and on relations between Italian antifascists and the Allies are also crucial to understanding the actions of Italian antifascist exiles in the United States. See J.E. Miller, *The United States and Italy, 1940-1950. The Politics and Diplomacy of Stabilization*, North Carolina University Press, Chapel Hill, 1984; A. Varsori, *Gli alleati e l'emigrazione democratica antifascista (1940-1943)*, Sansoni, Firenze, 1982; see also A. Varsori (editor), *L'antifascismo italiano negli Stati Uniti durante la Seconda guerra mondiale*, atti del convegno, Archivio trimestrale, Roma, 1984.

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the main antifascist association in the United States. As historians such as Antonio Varsori and James Miller point out, the most politically influential Italian antifascist in the United States was Count Carlo Sforza, a former Italian diplomat who was widely recognized by the antifascist community in the United States as its leader.⁶ Sforza was a refugee in New York from the summer of 1940 to the fall of 1943, and during those years he sought to be recognized by the US State Department and the British Foreign Office as a first-class political collaborator. He wanted to create a political committee called Free Italy, a kind of unofficial government-in-exile that would be recognized by the Allies. This committee was to include a legion of Italian volunteers to fight alongside the Allied army in an attempt to replicate what De Gaulle was doing with his *France Libre*.⁷ The legion was to be led by Colonel Randolfo Pacciardi, former leader of the Italian Republican Party who had fought at the head of the Garibaldi Brigade against Francoist forces in the Spanish Civil War. On one hand, US and British political authorities were not interested in establishing formal relations with Italian political committees; but, on the other hand, the Coordinator of Information (COI), the predecessor of the OSS, and SOE were interested in groups that could conduct guerrilla operations and help build an underground Resistance network in Italy. Pacciardi was therefore approached by COI agents who were interested in retrieving more details about the legion project to report to their superior, director William Donovan.

In addition to seeking political recognition, Italian antifascists in the United States also sought more specific and concrete assistance from Anglo-American agents. The antifascists often asked for assistance in financing their propaganda projects, by taking their concerns to Anglo-American political authorities, seeking help to transmit messages to Italy when the normal postal service was not active, and to return to Italy, both in terms of permits and logistics. Especially the last aspect became crucial when the Allied landing in Sicily opened the possibility for the exiles to return to their homeland. All these requests were handled by the OSS, the SOE, or

⁶ On Carlo Sforza's exile in the US see Neal H. Petersen, *From Hitler's Doorstep: The Wartime Intelligence Reports of Allen Dulles, 1942-1945* (Penn State Press, 2010).

⁷ *France Libre* was an anti-nazi French political and military organization led by General Charles De Gaulle. The movement refused to recognize the June 1940 armistice between France and Germany and kept fighting alongside Great Britain.

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by both agencies together. As we will see in the next paragraphs, the British SOE was also active in the US, although not officially.

The US was not the only place where American and British agents collaborated with Italian antifascists. Another important hub for interactions between Italian antifascists and Anglo-American agents was Switzerland. In fact, the SOE and the OSS had established their operational stations in Bern in 1942, sending as offices chiefs respectively John McCaffery and Allen Dulles, later director of the CIA. The Italian antifascists in Switzerland were associated with the Italian Committee for the National Liberation of Northern Italy (CNLAI). This was a political and military organization that included all antifascist parties and coordinated partisan guerrilla groups. The CLNAI representatives in Switzerland sought not only political but also military recognition, as they wanted the partisan guerrilla bands to become a kind of liberation army.⁸ At the same time, the antifascists urgently needed material support from the Anglo-Americans: the OSS and SOE provided financial aid and equipment throughout the war. This is closely related to the third and perhaps most effective area of cooperation between the Italian antifascists and the Anglo-American intelligence services: Italy itself. During the Italian campaign, the OSS and SOE established numerous operational bases in liberated Italian territory and conducted clandestine operations behind enemy lines. OSS and SOE agents recruited Italians and worked on the battlefield with partisan groups and Italian agents of the Military Information Service (SIM).⁹

Since the late 1980s, Italian and Anglo-Saxon historians have analyzed the nature and consequences of the relationship between Anglo-American agents and Italian antifascists, both in Italy and in exile. In this regard, the release of SOE and OSS documents has been crucial for the reconstruction of the history of the two agencies' activities in relation to the Italian situation. The opening of the archives of SOE and the OSS also

⁸ On this matter see T. Piffer, *Gli alleati e la Resistenza italiana*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2010, pp. 72-73.

⁹ The Special Operations Executive was founded in July 1940 as a wartime strategic service. It was dismissed at the end of World War II. On McCaffery's SOE Bern station see Stafford, *Mission Accomplished*, pp. 88-91. On Dulles' OSS Bern station see N. H. Petersen, *From Hitler's Doorstep: The Wartime Intelligence Reports of Allen Dulles, 1942-1945*, Penn State Press, 2010. On the cooperation between SIM, OSS and SOE see M. Pasqualini, *Carte segrete dell'Intelligence italiana: Il S.I.M. in archivi stranieri*, Roma, Ministero della Difesa, 2014.

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marked a turning point in the Italian historiographical debate on the history of the antifascist Resistance, where the subject of collaboration with the Allies had been largely neglected for decades.¹⁰ One of the main aspects broader historiography on the Italian Resistance highlights, is the high level of divergences and political conflicts within the antifascist parties and, in particular, between leftist and moderate groups. Such conflicts also existed within the antifascist exile communities.¹¹ In this difficult context, wartime cooperation with the Anglo-American strategic services was a controversial issue. On the one hand, cooperation with US and British forces was often the only way to fight fascism in Italy and from abroad, whether in the form of propaganda, political advice, or, as will be shown in this essay through the cases of Pacciardi and Salvadori, military activity. On the other hand, the line between cooperating with the Allies for a common goal and selling out the cause of Italian democratic nationalism in the service of the Allies was thin. In many cases, it was the Anglo-Americans and not the Italians who set the rules of the game. The Anglo-American military leadership decided what could be accomplished, how antifascists could be used, and which parts of their projects should be discarded. In this dynamic, OSS and SOE agents often acted as intermediaries between the antifascists and

