



Oreste Foppiani

The Allies and
the Italian Social Republic
(1943–1945)



Peter Lang

Italy's change of camp during World War II marked a turning point in the lives of all Italians, causing the "death of the fatherland" and the collapse of a two-decade long, dictatorial régime. Also, this switch triggered a bloody civil war, which increasingly divided an already fragmented country into two separate territories: the Salò Republic (RSI), occupied and controlled by the Germans, and the Southern Kingdom, occupied and administered by the Anglo-Americans.

This book is about the British and American relations with, perceptions of, and judgments on the RSI. The period examined runs from September 1943 through April 1945 with some incursions into the immediate post-war period, when the Allied Control Commission and, after the fall of 1944, the Allied Commission and the Advisory Council for Italy, were still functioning. During this time frame Anglo-American troops were still occupying Italian soil, and some republican fascists remained in hiding, waiting to appear again on the political scene as turncoats, diehard fascists or "gladiators." While the first part of the monograph deals specifically with the relations between the latter and the Allies, the second deals with American and British journalists and/or intellectuals who wrote about or worked for the RSI. The last section is dedicated to the different categories of post-9/8 Prisoners of War.

Oreste Foppiani is Assistant Professor of International History and Politics at Webster University Geneva, and is a Fellow of the School of Political Sciences of the University of Pavia where he lectured from 1998 to 2004. He holds a PhD in International Relations from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (HEI).

The Allies and the Italian Social Republic (1943–1945)

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Anglo-American Relations with,
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the RSI during the Italian Civil War



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To Andrea

Acknowledgments

Eight years ago, under an intricately carved 15th century wooden ceiling in the School of Political Sciences at the University of Pavia, I was discussing my tentative PhD topic with Prof. Guido Donnini. Although Professor Donnini and I had reached a very useful level of constructive criticism, we remained stuck in an argumentative blind alley. According to him, I could either choose a topic that I liked very much, but that had already been extensively researched and which a hundred dissertations had already been written, or fill in an academic lacuna working on a completely new topic. After listing a series of possible subjects, my former *Laurea* thesis supervisor asked me: “Why don’t you write a thesis on the RSI and the US?”

Six months later, under the very low and much less decorated ceiling of the former HEI Unit of International History and Politics, temporarily installed in the WTO building, Prof. Bruno Arcidiacono, my PhD thesis director, asked me: “Why don’t you write a thesis on the RSI, the US, and the UK?” Professor Arcidiacono suggested I should extend my initial idea to a wider comparative perspective. From these two questions, and the ambitious intention to complement Professor Arcidiacono’s 1981 dissertation (“Le ‘précédent italien’ et les origines de la guerre froide: les Alliés et l’occupation de l’Italie, 1943-1944”), I started to work on this project.

Since the beginning of my globetrotting research (from 2003 through 2006, I travelled extensively to Rome, London, and Washington, DC) I received controversial, scholarly feedback that ran from very critical words, such as those of Dr. Lutz Klinkhammer, to flattering ones, such as those of Prof. Warren F. Kimball: both were useful to keep my feet on the ground and go forward.

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O.F.

Contents

Introduction.....	13
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PART I

The Allies and the Italian Social Republic:

Uncle Sam, John Bull, and Ben	23
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1. United States and United Kingdom: A War Marriage of Convenience	23
2. The View from the White House.....	29
3. The US Military in Italy: Covert Operations and Secret Contacts with the RSI	33
4. OSS R&A Report Number 1740: the Italian Fascist Government ..	41
5. The Decima MAS in the US and British Archives.....	49
6. East! East! East! Tentative US-Italian Efforts to Save Venezia Giulia	69
6.1 The Decima MAS's Determination to Protect the Eastern Border.....	69
6.2 The OSS Tries to Enter Trieste	70
6.3 The OSS Meets the Decima: A War Engagement before a Post-War Marriage	77
7. Clandestine Fascism and Allied Intelligence Clashes	87
7.1 Pignatelli, Poletti, and the RSI Infiltration in the OSS.....	87
7.2 Pignatelli's Southern Network: An Aborted Response to Northern Resistance	92
7.3 Gallitto's Mission: One Officer and Two Navies.....	104
8. The Vega Battalion: Stay-Behind Soldiers and Smugglers.....	111
9. The View from Downing Street	117
9.1 Mussolini and the British Central Thread in Storia di un anno	124
9.2 "Operation Crossword" and the RSI Variant	135
9.3 Mussolini's Offensive against the Nazis and Tentative Talks with the British	140