¹⁰ The reasons why the significance of the complex Anglo-American collaboration with the Italian Resistance has long been neglected are to be found in the larger context of the politicization of the history of the Italian Resistance that began immediately after the end of the war. The phenomenon of the Resistance was made out to be the basis of the Italian Republic and the new national identity. Political parties, from the right to the left, exploited the history of the Resistance by neglecting some of its aspects and mythologizing others, depending on the political message they wanted to emphasize. In this context, the role of the Allies was discredited in order to emphasize the role of the Italians. See on this matter R. De Felice; P. Chessa, *Rosso e nero*, Milano, Baldini & Castoldi, 1995; E. Gentile, *La grande Italia: ascesa e declino della nazione nel ventesimo secolo*, Milano, Mondadori, 2006. Particularly critical of the cooperation between the Resistance and the allies is Ernesto Galli della Loggia in his *Morte della Patria* (in English: death of the homeland). See E. Galli Della Loggia, *La morte della patria: la crisi dell'idea di nazione tra Resistenza, antifascismo e Repubblica*, Roma ; Bari Laterza, 1996. One of the pioneers of a new approach to the subject in Italy was Massimo De Leonardis. He published *Gran Bretagna e la Resistenza partigiana in Italia* in 1988, attempting to read the history of the Resistance beyond the left-wing and right-wing visions of the Anglo-Americans, each guilty of weakness in the face of revolutionary advances and of suppressing the autonomy of the Resistance. More recently, Tommaso Piffer has provided some interesting insight into the importance of freeing the history of relations between the Allies and the antifascist Resistance from politicized perspectives. In his book *Gli alleati e la resistenza italiana* (The Allies and the Italian Resistance), he offers a reconstruction of the actions of the OSS and SOE in Italy in collaboration with the Italian Resistance. See M. De Leonardis, *Gran Bretagna e la Resistenza partigiana in Italia (1943-1945)*, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1988; T. Piffer, *Gli alleati e la Resistenza italiana*, cit. Another recent interesting work is O. Wiewiorka, *The Resistance in Western Europe, 1940-1945*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2019. In this book, the author looks at OSS' and SOE's activities in a Western European framework.

¹¹ See for example C. Pavone, *Una guerra civile*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 1994; F. Solari, *L'armonia discutibile della Resistenza. Confronto fra generazioni*, Milano, La Pietra, 1979. See also T. Piffer, *Il Banchiere della Resistenza*, Mondadori, Milano, 2005, pp. 66-67.

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Anglo-American military and political authorities. The autonomy of the strategic agencies was closely related to their goals of gathering intelligence and promoting underground guerrilla operations; politics was not their prerogative.¹² Moreover, while wartime secret services, despite of agents' personal inclinations and political ideals, followed the line determined by their governments, Italian antifascists, as said, struggled to find unity of action, even within the same political group. The result was that Italian political leaders, especially outside Italy, established individual and often secret contacts with the Anglo-Americans. However, it happened that the information about these contacts was leaked and circulated within antifascist communities in exile, leading to strong criticism from Italians themselves. Working for a foreign agency could be considered a betrayal to the Italian cause and could be used as a weapon to attack political opponents. This marked a sort of paradox. The emigrated antifascist leaders needed support for their activities, but getting that support from the Anglo-American strategic services could discredit them as foreign agents or mercenaries. This often resulted in the necessity of making frustrating choices and finding compromises between the willingness of seeing Italian nationalist stands officially recognized and having the possibility of concretely fighting fascism. Salvadori and Pacciardi found themselves in such an inconvenient position, but they were not the only ones. The antifascist exile and future ambassador in Washington, Alberto Tarchiani, was accused by communist and anarchist groups in the US of being a British agent and of financing the Mazzini Society, of whom he was Secretary General, with British money. The idea that Tarchiani was a British agent was then strengthened by the fact that Tarchiani and Alberto Cianca, another Mazzini Society member, went back to Italy in 1943 thanks to the SOE, a fact that was not a secret in the Mazzini Society's circles even at the time.¹³ When in February 1945 Tarchiani became Italian ambassador in Washington, the OSS opened a file on him where it is reported that he had the fame of being a British agent.¹⁴ The Italians who managed to reach their homeland in 1943 thanks

¹² On this matter see for example T. Piffer, *Gli alleati e la resistenza italiana*, cit., pp. 100-101.

¹³ A. Varsori, *Gli alleati*, cit., p.237.

¹⁴ Memorandum on Alberto Tarchiani, February 15th, 1945, National Archives College Park (NACP), WASH-SI-PTS-I: documents related to Alberto Tarchiani, M 1934, OSS, documents of special funds of Washington secret services, 1942-1946, box 1, folder 1.

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to OSS and SOE's cooperation were in general often accused of being foreign agents by fellow antifascists. In the case of Tarchiani and Cianca, Pacciardi was on the side of the accusers, as will be shown more in detail in the next sections. On the same matter, in a letter to Don Luigi Sturzo, the leader of the prefascist catholic party, Giuseppe Lupis, Italo-American socialist editor of the New York newspaper *Il Mondo*, affirms that all the ones that managed to reach Italy accepted «to put themselves at the service of the British».¹⁵

The antifascists that had ties with Anglo-American secret services were well aware of the political risk they were undertaking and were in some cases very careful not to compromise their independence. An interesting example in this sense is the case of the Organization of the Italian Resistance (Organizzazione della Resistenza Italiana, ORI). The ORI was an underground Italian organization of volunteer fighters, founded in Southern Italy in December 1943 through an initiative by Raimondo Craveri, an antifascist affiliated with the Action Party. The ORI was created with the precise purpose of cooperating with the OSS in guerrilla and intelligence operations and acting as a liaison with Italian partisans in northern Italy. The organization was basically an entirely Italian OSS operative group: ORI's agents were trained by OSS agents and wore American uniforms. However, the agreement between the ORI and the OSS foresaw no salaries for ORI's volunteers, as a distinctive mark of the fact that they were not American agents.¹⁶

In the varied context of the relations between Italian antifascists and Anglo-American secret services, it was therefore quite common for the first to experience a contradiction between the interest in working with the Allies for the common cause of defeating Nazi fascism in Italy and the fact that the same cooperation could result in a loss of political independence. The article will therefore focus on the complexity and the political choices behind the cooperation between Italian antifascist leaders and Anglo-American strategic services through the comparison of two case studies. The first is the analysis of the problematic individual enrolment of Max Salvadori in the British SOE. The case of Max Salvadori is an example of individual choice for activism. Salvadori, in fact, rejected the criticism that working for the British army was unpatriotic behavior.

¹⁵ Letter from Lupis to Sturzo, June 5th, 1945, Istituto Sturzo (IS), Sturzo papers, folder.716, c..17.

¹⁶ R. Craveri, *La campagna d'Italia e i servizi segreti: la storia dell'ORI (1943-1945)*, Milano, La Pietra, 1980, p. 50.

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The second case study is the failure of Randolpho Pacciardi's project for the constitution of an Italian legion supposed to fight alongside the Allies. He tried hard to find support for its establishment, but his refusal to form a legion without any sort of political recognition complicated the matter and was one of the reasons why the project failed.

The two case studies offer the opportunity to discuss two different positions concerning cooperation with Anglo-American secret services. The first reflects the willingness to act first, and look for political recognition eventually, while the second tried to subordinate action to political recognition. In both cases, though, criticism among the Italian antifascist community was high. Salvadori's and Pacciardi's experiences illustrate, therefore, the complexity behind the choice of cooperating with Anglo-American secret services.