9.4	The Secret Meeting in Montecolino between Myth and Reality.....	143
9.5	Mussolini's Get-Away Manoeuvre from the Nazis.....	145
9.6	Hidaka and Biggini: the Repositories of Mussolini's Papers	149
9.7	British Divergent Views on Venezia Giulia and the Role of the Decima MAS	153
10.	The Genesis of the "De Courten Plan"	163
11.	The British Military in Italy: Covert Operations and Secret Contacts with the RSI	175

PART II

American and British Journalists, Intellectuals, and the RSI 181

12.	War Press: The Mockery of Mussolini's Republic or the Acknowledgment of Its Good Functioning and Ideas	181
12.1	The Times.....	184
12.2	The New York Times	198
12.3	The New Republic.....	208
12.4	The New Statesman.....	213
13.	Intellectuals and the RSI.....	217
13.1	Ezra Pound	217
13.2	James "Giacomo" Barnes.....	227

PART III

Post-9/8 Prisoners of War 237

14.	Post-9/8 Prisoners of War: Sowing the Tares with the Wheat	237
15.	Fascist Captives in US Hands.....	243
15.1	Hereford: A Symbol	247
15.2	Hawaii: Vanguard of Diehard Fascists and Non-Cooperators	254
16.	Fascist Captives in British Hands.....	257
16.1	Italian Prisoners in the UK after the Armistice: A New Species of Captives	258
16.2	Fascists?	261
16.3	South Africa	264
16.4	Kenya	266
16.5	Australia	269

16.6 India.....	272
17. The RSI Prisoners in Italy: Legal and Organisational Problems ...	279
Conclusion	297
Appendices	303
Appendix 1 - “We needed Valerio Borghese”	303
Interview with James Angleton by Livio Caputo	303
Appendix 2 - Interview with Giovanni “Nino” Buttazzoni	307
Appendix 3 - Interview with Eugenio Wolk.....	314
Appendix 4 - Interview with Vittorio Dan Segre	326
Appendix 5 - “How the Blitz to Defend Trieste Failed”	328
Interview with Felice Rovelli by Massimo Calamari	328
Appendix 6 - Interview with Gino Stefani.....	330
Appendix 7 - Glauco Luchetti’s Account.....	340
Appendix 8 - Selected Documents on the Decima MAS.....	346
Bibliography.....	371
Primary Sources.....	371
Archives and Manuscript Collections.....	371
Published Documentary Collections	372
Interviews, Accounts, and Discussions	372
Secondary Sources.....	374
Articles and Book Chapters	374
Books.....	377
PhD Dissertations	388
Conference Papers, Proceedings, and Other Unpublished Research	
Essays	389
Documentary Films and Similar	389
Newspapers and Periodicals	390

Introduction

This work is about the British and American relations with, perceptions of, and judgments on the Italian Social Republic (Repubblica Sociale Italiana or RSI) during the short life span of the first Italian republic since the unification of the country in 1861.¹ I analysed the period September 1943-April 1945 with some incursions into the immediate post-war period, when the Allied Control Commission (ACC) or, after the fall of 1944, the Allied Commission (AC) and the Advisory Council for Italy (ACI), were still functioning. During this time frame (1945-1946), the Anglo-American troops were still occupying Italian soil, and some republican fascists remained in hiding, waiting to appear again on the political scene as turncoats, diehard fascists or “gladiators.”

The book is divided into three parts: 1) The Allies and the Italian Social Republic; 2) American and British Journalists, Intellectuals, and the RSI; 3) Post-9/8 Prisoners of War.

The first part deals with the political and military relations between the Americans and the Italian Social Republic and between the latter and the British. Additionally, the divergent opinions and frictions between the Allies, caused by their dealings with the republican fascist actor, are highlighted.

From the papers analysed in the US and British archives and in the official diplomatic-document collections, the ambiguous, or better, exquisitely political bi-channel attitude shown by the White House and Downing Street toward the National Republican Fascist Government² is analysed here for the first time. Highlights from the memoirs of major

1 For a reassessment of the bureaucratic and legislative structures of the RSI, see Francesca Romana Scardaccione (ed.), *Verballi del Consiglio dei Ministri della Repubblica Sociale Italiana: settembre 1943-aprile 1945* (Roma: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Direzione Generale per gli Archivi, 2002), pp. xvii-xxxvi.

2 The Salò Government will officially become the Italian Social Republic (RSI) on December 1st, 1943.

and minor protagonists are further referenced in support of this pragmatic diplomacy.

These two levels of behaviour are: 1) The clear-cut refusal to consider the RSI a political counterpart with which the Anglo-American governments could deal;³ 2) The specific interest in opening some channels of communication with well-circumscribed RSI military units or representatives not so much to advance the interests of the war, but for future, post-war goals and settlements, focused on anti-communism (local and/or foreign communism). As the Allies did not want any variations on the theme of the “Unconditional Surrender Doctrine” established at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, a strategy to support this goal was put in place.

From almost all of the post-war reports edited by the US, and in minor part British, intelligence services, emerges a series of contacts with the RSI during a specific time frame from the fall of 1944 to the spring of 1945. The main actors concerned are the Decima MAS, and namely Commander Borghese, and, by proxy or directly, PM Mussolini and a few of his acolytes (e.g., Prince Pignatelli).

Here I demonstrate that both parties wanted to find a way out from the lethal German embrace, and safeguard national industries, infrastructure and, last but not least, the Julian-Dalmatian region. It is evident that while Mussolini tries to establish some contacts with Churchill and his envoys, Borghese has an open channel with the American OSS through the men infiltrated into the Decima MAS via the Southern Italian Office of Naval Intelligence (SIS). These infiltrations into the Decima, toward the end of the war, are well known to Borghese, and in a certain way were condoned by him. Moreover, he hoped to capitalise on this information network in order to formulate an exit-strategy for himself and his men.

Another area of interest, very much focused on the technical know-how of the then fundamental underwater warfare, is that of the person of

3 The Allies had chosen Badoglio's Italy, which represented the legal continuity of the Kingdom of Italy through the instrument of surrender to the Allies; i.e., the Cassibile or Short Armistice signed on September 3, 1943, and/or the Malta or Long Armistice signed on September 29, 1943. See PRO-NA, HS 6/778, “SOE organisation: armistice terms, Badoglio coup d'État.” See also Giuseppe Tuzzolo, *L'ultima notte del fascismo tra diritto e storia* (Foggia: Edizioni della Vela, 2001), pp. 22-24, and pp. 26-31.

Lieutenant Wolk, whose skills and inventions are of primary importance for Royal Navy Reserve Lt. Cdr. Lionel Crabb. The manifest British attention is well highlighted in the 1992 interview granted to scholar Marino Viganò by the very same Commanding Officer of the Italian frogmen, Lt. Eugenio Wolk, which has been reported entirely herein (see Appendix 3). Besides, in this interview Wolk provides evidence that a consistent quota of the Regia Marina brass was already in contact with the Royal Navy and the British Secret Intelligence Service well before 9/8. Indirectly, Wolk's statement sheds light on Rear Admiral Maugeri's ambiguous role as SIS chief. This suspicion emerges also in Mussolini's *Storia di un anno* where the British central thread becomes the leitmotif of his statement of defence in book form.

The British, again, showed an intricate interest for the German, tentative, stay-behind organisation in Northern Italy code-named "Cypress Organisation." Their focus on Cypress put in place in North-Eastern Italy, with which they remained in constant contact through the liaison of a former Royal Italian Army SIM officer, and a double agent, was particularly pronounced.

The documentary sources concerning the Southern, clandestine fascist network are also very clear in highlighting the clashes between the British and the Americans, where the latter – at least until the liberation of Rome – are considered dangerous rookies and amateurs by the British.

In this section, I demonstrate that a clandestine network built by Prince Valerio Pignatelli della Cerchiara, indeed, became a political base upon which British and American services could count in the post-war, reconstruction period, when Italy might have run the risk of a Soviet-sponsored communist drift.

It is also evident that the British had the intention of acquiring a Balkan influence, specifically the natural "aircraft carrier" position between the two coasts of the Adriatic Sea. Yet, the British intention to create a stay-behind organisation like that conceived of by their American cousins is not so evident. Between 1945 and 1948, the British will assume a stand-by position in the *in fieri* Gladio network, and they will mainly use the ex "fascist" seamen and saboteurs to sink the ships loaded with weapons destined for Palestine-based, Jewish anti-British movements, and to keep some control in the Mediterranean area. The tentative participation of the British in the Gladio organisation emerges in the 1948 Brussels Treaty establishing the Western European Union (and

some *pourparlers* are also made in 1947 during the signature of the Franco-British Treaty of Dunkirk) and then with NATO in 1949.⁴

In this Cold War purgatory and during the preparation of the stay-behind Gladio, the British have a minor or junior partner role. After the constitution of NATO, and once its imperial role is buried as a result of the sorry figure cut during the Suez crisis, the UK will resume its duties and help the USA in its fight against the USSR and the Eastern Block. Of course, these links fall outside the scope of this work.