Max Salvadori's choice in the name of activism

«Ten grams of action are worth more than ten pounds of printed paper».¹⁷ This sentence, written by Max Salvadori in 1945 to the antifascist historian Gaetano Salvemini, sums up his position regarding the role he believed he had to play in the war against fascism. Propaganda was not enough. Action was, in fact, the leitmotif of Salvemini's antifascist struggle, from his first involvement in the *Giustizia e Libertà* movement in 1929 to his direct participation in the Italian campaign while serving in the British Army.¹⁸ Salvadori's antifascist activism was characterized by a firm belief in Great Britain as the only power that could oppose Nazi-fascism. This was the main reason why Salvadori sought partnership with British institutions from the second half of the 1930s. A second, more practical reason was that Salvadori held British citizenship, which

¹⁷ Original text in Italian: «Dieci grammi di azione valgono più di 10 chili di carta stampata», Memorandum by M. Salvadori to M. Cantarella, September 10th 1945, Società Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso di Porto San Giorgio (SOMS), Max Salvadori papers, box 35, folder 10.

¹⁸ *Giustizia e Libertà*, (in English: Justice and Liberty) was an antifascist movement founded in France in 1929. It was led by Carlo Rosselli until his assassination in 1937. Following the ideals of liberal socialism, *Giustizia e Libertà* was active abroad to keep the Italian democratic tradition alive while conducting underground antifascist propaganda in Italy. After the death of Carlo Rosselli and his brother Nello, the movement was led by Emilio Lussu and turned more decisively toward socialism. This is the reason why some of the first members distanced themselves from the movement after 1937. see V. Spini, M. Gervasoni, A. Caffi (editors), *Giustizia e Libertà e il socialismo liberale*, Milano, M&B, 1999; M. Bresciani, *Quale antifascismo? storia di Giustizia e libertà*, Roma, Carocci, 2017.

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he had inherited from his grandmother and which enabled him to apply for the British army. Nevertheless, Salvadori's cooperation with the British intelligence services, at first occasional and then increasingly stable, until his final enlistment in the army in 1943, did not go smoothly. Although he admired British democracy, he was highly critical of the British's punitive policy toward Italy, and while serving in the SOE he tried to counter the unfriendly British attitude toward the Italian Resistance by trying to convince his superiors of the value and reliability of Italian antifascists.¹⁹ Thus, in the last weeks of the war, Salvadori wrote a series of reports to convince the British Foreign Office to trust the antifascists of the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale Alta Italia (CLNAI), the political and military organization that coordinated the antifascist Resistance in German-occupied Italy.²⁰ Similar efforts were not enough to avoid criticism within the antifascist community in exile, particularly in the United States.²¹ As noted in the previous section, the negative connotation of being a British agent was widespread in the quarrelsome environment of Italian anti-fascism in the United States, both among exiles and in the Italian American communities. This logic was rejected by Salvadori, as will be shown below.

¹⁹ Churchill and his Foreign Office had a punitive attitude toward Italy, which was blamed for the war, without distinguishing the Italian people from the fascist regime, as the antifascist political representatives wanted the Allies to do. While Roosevelt adopted a softer attitude toward Italy, he recognized Britain's dominant interests in the Mediterranean. At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, the two heads of state included Italy among the enemies who would have had to accept unconditional surrender. As for the role of the antifascists, Churchill saw no particular benefit in their action and rejected any kind of request for their political recognition. This view also affected relations between SOE and the Italian partisans during the Italian campaign. Faced with the antifascists' demands for supplies and money, the British military leadership authorized only for a limited amount of resources to be destined to the partisans. The situation began to change in mid-1944 when the first antifascist government was established in the Italian capital after the liberation of Rome, and the United States began to play an important role both in policy-making toward Italy and on the ground. Anglo-American policy towards Italy is one of the main topics analyzed in the historiography of the relations between Italy and the Allies. Relevant issues in this sense were constituted by the divergencies between the British and the Americans and by the complexity of the Italian peculiar status of "cobelligerant". Some of the most relevant studies on these matters are M. Howard, *The Mediterranean in British Strategy in the Second World War*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968; D. Ellwood, *L'alleato nemico. La politica dell'occupazione anglo-americana in Italia 1943-1946*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1977; E. Aga Rossi, *L' Italia nella sconfitta politica interna e situazione internazionale durante la seconda guerra mondiale*, ESI, Napoli, 1985; E. Aga Rossi, *Una nazione allo sbando: l'armistizio italiano del settembre 1943 e le sue conseguenze*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2003; E. Di Nolfo e M. Serra, *La gabbia infranta: gli alleati e l'Italia dal 1943 al 1945*, Roma; Bari, Laterza, 2010.

²⁰ Letter from C. Roseberry to Max Salvadori, 16th of May 1945, SOMS, Salvadori's papers, box 33, folder 1.

M. Salvadori, *Resistenza e Azione*, Bari, Laterza, 1951, pp. 232-233; A. Grasso, *Max Salvadori. Appunti per una biografia politica*, Roma, Aracne, 2014, pp. 248-249. On Salvadori's commitment for the antifascist cause from his position within the SOE see also R. Craveri, *La campagna d'Italia e i servizi segreti*, cit., pp. 36-37.

²¹ A. Grasso, *Max Salvadori*, cit., pp. 224; 236.

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Before looking more closely at Salvadori's explanation for his decision to work for the British Army, given in a conversation with antifascist historian Gaetano Salvemini immediately after the end of the war, we should summarize the history of Salvadori's relations with the British intelligence services as a framework for the following considerations.²²

The first contact between Salvadori and British intelligence dates back to July 1937, when he was 29 years old. Salvadori had been living in exile since 1924 because his father, a well-known antifascist, had been attacked by fascist troops and, as a result, the whole family decided to leave Italy. In 1937 Salvadori settled in London, where he carried out antifascist propaganda. He firmly believed that Britain, as a bulwark of freedom and progress, was the only power that could understand and fight the threat of fascism, and he wanted to collaborate with British institutions. Thanks to his cousin Lawrence Collier, who worked for the Foreign Office, he got in touch with the British secret service (SIS), or MI6. This is how he met Claude Dansey, an SIS agent who was in charge of a European network of agents and had worked in Rome from 1926 to 1936.²³ This marked the beginning of Salvadori's first sporadic activity for the SIS, for which he undertook some undercover assignments. In the weeks following Salvadori's meeting with Dansey, Salvadori was provided with a false identity to get to Spain and participate in the Spanish Civil War, where Randolfo Pacciardi led the Garibaldi Brigade against the Francoist forces. Salvadori and Pacciardi then traveled together to the United States, where they gave a series of lectures on the Spanish War. During this time in the United States, Salvadori and Dansey remained in contact. In 1939, shortly before the start of the war, the SIS agent brought Salvadori back to England to work with the newly formed Section D of MI6, which was to use propaganda and covert

²² The most important works to deepen Max Salvadori's relations with British secret services are the two volumes on SOE's activity in Italy. Roderick Bailey's *Target Italy*, which focuses on the years 1940-1943, offers the most comprehensive reconstruction of Salvadori's first involvement in British secret services activities. David Stafford's *Mission Accomplish* offers instead a reconstruction of Salvadori's activity in Italy between 1943 and 1945. Alessandra Grasso's biography of Salvadori allows one to contextualize Max's work for the British within his whole political activity. See A. Grasso, *Max Salvadori*. cit., R. Bailey, *Target: Italy*, cit.; D. Stafford, *Mission Accomplished*, cit.