Concerning the literature on the historical period of the RSI, it is indeed meaningful, due to the scarce scholarly interest attributed to date to the RSI,⁵ that for many years the main reference book was that of a non-Italian; i.e., the voluminous *The Brutal Friendship* (1962) by Frederick William Deakin. Deakin's *opus magnum*, although far from exhaustive and permeated by a British-centred conception of the RSI, is still the most important work on this topic.⁶ A noteworthy journalistic

4 See Daniele Ganser, *NATO's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), p. 27. For a thorough analysis of the initial British detachment and independence from the US collective security system and blueprint, see John Baylis, "British wartime thinking about a post-war European security group," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1983, pp. 265-81; Id., "Britain, the Brussels Pact and the continental commitment," *International Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 4, Fall 1984, pp. 616-29; Bert Zeeman, "Britain and the Cold War, an alternative approach, the Treaty of Dunkirk example," *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 3, July 1986, pp. 343-69; Julian Lewis, *Changing Direction: British Military Planning for Post-War Strategic Defence, 1942-1947* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), *passim*. See also Alexandre Solioz, "Le concept de troisième force en Grande-Bretagne au lendemain de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale: une approche systémique et idéologique d'un concept aux multiples facettes" (Geneva: HEI, 2010), *passim*.

5 Notwithstanding the abundance of titles on the RSI that have appeared to date (an Italian editorial *El Dorado* where part-time historians or journalists filled the space left empty by professional historians), no scholars invested their time and skills to write an exhaustive and well-documented history of the Italian Social Republic that deals with the topic in terms of major issues and periods (e.g., the National Republican Government and the War of Liberation in the fall of 1943; the Civil War and the role of the Nazi-file PFR and its powerful temporary secretary through the winter of 1943-1944 and the spring of 1944; the resurrection of Mussolini and its exit-strategy through the summer of 1944 and the winter of 1944-1945).

6 Although literary works, Italo Calvino's *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (1947) and *Ultimo viene il corvo* (1949) represent an egregious complement to Deakin's *The*

history of Salò, albeit supported by excellent archival research, is Giorgio Bocca's *La Repubblica di Mussolini* (1977). Taking into account, with some reservations, the final, unfinished volume by Renzo De Felice on Mussolini and the Italian Civil War (1997), the ultimate scholarly work on the RSI is Luigi Ganapini's *La Repubblica delle camicie nere* (1999). Ganapini's book is an excellent monograph, thoroughly documented and well written. The author is convinced that the official image of the RSI – probably the image spread and supported by Resistance historians close to the parties of the Committee of National Liberation (CLN) – “hides more lives, more characters, more images than those portrayed by the testimony of the protagonists or the enemies, or by the same collective memory.” This image represented a sort of blueprint of ideas, motivations and goals that later penetrated into the culture of the 20th century, highlighting the existence of an “ambiguous borderline between the convinced adhesion and the acceptance of the lesser evil, as if a narrow contiguity between fanaticism and opportunism could exist.”⁷

The second part deals with the way some British and American intellectuals and/or journalists considered or treated the RSI in their works and deeds. I read the articles in which the Allied press covered the political phenomenon of the RSI through the journalist's magnifying glass. Although I skimmed through many periodicals and newspapers, the most interesting articles were those found in the *Times*, the *New York Times*, the *New Statesman*, and the *New Republic*. The approach of daily newspapers and weekly magazines was quite different. In fact, while the newspapers refrained from head-on, written battles among different figures, the weeklies often hosted the editorials of famous Italian *fuoriusciti* (e.g., Gaetano Salvemini and Carlo Sforza). The absence of references to the RSI in rightist weeklies such as the *Spectator* is indeed noteworthy, while liberal weeklies such as the *New Republic* or the *New Statesman* wrote about Salò.

Here, I demonstrate that while conservative editors-in-chief refrained from even mentioning the Italian Social Republic in their columns, their

Brutal Friendship. Calvino's books have the merit of giving a snapshot of situations and moods that cannot be found anywhere else.

7 See Luigi Ganapini, “Una rilettura critica della storiografia sulla RSI e sull'ultimo fascismo,” in *L'Impegno* (official magazine of the Istituto per la storia della Resistenza e dell'età contemporanea di Biella e Vercelli “Cino Moscatelli”), Anno XX, No. 3, December 2000, p. 4.

leftist colleagues, perhaps only out of mere intellectual curiosity, gave more space and attention to Mussolini's socialist-republican recipe.

For American newspaper – men and – women (and to a lesser extent the British ones), Mussolini's republic was not a subject of paramount importance – much less for Anglophone public opinion. The Allies were fighting a global war, with an immense aero-naval effort against the Empire of Sun and a still powerful Germany, and Southern Europe became a secondary war theatre. Notwithstanding the lack of interest of Anglo-Saxon readers on both sides of the pond, some journalists wanted to describe – although most of the articles were quite negative and trivial – the reality of life in the RSI: from the Nazi yoke to the puppet state, from its inflation rate to its “revolutionary” law on the socialisation of companies and industries. From my research, Matthews and McCormick emerge as the two US journalists that most frequently dealt with Salò without accepting the stereotyped image of it.

As far as British and American intellectuals are concerned, I analysed the deeds and writings of two different pens: the jewel in the crown among American fascist-friendly authors, Ezra Pound, is the first intellectual and author that worked with zest and assiduity for the RSI. Then, I focused extensively on an almost unknown British subject who became an “Italian fascist for love and faith:” James Strachey Barnes. Barnes, like his fellow countryman Arthur Kenneth Chesterton, was a British fascist and a son of the colonies conscious of the imminence of the fall of the British Empire. While the latter abandoned British fascism for nationalism, the former betrayed his country broadcasting for the Italian fascist radio. Pound and Barnes emerged as the US and Britain's most representative and active intellectuals who sided with Mussolini and contributed regularly to the RSI propaganda.

The literature on this part is made up of the war press articles of a half-dozen British and US daily newspapers, and weekly magazines, and some memoirs by journalists who wrote either for the *Times* or the *New York Times*: Marco Mariano and Federica Pinelli co-authored a valuable book on the Italian reportages by the US newspaperwoman Anne O'Hare McCormick.

On the one hand, the main works on the most important US intellectual who dealt with Mussolini's republic are *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* by Tim Redman, *L'Italia di Ezra Pound* by Niccolò Zapponi, and *Ezra Pound the Last Rower* by Clemens Heymann. Redman, after

all, remains the only one with an exhaustive chapter on Pound and the RSI, a topic that all the above-mentioned authors treat at best marginally at worst ignoring it. On the other hand, the main study on the almost unknown Major Barnes is that by Claudio Maria Mancini; Mancini wrote a well-researched essay in which he analyses Barnes's life through the latter's personal papers and the Italian Archives documents.

Finally, the third part deals with the problem of post-9/8, British- and American-held Italian Prisoners of War – either fascists *tout court* (a rare species after the collapse of fascism in July 1943) or simply non-cooperators that pledged a “technical allegiance”⁸ to the RSI, are the objects of these chapters. While the latter were African Campaign veterans⁹ who did not accept the 9/8 Armistice for different reasons (i.e., for moral coherence or mere fear of having their families in Italy harmed by the Germans), the former, although a tiny minority, simply maintained their original fascist credo. Last but not least, another, new category of POWs who joined the African Campaign veterans in the non-cooperation effort was that of the young RSI troops captured during the Anzio-Nettuno landings of January 1944.¹⁰ Although their respective reasons to refuse the cooperation with the Allies were different if not at the antipodes, they were both put in the same category and developed a strong esprit de corps.

In this section, I demonstrate that both British and American captors tarred everyone with the same brush. The reasons were different, but both the Allies excelled at using effective psychological techniques of persuasion, or *ante litteram* moderate physical pressure, to convince the non-cooperators to join the Italian Service Units (ISUs). However, it emerges that neo-fascists were definitely better treated by the British captors than by the Americans.

Additionally, I sustain that the British Empire, which exploited its former POWs as inexpensive manpower until February-March 1947, tried

8 They did not recognise Badoglio's Government and consequently the Allies assimilated them to the neo-fascist soldiers. See PRO-NA, WO 229/8/13, “Italian POWs: pro-Fascist.”

9 Most of the *africanisti* (African Campaign veterans) were captured by or surrendered to the Anglo-American allies between the second Battle of El Alamein in October-November 1942 and the Tunisian retreat in April-May 1943.

10 See Roberto Chiarini and Antonio M. Arrigoni (eds.), *Intervista a Giuseppe Margottini*. Archivio delle fonti orali, No. 30 a-b, produced and distributed by CSD-RSI, Salò (Brescia), Italy, 2007.

to exploit every category of prisoner (including the fascist, non-cooperator non-coms and troops via subterfuges and decoy mirrors), but did not succeed in bending as many nons as their American cousins. Moreover, the non-cooperators were both a problem and a constant challenge for HM's Camp Commandants. In the end, only a tiny group of nons in US and British hands resisted their captors. Of course, the more resistant nons were those under the British (i.e., Camp No. 25 at Yol, India). Once the war was over, the temptation to obtain better treatment (especially from the spring of 1945) in the US camps made cooperation a much easier choice: only the compounds in the Hawaiian Islands became a real vanguard of RSI non-cooperators until the last days of captivity.

To complete the overview of the post-9/8 prisoners, I added a specific chapter on the RSI POWs held in Italy: these POWs were held first by the Americans then by the Italians. The prototype camp analysed here is Coltano's (Pisa), in which living conditions were better only if compared to those in the French-held camps in Algeria, Morocco, and Corsica. As I demonstrate in this chapter, the British left the Americans holding the baby as a sort of "welcome present" for their new senior-partner status in Italy. Besides, as stated by former RSI POW Arturo Conti, American MPs and troops on duty in Coltano treated the neo-fascists at best as second-rate POWs, at worst as common delinquents.