²³ R. Bailey, *Target: Italy*, cit., pp. 24-251.

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operations to counter the enemy, and which in July 1940 was transformed into the Special Operations Executive, a strategic service agency of the War Office and formally separate from SIS.²⁴

From that moment until the beginning of 1943, Salvadori collaborated with the SIS and the SOE without having a structured position within these agencies. During these three years, the Italian antifascist carried out a large number of undercover missions for the British, both in Europe and in North America. In June 1940, Salvadori returned to the United States, from where he left from time to time for undercover intelligence and recruiting missions in Mexico and Canada. During these years, Salvadori's activities were varied and quite ambiguous. He acted essentially as an undeclared British agent in violation of US laws on neutrality and foreign propaganda.²⁵ He was simultaneously a political advisor, an undercover agent for intelligence gathering and sabotage missions, a recruiter, and an element of liaison between British intelligence and the antifascist community in exile, first in France and then, after Paris had fallen under Nazi occupation, in the United States, where he was associated with the Mazzini Society, although he never became an official member of the association.²⁶

The turning point for Salvadori's involvement with the British SOE came in early 1943 when his application to join the British Army was finally accepted and he was appointed to the War Office's SOE. Salvadori returned to London, where he officially joined the Italian Section "J" of the SOE under the chief Cecil

²⁴ Salvadori's undercover activity in this period, and the only partial documentation on this matter open to the public, raised suspicion about him being a fascist spy. See for example M. Canali, *Le spie del regime*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2004. He was establishing relations with fascist high-ranking Party members, such as Arturo Bocchini, chief of police, with the idea of blowing on the fire of divergencies within the Fascist Party and keeping Italy out of the war. Roderik Bailey's book shines more light on this phase of Salvadori's activity in cooperation with British MI6, thanks to his access to Salvadori's papers on this matter. R. Bailey, *Target: Italy*, Cit., pp. 32-34. See also A. Grasso, *Max Salvadori*, Cit., pp. 256-258.

²⁵ R. Bailey, *Target: Italy*, cit., pp.29-40; A. Grasso, *Max Salvadori*, cit., pp. 209-211.

²⁶ It is not clear who in the antifascist community in the US and Mexico knew of Salvadori's secret activity for MI6 and then for SOE. It is likely that the secretary general of the Mazzini Society knew, at least in part, of Salvadori's connection to the British. Indeed, his son Lucio was one of the volunteers recruited in the US to participate in a special British mission to India. Moreover, Tarchiani himself was in contact with British and American agents. It was thanks to them that he returned to Italy in the summer of 1943. In 1944, he was also part of a special mission group from SOE whose goal was to reach Rome, which was still under Nazi control.

Letter by L.S. Tarchiani to M. Salvadori, Società Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso di Porto San Giorgio (SOMS), Max Salvadori papers, box 35, folder 11.

On Tarchiani's mission with the SOE see his diary: A. Tarchiani, *Il mio diario di Anzio*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Verona, 1947.

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Roseberry. After a period of training, Salvadori arrived in Italy in September 1943. He was assigned to the Vigilant mission under the direction of Major Malcolm Munthe, which advanced from Sicily into mainland Italy toward Campania.²⁷ In the Napoli area, Salvadori came into contact with the antifascist circles of the liberal philosopher Benedetto Croce. When Munthe was dismissed in late January 1944, Salvadori was placed by the SOE command under the responsibility of Captain Gerry Holdsworth, who was appointed chief of the SOE Special Operation Force in Italy. Holdsworth needed Salvadori in the north to make contact with the antifascists in the occupied territories. As the Allied headquarters believed that the defeat of German forces was imminent, the Anglo-Americans began to worry about the future political and administrative organization of the liberated territories. Salvadori was therefore one of the agents of SOE who were sent to the north to take care of liaisons with the aforementioned CLNAI. When Milan was liberated, Salvadori was the only official Allied representative in the city. This responsible position proved that he had earned the respect and trust of his superiors during his years of service.²⁸ One of the greatest admirers of Salvadori's work was Cecil Roseberry, head of the Italian section of SOE. At the end of the war, when the SOE was about to be dismantled, Roseberry was unsure what his role would be in the near future, but he wrote to Salvadori: «If my work lies along para-official lines then I should want nobody to be in with me more than yourself - so don't get yourself cut off».²⁹ Salvadori, however, seemed to have other plans. In July 1945, he asked to be quickly removed from office to take a teaching position at Bennington College in Vermont.³⁰ Salvadori thus moved back to the United States, where some old friends of the Italian antifascist emigration, such as Professors Gaetano Salvemini and Michele Cantarella, still resided.³¹ Nevertheless, the mood among the Italians in the US seemed as bitter as it had been in 1942. As Alessandra Grasso explains in her political biography of Salvadori, upon his return to the US, Salvadori was publicly accused by socialist and anarchist newspapers of having been a British agent

²⁷ Munthe's Vigilant mission had the goal of establishing contacts with antifascists who could fight behind the enemy lines. D. Stafford, *Mission Accomplished*, cit., p.2.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 240; 264-265; 308-310.

²⁹ Letter from C. Roseberry to Max Salvadori, 16th of May 1945, SOMS, Salvadori's papers, box 33, folder 1.

³⁰ Letter from Salvadori to the Under-secretary of State for War, 27th of July 1945, SOMS, Salvadori's papers, box 33, folder 1.

³¹ Salvemini was a professor of History at Harvard, while Cantarella was a professor of Italian literature at the Smith College of Northampton.