The third part of this dissertation benefited from my participation in the 2007 conference on the non-cooperators organised by the Centro Studi e Documentazione sul Periodo Storico della Repubblica Sociale Italiana (CSD-RSI) in Salò,¹¹ and the numerous accounts of non-cooperators such as Gaetano Tumiati, Giuseppe Margottini, Luigi Deserti, Gianni Roberti and Arturo Conti: their direct accounts both corroborated and complemented the documentary sources.

As for the literature concerning the post-9/8 POWs, the best available scholarly monograph, although dealing with all Italian POWs except for those who fell into Russian hands during World War II, is still Flavio Giovanni Conti's *I prigionieri di guerra italiani, 1940-1945*. On the other hand, the best anthology on Italian POWs is that edited by Romain H. Rainero, *I prigionieri militari italiani durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale*. As for US and British scholarship, three books stand

11 "La guerra nel reticolato. I prigionieri italiani non cooperatori (1940-1946)," CSD-RSI, Salò (Brescia), October 6, 2007.

as main references: Louis E. Keefer's *Italian Prisoners of War in America, 1942-1946*, George Glover Lewis and John Mewha's *History Of Prisoner of War Utilization by the United States Army, 1776-1945* (the official U.S. Army textbook on POWs), and Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich's *The British Empire And Its Italian Prisoners of War, 1940-1947*. Moore and Fedorowich's book is the ultimate work on the Italian POWs that "served" under His Britannic Majesty. Unfortunately, none of the above-mentioned texts, with the exception of Conti's,¹² have an exhaustive chapter on the so-called non-cooperators or, in certain cases, the diehard fascists that remained faithful to Mussolini after 9/8.

Of course, some memoirs are of paramount importance, such as the articles published in the periodical of the Italian Association of Non-Cooperators *Volontà*, particularly in their capacity to establish the idea of the zeitgeist within the non-cooperator camps. The most important and well-documented memoirs are: Armando Boscolo's *Fame in America*,¹³ Gaetano Tumiatì's *Prigionieri nel Texas*, Mario Tavella's *Io prigioniero in Texas*, Elios Toschi's *In fuga oltre l'Himalaya*, Leonida Fazi's *La Repubblica fascista dell'Himalaya*, and Fiorenzo Capriotti's *La mia Decima*. Additionally, documentary films such as Camilla Calamandrei's award winning *Prisoners in Paradise*¹⁴ and motion pictures such as *Texas 1946* by Giorgio Serafini¹⁵ (under the supervision of Armando Boscolo, whose book, *Fame in America*, inspired the 2002 film starring Luca Zingaretti and Roy Scheider) shed light on the real conditions of non-cooperators.

12 Flavio G. Conti, *I prigionieri di guerra italiani, 1940-1945* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), pp. 389-406 (chap. 7).

13 It is relevant to read the articles published in the weekly magazine *Candido* about the polemical reactions by American citizens following the review of Boscolo's book. See Franco Pagliano, "Fame in America," *Candido*, No. 22, May 30, 1954, and No. 28, July 11, 1954.

14 Camilla Calamandrei, *Prisoners in Paradise* (produced by the author-director herself and distributed by Public Broadcasting Service, USA, 2001).

15 Gaetano Tumiatì, during an interview he granted me on August 3, 2007, expressed his doubts on the quality of Serafini's film. According to Tumiatì, settings and characters lacked credibility. See also Vezio Melegari, "Texas '46: un film su cui meditare," *Volontà*, Anno XLII, Nos. 3/6, March-June 2002, pp. 4-7 (Archivio *Volontà*, CSD-RSI, Salò, Brescia); Giordano Bruno Guerri, "Anche il cinema aiuta a rileggere quell'epoca," *Il Giornale*, May 8, 2002; Emilia Costantini, "Zingaretti: da Perlasca a italiano nel lager Usa," *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 30, 2002.

As for the difficulties encountered during my research, I have to remark that during my stay in the United States, in 2005-2006, I tried several times via telephone and letter to contact Mr. Emilio Q. Daddario, a former OSS officer who, in April 1945, was supposed to capture Mussolini. Daddario, in the end, reluctantly agreed to discuss with me some important details concerning his mission in Northern Italy on the telephone, but he refused to meet me in person to grant me an interview.

Additionally, parts of the OSS Director's files ("William J. Donovan's Files") at College Park (NARA) were not yet re-ordered and available to the public. Moreover, it was a pity that the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles did not allow me to see one folder of the correspondence between Mr. and Mrs. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and the Ambassador of Japan to the RSI Baron Shinrokuru Hidaka, because this is "sealed shut" until 2017. These documents might have contained important revelations about the Churchill-Mussolini's contacts during the war. Another despicable obstacle was the Bush administration's re-classification plan for thousands of files for security reasons: the very same files that the Clinton's administration had generously opened to the public in the 1990s.¹⁶

Finally, I have to remark that although the US Archives (NARA) can be a cornucopia of documents, their consultation could be quite difficult. In fact, some Record Groups still have a file-card index whose small print causes severe eyestrain. On the contrary, the British Public Record Office and National Archives (PRO-NA), although equipped with a state-of-the-art online catalogue, allow the researcher to see too few documents at a time. Not to mention the fact that most of the "Files formerly in possession of Mussolini," the same documents that benefited, among others, from a scholarly reorganisation by Sir Frederick William Deakin,¹⁷ are photocopied and/or translated versions of the original ones. Indeed, these were the challenges and the opportunities of this work.

16 Scott Shane, "Archivist Urges U.S. to Reopen Classified Files," *New York Times*, March 3, 2006, Late Edition – Final, Section A, Page 1, Column 1.

17 The late Professor William F. Deakin (1913-2005) repeatedly denied the existence of the Churchill-Mussolini correspondence for sixty years. See PRO-NA, FO 370/2263, "Lack of evidence [...] correspondence Mussolini-Churchill;" FO 371/49933, "Contents of files formerly in possession of Mussolini." N.B. I tried to contact Professor Deakin twice via telephone and letter, but I have been told that his health was too fragile to allow him to grant me an interview.

PART I

The Allies and the Italian Social Republic: Uncle Sam, John Bull, and Ben

Ike said it was a “crooked deal” and that the document would not become public possibly for ten years after the war*

1. United States and United Kingdom: A War Marriage of Convenience

The opening quotation of the first part of this work is a hint that the so-called “special relationship” between the United Kingdom and the United States was in reality a war marriage of convenience.¹⁸ The British, after successfully dragging the Americans into the war,¹⁹ realised at their expense that their *modus operandi* often differed from that of their ally. In fact, the Anglo-American alliance did not entail at all that the two allies had the same views; the armistice with Italy and the behaviour adopted by Americans and British toward their former enemy, is a good example of it.

* Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1946), p. 405.

18 James E. Miller, *The United States and Italy, 1940-1950: The Politics and Diplomacy of Stabilization* (Chapel Hill, NC, and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 86-87, and pp. 110-11.

19 Thomas E. Mahl, *Desperate Deception: British covert operations in the United States, 1939-44* (Washington, DC, and London: Brassey's, 1998), passim; Christopher M. Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (New York: Harper & Collins Publishers, 1995), pp. 22-25. See also David J. C. Irving, “Churchill and U.S. Entry Into World War II,” *The Journal of Historical Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Fall 1989, pp. 261-86.

The Kansan military's statement comes from the war journal and memoirs of Capt. Harry Cecil Butcher, Eisenhower's naval aide from 1942 to 1945. It is interesting to note that the Italian translation of the first edition (excluding the special edition distributed to the US military through the Armed Services Edition) of the USNR officer's book, edited by Puccio Russo, translates the US edition without any censorship or cuts. This is not the case of the British edition where in the third part, at page 346, "The Conquest of Italy," in the chapter "Monty Stubs His Toe" (translated in Italian as "Monty va all'attacco"), half of the paragraph has been cut where the author, quoting Ike, writes about the "Short Armistice" between Italy and the Allies:

Major Lee was instructed to accompany Ike to the meeting for affixing the signatures to the historic document – a meeting which I greatly regretted having to miss, but Ike said it was a "crooked deal" and that the document would not become public possibly for ten years after the war. Nevertheless, I felt a sly photograph with my Contax would be invaluable. I asked Lee to bootleg one or several on his camera.²⁰

This is what one reads only in the first US edition at page 405. That paragraph is indeed an important one, because the SACMED affirms that the armistice is not a square deal.

In 1946, in the very same period when the Allies were elaborating the peace treaty with Italy – a treaty that caused the cession of Istria and Dalmatia to Yugoslavia, the loss of property and fatherland to more than 250,000 people,²¹ and the "emasculat[i]on" of the Regia Marina – which

20 Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1946), p. 405.