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for many years, even before he was officially inducted into the British army. The spark of the scandal was ignited by Andrew Ingrao. He was an Italian-American psychologist who had been recruited by the SOE and probably by Salvadori himself for an antifascist propaganda mission in British prison camps in India, but he was interned by British military authorities for inappropriate behavior during his service. He was discharged in 1943 and returned to the United States. Presumably angered with British authorities by his internment, he publicly attacked the Mazzini Society, accusing it of being funded by the SOE. In 1945, Ingrao then directed his accusations against Salvadori, calling him an agent of British imperialism. This attack was taken up by communist and anarchist groups, as well as by Giuseppe Lupis, editor of the socialist newspaper *Il Mondo*.³² The suspicion of Salvadori being a servant to British imperialism was also shared by Salvemini.³³ When Salvadori found that his esteemed friend Salvemini was among those who doubted his honesty toward the Italian cause, he decided, on Cantarella's advice, to write a long memorandum setting forth his version of the facts and defending his decisions.³⁴ The terms of this exchange are recounted in detail in Grasso's work. For the purposes of this essay, it is important to know that Salvadori used this exchange to revise his decisions and his activity for the antifascist cause, even though he denied his initial involvement in the activities of British MI6, admitting only to having been in contact with SOE in the two years prior to his enrollment.³⁵

The first aspect that should be highlighted is that Salvadori rejected the simple explanation of having collaborated with the British by virtue of his citizenship, thus answering a kind of nationalist call. In fact, Cantarella tried to defend Salvadori's position with Salvemini, stating that it was not wrong that Salvadori, as a British citizen, had chosen to serve his second homeland. Salvadori, informed by Cantarella himself of the latter's efforts to defend his entry into the British army, replied that he ignored and had always ignored such nationalistic sentiments. Instead, he asserted that he had acted «to serve the cause of personal liberty» and that

³² A. Grasso, *Max Salvadori*, cit., pp.223;235. On the internment of Ingrao see also M. Corvo, *OSS in Italy*, p. 32.

³³ Letter of G. Salvemini to M. Salvadori, October 17th 1945, SOMS, Salvadori's papers, box 35, folder 10.

³⁴ In the course of this correspondence with Salvemini and Cantarella as a mediator, he also wrote a shorter memo about his years of service in Italy. SOMS, Salvadori's papers, box 35, folder 10.

³⁵ A. Grasso, *Max Salvadori*, cit., pp. 223;235. The fact that Salvadori decided to hide his first years of cooperation with British SIS should not surprise considering the secrecy of the matter. Even today, Salvadori's papers referred to that period are not open to public consultation, because SIS papers are classified, while the SOE's papers are not.

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he saw no contradiction in being both Italian and British. Salvadori was aware of the criticism that the British punitive policy toward Italy had provoked within the Italian antifascist community and, in particular, in Salvemini.³⁶ However, he believed that in the state of war that had just ended, it was important to separate political criticism and commitment to the defense of democracy.³⁷ He also defended the role of the SOE, and the help it provided to the Resistance. In particular, Salvadori responded to Salvemini's criticism that SOE used financial aid and equipment supplies to discriminate against leftist partisan groups, explaining that the only logic the Allies followed was to help those who could be more useful in the fight against the enemy. He wrote:

Through the Special Forces, all the Resistance movements in Europe were directly helped by the British Army. If accepting the help of a brother in arms means being an agent, hundreds of thousands of people (...) [in Europe] were agents of British imperialism.³⁸

Increasing criticism of Salvadori's wartime experiences probably prompted him to write a more detailed and public account of his antifascist activities in exile and in Italy. In 1951 Salvadori published the first edition of his memoirs. Although quite secretive about his cooperation with the British in the early years of the war, probably for reasons of secrecy of information, his book contains interesting thoughts about Salvadori's experience in the British Army between 1943 and 1945. In his memoirs, he pointed out two elements that complicated his cooperation with the British during the war. The first was the fact that his decision was not shared or understood by his friends and colleagues. Recalling his first days in London, in March 1943, he wrote:

³⁶ E. Aga-Rossi, *Una nazione allo sbando*, Cit., pp.90-92; Cfr. A. Varsori, *L'Italia nelle relazioni internazionali*, pp. 11-14

³⁷ Memorandum by M. Salvadori to M. Cantarella, September 10th 1945, SOMS, Max Salvadori papers, box 35, folder 10.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

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I am sorry that I cannot get along with my friends, whom the idea of wearing a foreign uniform fills with horror (...). If there is a war and one is convinced that war is right and necessary, one should take part in it as a combatant, not as an arm-chair critic or radio orator.³⁹

The second difficulty was that wearing the British uniform in Italy meant that he was treated as a foreign agent even by his close and old acquaintances. He wrote, for example, about the pain of not being recognized in his own hometown of Porto San Giorgio. After many years away from home, he managed to visit there in June 1944, which moved him greatly. However, he was even more stunned when he was called a «foreign agent» while entering his own family's home. «Bitterness (...). After eleven years, you become a foreigner. And say that for eleven years I dreamed of the moment of return».⁴⁰

In conclusion, Salvadori believed that working for Great Britain was the only way to effectively fight fascism. He found his interlocutors in Britain's strategic services and took advantage of the opportunities they offered, both to serve the antifascist cause and to provide for his family. This did not mean it was an easy decision. His cooperation with MI6 and SOE led to disappointment for two main reasons. The first reason was the difficulty of making the British understand the complexity of the Italian situation as he conceived it and of persuading them to act consistently. Namely, he wanted the British decision-makers to distinguish between the fascist regime and the Italian antifascists, to abandon the British punitive attitude towards Italy and to support the antifascist struggle. The second reason lay in the antifascist environment itself. According to Salvadori, the climate of polemics and senseless quarrels inhibited action. On several occasions, during his exile and after the war, he expressed his distance from such an attitude, putting action before political disputes that, in his opinion, were driven only by personal goals.⁴¹ The case of Randolfo Pacciardi, that follows, was also deeply influenced by the same quarrelsome environment.

³⁹ M Salvadori, *Resistenza e Azione*, cit. p. 206.

⁴⁰ Original text in Italian: «Amarezza (...). Dopo undici anni si diventa stranieri. E dire che per undici anni avevo sognato il momento del ritorno». *Ibidem*, p. 252.

⁴¹ Memorandum by M. Salvadori to M. Cantarella, September 10th 194, SOMS, Max Salvadori papers, box 35, folder 10.

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Pacciardi and the legion that had to be Italian

In the months that Salvadori spent in North America acting undercover for the SOE, Colonel Randolph Pacciardi⁴² was bargaining with the American Coordinator of Information (COI), the predecessor of OSS, to make his own contribution to the antifascist fight. If Salvadori had trouble having his individual enrolment application accepted, Pacciardi's mission was even more complex to accomplish since it required a political recognition from the Anglo-Americans that never arrived.

Pacciardi's activity during his exile in the United States, from the winter of 1942 to the summer of 1944, was characterized by the attempt to form an Italian legion of volunteers to fight alongside the Allies. In 1942, Pacciardi's idea was that such a military corps would have played the role of a psychological explosive to make the Italian population and army arise.⁴³ In the Colonel's mind, action had to be accompanied by a strong nationalistic stand and, therefore, by political recognition from the Allies. Participating in the war would otherwise have discredited the fighters themselves and would have ended up weakening the antifascist cause instead of strengthening it. A summary of Pacciardi's exile experience is necessary to understand his approach to the cooperation with American secret services, which were his main interlocutors for the realization of the legion project.

Pacciardi left Italy in 1927. In fact, he had been previously arrested because of antifascist activities and, having managed to escape from his prison, he left for Switzerland and then settled in France. A decade later he volunteered to fight in the Spanish Civil War, leading the Garibaldi Brigade in the fight against the Francoist forces. After the aforementioned lecture tour of the United States, which the colonel undertook with Salvadori,

⁴² The works by Alessandra Baldini and Paolo Parla on Pacciardi's private papers are crucial to reconstruct his activity in exile. Other relevant studies are Varsori's works on Italian exiles in the US. See A. Baldini; P. Palma, *Gli antifascisti italiani in America, 1942-1944: la Legione nel carteggio di Pacciardi con Borgese, Salvemini, Sforza e Sturzo*, Firenze: Le Monnier, 1990); A. Baldini; P. Palma, «Nuovi documenti sulla "Mazzini Society": i rapporti con i comunisti nell'antifascismo USA dal carteggio inedito di Pacciardi agli esuli d'oltreoceano», *Nuova Antologia*, 1990.

⁴³ A. Baldini, P. Palma, *Gli antifascisti italiani in America*, cit. pp. 31-35.

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he settled in Paris, where other important Italian antifascists, such as diplomat Carlo Sforza and journalist Alberto Tarchiani, also lived. Amid the German occupation of France, he fled to North Africa and from there tried to reach the United States. He arrived in New York on December 26, 1941.⁴⁴ During his first days in the US, the legion project was already on the desk of COI agents John Wiley and Dewitt Poole. In fact, the legion project was originally subordinated to the aim of establishing the aforementioned *Free Italy* political committee sponsored by Count Carlo Sforza, who had arrived in the United States in the summer of 1940.⁴⁵ The Italian legion should have therefore been the military arm of a wider political body under Sforza's leadership. At the beginning of 1942, thanks to his connection with the Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, Sforza presented the legion project to the American COI agents and proposed Pacciardi as its ideal military leader.⁴⁶ In January 1942, Colonel Pacciardi was introduced to the COI and future OSS director William Donovan, as well as to other COI agents, such as Dewitt Poole, Charles Wiley, and Colonel Millard Preston Goodfellow.⁴⁷ In general, the COI's position on Sforza and Pacciardi's plan was one of cautious interest. It was indeed too soon for the US, who had just entered the war, to make any specific plan for Italy.⁴⁸ Pacciardi's greatest commitment during his two and a half years in the United States was the founding of the legion. While conducting antifascist propaganda in Italo-American communities, he attempted to gain supporters for his project through an unofficial recruitment campaign. At the same time, he tried to obtain support and official authorization, first from the COI and then from the OSS, to start real recruitment, organize the legion, and participate in the war alongside his soldiers. There were, however, many obstacles to Pacciardi's plan. Besides high-level resistance stemming mainly from the US War Department and the British

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. XX-XI.

⁴⁵ Count Carlo Sforza was an eminent diplomat of pre-fascist Italy. He was foreign minister after World War I, from 1921 to 1922, and again after World War II from 1947 to 1951.

⁴⁶ NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-17

⁴⁷ A. Baldini, P. Palma, *Gli antifascisti italiani in America*, cit., pp.10-12.

⁴⁸ NACP, Director's Office memorandums relating to Count Sforza and subsidies for the Mazzini Society, January 21st 1942, Record of the Office of Strategic Services, Record Group 226, entry 210, box 341, stack 250, row 64, compartment 27, [WN#13434].

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Foreign Office, Pacciardi gradually lost the support of his own antifascist fellows.⁴⁹ The main reason for discord between him and his old friends of the Mazzini Society, and especially its Secretary General Alberto Tarchiani, was Pacciardi's idea that cooperating with the communists was necessary to accomplish meaningful results in the antifascist struggle - and to recruit a good number of volunteers for his legion.⁵⁰ Pacciardi was worried about the course of his recruitment campaign, and rightly so. The Americans were in fact considering it an «ill success» because of the low number of volunteers that Pacciardi was able to recruit.⁵¹ For this reason, between the summer and the fall of 1942, no official commitment to the legion's institution arrived from US authorities, but Pacciardi kept trying and in October 1942 founded his own newspaper, *La legione dell'Italia del popolo*, to collect fundings and adhesions.⁵² At the same time, the newly established OSS had recently set up its Italian desk, led by Earl Brennan. In the fall of 1942, the OSS was starting its own recruiting campaign within Italo-American communities, in preparation for an Allied landing on Italian territory. This also brought renewed interest in Pacciardi's legion which could have been valuable in North Africa, where the OSS and SOE were training agents for special operations to be conducted in Italy. It was not until June 1943, when the landing in Italy was imminent, that the legion project appeared to be finally coming to life. Pacciardi received an offer to join the American Army as a captain, which was a demotion for him but the only option given his foreign citizenship. Pacciardi accepted, passed the army medical visit, and was ready to go. Again, though, the project was stopped at higher political and military levels, and the Allied headquarters in Algiers didn't authorize Pacciardi's departure.⁵³

⁴⁹ On the debate about the legion at the War and State Departments, and on the British Resistances on supporting any kind of "Free Italy" like movement, see J.E. Miller, «Carlo Sforza e l'evoluzione della politica americana verso l'Italia. 1940-1943», *Storia Contemporanea*, n.4,1976, p.837. See also A Varsori, «Sforza, la Mazzini Society e gli alleati (1940-1943)» in *L'antifascismo italiano negli Stati Uniti durante la Seconda guerra mondiale*, cit., p.144; A. Baldini, P. Palma, *Gli antifascisti italiani in America*, Cit., pp. 30-31.

⁵⁰ A. Baldini, P. Palma, «Nuovi documenti sulla "Mazzini Society"», cit.

⁵¹ NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-307.

⁵² A. Baldini, P. Palma, *Gli antifascisti italiani in America*, cit., p. 57.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, pp. 60-68.

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The reason why this happened is linked to the turn that the events took in Italy in the summer of 1943. On the 25th of July, in fact, Mussolini was deposed by the Great Council of Fascism and arrested, with the complicity of King Vittorio Emanuele. The leadership of the new government was entrusted to Marshal Pietro Badoglio, a moderate exponent of the fascist regime. Most antifascists, both in Italy and the United States, opposed the new government, considering Badoglio and the monarchy too compromised with fascism. The policy to be adopted toward the Badoglio government was a reason for heated debates between Roosevelt and Churchill. While the former was of the opinion that it was necessary to remain outside the political dynamics to allow Italians self-determination, Churchill wanted to recognize the Badoglio government for reasons of military opportunity. He saw, in fact, the Italian monarchy as an institution strong enough to prevent Italy from slipping into chaos and anarchy, something that could fall on the shoulders of Anglo-American troops in Italian territory. In the end, it was the British line that prevailed. On September 8, the Anglo-Americans signed the armistice with the Badoglio government, which a little over a month later declared war on Germany, causing Italy to acquire the ambiguous status of «Cobelligerente» of the Allies.⁵⁴

In the United States, Pacciardi was one of the staunchest opponents of the Badoglio government, which he frequently attacked in his newspaper. Probably for this reason, the officers of the State Department and the Foreign Office must have believed that he was a figure that could destabilize the Italian political situation, and blocked once again the realization of the project of the legion, despite many Allied military leaders, including General Eisenhower, were in favour of his return to Italy.⁵⁵ In the meantime, other exiles began to return to Italy with the Anglo-Americans' consent, accepting the condition of cooperating with the Badoglio government. This was the case of Alberto Tarchiani in September 1943 and of Carlo Sforza in October 1943.⁵⁶ Pacciardi sharply criticized Tarchiani and Sforza for accepting this. His pride in integrity and independence,

⁵⁴ On Italian peculiar status see D. Ellwood, *L'alleato nemico*, cit.

⁵⁵ A. Baldini, P. Palma, *Gli antifascisti italiani in America*, cit., pp. 75-81.

⁵⁶ NACP, Memorandum by R. Hollingshead to E. Brennan, 22nd of April 1943, M 1934, OSS, documents of special funds of Washington secret services, 1942-1946, WASH-SI-PTS-I: documents related to Alberto Tarchiani, box 1, folder 1; NACP, Memorandum on Alberto Tarchiani, 15th of February 1945, M 1934, OSS, documents of special funds of Washington secret services, 1942-1946, WASH-SI-PTS-I: documents related to Alberto Tarchiani, box 1, folder 1. On Sforza's return to Italy see L. Zeno, *Il conte Sforza. Ritratto di un grande diplomatico*, Le Monnier, Firenze, 1999, pp. 157-165.

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his inclination to work closely with the Communists, and, above all, his opposition to Badoglio and the Italian monarchy, cost him a long wait for a permission to return to Italy.⁵⁷ Only in June 1944, after the liberation of Rome and without being able to lead a legion anymore, he was allowed to leave and travel to Italy.

In his attempt to create the Italian legion from the beginning of 1942 to the summer of 1944, the dichotomy between Pacciardi's idea of an Italian legion with a clear nationalistic stand and the concrete proposals that he received was wide. At the same time, Pacciardi received strong criticism about the way he tried to develop the Legion project independently from Sforza's committee by his antifascist fellows.

The fear of being at the service of foreign states was already present in a report about the committee and legion project that Sforza wrote for the COI in January 1942. In fact, the legion project was initially conceived as subordinate to Sforza's political committee. The fact that the legion was to be Italian was of central importance. Indeed, they could not become «the instrument of foreign governments without any stipulations (...). We cannot ask for actions that might even have the slightest appearance of treachery».⁵⁸

The COI's proposition, however, was to be much more military than political. US officials needed to avoid any public endorsement before being completely sure of the success of Pacciardi's recruiting campaign, which was expected to reach one thousand men.⁵⁹ In April 1942 COI agents proposed, informally, the establishment of a special corps, grouped by language and nationality, but part of the American army. This formation would wear the American uniform but could add a distinctive insignia, like the Garibaldian kerchief.⁶⁰ This corps was meant to be used for dangerous guerrilla operations, and it could be led by Pacciardi with the grade of captain. «Meanwhile, colonel Pacciardi could be engaged in a civil capacity to assist in recruiting. For this he was

⁵⁷ A. Baldini, P. Palma, *Gli antifascisti italiani in America*, cit., pp. 73-82.

⁵⁸ «Plan for organizing an Italian legion», NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-2.

⁵⁹ NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-123.

⁶⁰ The Democratic and Republican antifascists in the United States drew inspiration from the Italian "Risorgimento," as the struggle for the country's unity and independence was called. Garibaldi was the leader of the famous expedition of the "Thousand Men" who set out from northern Italy to conquer the south, which was under the rule of the Bourbon monarchy. Their distinctive mark was a red skirt and a bandana around the neck.

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offered pay and expenses. He had declined anything except expenses».⁶¹ As COI's internal memorandum of conversation shows, Pacciardi refused the idea of being paid by the American strategic services, most likely out of pride and the fear of being considered a mercenary, even if he was in economic need, as he himself explained in occasion of a conference about antifascist exiles in the US in 1984.⁶² At first, Pacciardi seemed to have accepted COI's proposal «to break the vicious circle of not being in the position of recruiting, but at the same time have to face the fear that there were not enough men to form an Italian legion», as he wrote the following day to Donovan, who was not present at the meeting.⁶³ But then, after discussing the situation with Harold Hoskins of the Interdepartmental Committee, who was responsible for coordinating exiles communities in the US, he changed his mind.⁶⁴ He therefore wrote to Donovan: «An Italian legion would have political value, but this organization, on the contrary, would have only the character of any American military initiative».⁶⁵ This sentence implies that a simple American initiative would not suffice. Moreover, Pacciardi received from Colonel William, his reference in the US Army, some details about the role he was supposed to play. Pacciardi complained to Donovan that he had been told by William that he would be nothing more than a recruiting agent. Pacciardi refused to be just that.⁶⁶ He wrote:

The value and importance of an Italian corps, even if set up for guerrilla warfare, lies in the fact that it constitutes a psychological explosive for the army and the people of Italy. The small

⁶¹ NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-123.

⁶² NACP, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-123. On Pacciardi's financial conditions see On Pacciardi's economic condition see R. Pacciardi, «L'antifascismo italiano negli Stati Uniti: una testimonianza», in A. Varsori (editor), *L'antifascismo italiano negli Stati Uniti*, cit., p. 10.

⁶³ NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-122.

⁶⁴ A. Baldini, P. Palma, *Gli antifascisti italiani in America*, cit., p. 19.

⁶⁵ NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-123.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 31-35; NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-123.

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help we could give to the war, as anonymous mercenaries, would largely be destroyed by our total liquidation in Italy.⁶⁷

In fact, the discussions between Pacciardi and the COI went on with no great difference in the COI's proposition. At the end of the month, Pacciardi had a conversation with the COI agent Dewitt Poole during which he accepted the legion under the complete control of the American army. However, he also asked for the right to form a political committee separate from the legion, not to be recognized by the American government, but that, at the same time, should act as a liaison between the legion and the American government itself. Poole basically rejected Pacciardi's requests. The COI agent, in fact, answered that he did not see how the political committee could be recognized as a liaison between the legion and the American government and that, in general, he didn't have the authority to make any official commitment. Everything that he had said in their previous conversation was only exploratory.⁶⁸

This last exchange shows how, at the end of April 1942, Pacciardi still believed that the political nature of the legion should be recognized, and he wanted his recruiting campaign to be public, not undercover. At the same time, however, he started an off-the-records recruiting campaign while waiting for the officialization of the proposal that never arrived. It is in this phase that the problem of cooperation with the communists emerged. In the summer of 1942, when his relations with the Mazzini Society were deteriorating, he was ready to drop the idea of the political committee. He made clear to COI agents that he had experience in working with the communists, as he had done just that in Spain, and that he was ready to lead an Italian battalion of any size, with the only condition that the immediate command should be Italian, so that «it could not be said that he and his soldiers were hired mercenaries». He could be of help for recruiting individuals for special operations, but

⁶⁷ NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-123.

⁶⁸ NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-122.

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always stressed that «he must not be made into a mere mercenary agent».⁶⁹ Pacciardi's greatest concern was to appear as if he was selling the independence of the antifascist cause. Nevertheless, critics from the Italian and Italo-American antifascist environment were raising their voices.

After their bitter dispute over collaboration with the Communists, it is not surprising that Alberto Tarchiani was critical of Pacciardi's attitude toward the legion. In February 1943, he wrote to the Catholic leader Don Luigi Sturzo, who had also fled to the United States, that he and Sforza had never been against the idea of the legion if it was placed under a «responsible» Italian political committee. From his point of view, Pacciardi's legion became a tool in the service of foreigners. Tarchiani then added that he was aware that Pacciardi was offered a position in the American army, to lead an Italian corps. Tarchiani believed, however, that Pacciardi would have refused. In fact, in Tarchiani's opinion, accepting a position in the American army would have meant for Pacciardi to become a foreign officer.⁷⁰

However, Pacciardi seemed to be ready to accept the OSS's proposal. The will to act and go back to Italy was prevailing over political considerations, but things did not work out, despite Donovan's support. In September 1943, a few weeks after Tarchiani's departure and a few days before Sforza's, Pacciardi complained to Don Sturzo that he had tried to make his contribution to the Italian cause with the legion, but had failed.⁷¹ In his struggle to get the authorization to go back to Italy, Pacciardi claimed that his interest was to fight with the partisans in Italy and to act independently from any political use the Allies could make of him.⁷² When he finally managed to leave, on June 16th 1944, the front page of his newspaper, that in the meanwhile had changed its name into *Italia libera*, was entirely dedicated to his farewell to the United States. He declared that he was reaching out to Italy to fight for its liberation, without being an agent of any foreign power.⁷³ Pacciardi never joined the partisan ranks, though. Once in Italy, returning to be the leader of the Italian Republican Party,

⁶⁹ NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-307.

⁷⁰ Letter by A. Tarchiani to L. Sturzo, 2nd of December 1943, IS, Sturzo papers, folder 591, item 87.

⁷¹ Letter by R. Pacciardi to L. Sturzo, 3rd of September 1943, IS, Sturzo papers, Folder "Randolfo Pacciardi", item 20.

⁷² A. Baldini, P. Palma, *Gli antifascisti italiani in America*, cit., pp. 255-260.

⁷³ «Pacciardi è partito per l'Italia», in *Italia Libera*, vol. III, n. 12, 16 giugno 1944, New York Public Library.

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Pacciardi dove deeply into political activity. It is not clear why Pacciardi abandoned the idea of fighting. Salvadori's opinion on this matter is quite negative. The latter wrote that Pacciardi, after having given his word that he intended to fight with the partisans,

decided that a trip to the North was not compatible with his dignity (or maybe he was afraid he could happen in an accident like the one that happened a few months later when the entire chief of staff of the partisan division Osoppo was butchered by another group of partisans).⁷⁴

Salvadori therefore implied that Pacciardi refrained from fighting for cowardice. If this was true or was just another bitter gossip typical of the antifascist quarrelsome and divided environment is not clear. A clue that Pacciardi might have considered the idea of engaging in politics once back in Italy can be found in a report from OSS agent John Norman to Dewitt Poole. Norman wrote that on May 26th he visited Pacciardi in his office, and on that occasion, the Colonel told him that «he was going to be allowed to go to Italy very soon – he hoped in military capacity; if not, then he will act in a political capacity».⁷⁵ It is not clear, however, if Pacciardi was somehow prevented to act in a military capacity or if he just abandoned the plan of fighting in the North to devote himself to leading the Republican Party.

Conclusions

Pacciardi and Salvadori had very different visions of how they should pursue their antifascist fight. When the British army refused his application, Salvadori decided to keep acting undercover, with all the legal and personal difficulties that this implied. He was critical of the British's attitude towards Italian antifascists, both before and during the war. Nevertheless, he believed that political criticism came after military commitment

⁷⁴ Memorandum by M. Salvadori to M. Cantarella, September 10th 1945, SOMS, Max Salvadori papers, box 35, folder 10.

⁷⁵ NACP, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry A1 100, Administrative and Intelligence Records, 1941 – 1945, Foreign Nationalities Branch, INT-17IT-1198.

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when war was raging. He also believed that secrecy and discretion came before propaganda and political quarrels when there were security issues at stake.

Pacciardi was considered by his antifascist colleagues, and considered himself, a leader; and a leader could not act in the shadows, nor take the risk of appearing as a mercenary for foreign powers. This would have discredited not only him as a person, but the cause itself. Acting for Italy's sake and proving that a democratic Italy existed and deserved the same consideration that De Gaulle's France received, was his final political goal. When it became clear that this could not be achieved, he accepted to wear a foreign uniform to fight, but he could never drop his firm political belief against the Savoia monarchy and Badoglio.

The greatest difference between Salvadori's and Pacciardi's approaches to cooperation with Anglo-American secret services was that the first did not perceive a dichotomy between working for them and serving the Italian cause, but the latter did. Reaching too many compromises with the Anglo-Americans was for Pacciardi reason enough to attack his own colleagues, as Sforza and Tarchiani. The fear of being considered a «mercenary» or a «foreign agent» was present since the first exchanges between the Colonel and his American interlocutors. It is also true that Pacciardi's disappointment because of the lack of his legion's political recognition led him to hesitate, but not to refuse cooperation with the OSS.

Besides personal inclinations, both Salvadori and Pacciardi suffered because of the divided environment of antifascist exiles. In his memorandum of 1945, Salvadori wrote:

After September 1939, most of the exiles formed associations called "Italia Libera", "Mazzini" "Garibaldi" (...). I believed that - made barren by their excessive sectarianism, their contribution to the Allied victory, which could only ensure the overthrow of fascism, would be basically meaningless. [These associations] seemed to be limited to the requests of funding and recognition for the establishment of governments in exile and Italian legions. Highly honorable goals, but in my opinion, they reflect nationalistic concerns rather than a sincere desire to participate in the war.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Memorandum by M. Salvadori to M. Cantarella, September 10th 1945, SOMS, Max Salvadori papers, box 35, folder 10.

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About his experience, on the other hand, Pacciardi wrote:

How could it be possible (...) in such a hard and unspiritual environment to call people to action (...) without ceasing the divisions, the hateful polemics, the defamation (...). I challenge anyone to create a legion in these conditions. Without unity we will not create anything, we will do nothing, we will not make history.⁷⁷

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⁷⁷ A. Baldini, P. Palma, «Nuovi documenti sulla Mazzini Society», cit. p.425.

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