21 According to Raoul Pupo, "between 1944 and the end of the 1950s, at the Italian Eastern border more than 250,000 people, most of them of Italian extraction and citizenship, had to abandon their own historical residencies; that is, the cities of Zara, Fiume, the Quarnaro Islands – Cherso and Lussino – and the Istria Peninsula, handed over to the Yugoslav control. The so-called Julian[s] labelled this unofficially forced migration 'Exodus' [...] to highlight that a whole population, with its social articulations, its traditions and affections, had been ousted from its own land. Later on, the above term fully consolidated into the Italian historiography and collective memory as the Dalmatian-Julian Exodus or the more succinct and widespread Istrian Exodus. Most of refugees established their new residences in Italy [...], especially in the remnants of Gorizia and Trieste provinces. On the other hand, many other exiles did not find a place for themselves on the national territory

should have recognised the effective contribution of the Royal Armed Forces to the Anglo-American troops during the liberation of Italy, in the UK the thought of an influential US general officer was censored. In fact, Eisenhower did not agree on the way the Italian surrender and co-belligerency were going to be evaluated and rewarded;²² especially if one thinks of the way France succeeded in saving face (having it both ways) thanks to Churchill's stubbornness to make de Gaulle's Free France one-man movement a political entity and an ally first of the UK and, then, of the other "United Nations" following the French armistice and the constitution of Vichy Government.²³

During the war years there was clearly, and justifiably, a political image elaborated to feed both the British and American public opinion through malicious political discourses and PR operations: this public image often diverged from that supported and elaborated in private talks or within the Foreign Office and State Department milieus. For example, Harold Macmillan, then World War II Minister Resident in the Mediterranean, once told a fellow countryman that:

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- and emigrated to the Americas, Australia and New Zealand." See Raoul Pupo, *Il lungo esodo. Istria: le persecuzioni, le foibe, l'esilio* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2005), p. 15.
- 22 Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1946), p. 405. See also the British edition, *Three Years with Eisenhower* (London and Toronto: Heinemann, 1946), p. 346, and the Italian translation, *Tre anni con Eisenhower* (Milano: Mondadori, 1948), p. 444.
- 23 The Hexagon, although in 1940 was a defeated and Nazi-collaborating power, five years later finds itself at the winners' table as a member of the UN Permanent Security Council. It is interesting, *mutatis mutandis*, to see how the RSI, much more structured and autonomous both from an administrative and military point of view, was not considered and recognised by scholars as an independent government as was the case with the movement France Libre: a movement that was kept up through legal quibbles and devices by Churchill's moral authoritativeness, political determination, and shrewdness. See François Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Churchill. La mésentente cordiale* (Paris: Éditions Perrin, 2003), pp. 82-83; Ernest Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*. Volume II (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1971), pp. 332-342, and especially p. 337, where Mr. Eden affirms that General de Gaulle should moderate his behaviour toward the U.S. Department of State and that "Americans did not even regard the Free French as belligerents; their policy was to disintegrate the French Empire and to neutralise France, while his policy [Eden's] was to bring France into the war at our side."

You will find the Americans much as the Greeks found the Romans, great big, vulgar, bustling people, more vigorous than we are and also more idle, with more unspoiled virtues but also more corrupt. We must run AFHQ as the Greek slaves ran the operations of the Emperor Claudius.²⁴

Not to mention when the Chief of the Supply Services, U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Brehon B. Somervell, suggested exploiting the Lend-Lease Act to “force the British to turn over their bases in the Pacific to the United States, because the latter would need these islands after the war, given their expectation of exercising wide control over the area.”²⁵ Of course, these frictions were spread all over the alliance: from generals to privates and often these frictions led to open clashes.²⁶

The RSI was also the object of a clash between the Foreign Office and the US Embassy in London. In fact, when in June 1944 the ICRC endorsed the previous, March request from the RSI Red Cross to ship wounded military personnel from Croatia to Italy, and forwarded it to the

24 Alistair Horne, *Macmillan 1894-1956*. Vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 160.

25 Kathleen Burk, *Old World, New World: The Story of Britain and America* (London: Little, Brown, 2007), p. 507; Id., “American Foreign Economic Policy and Lend-Lease,” in Ann Lane and Howard Temperley (eds.), *The Rise and Fall of the Grand Alliance, 1941-1945* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 58.

26 As an anecdote, it is interesting to see the confidential report drafted by a US citizen that volunteered as a military ambulance driver and witnessed a series of clashes during the Campaign of Italy: from US bad driving (“the Americans on the roads used no courtesy at all”) on the poor roads of Italy to the higher salaries of the GIs that ruined the market every time they moved into a new spot: “The question of pay was another reason which built up hard feeling between the American soldier and the British Tommy. Whatever town the Americans are in, all the prices automatically go sky-high because of their lavish spending [...]. AMG can control prices, but they do not control wages. This situation irks the Empire troops and prevents their getting along together.” Then, the US ambulance driver also mentions a biased, press coverage on the Italian campaign. In fact, in a famous reportage on the Sicilian invasion, *Life* “did not once mention British participation.” Last but not least, “British soldiers who went through tough and bitter fighting for three long years receive no campaign ribbons, while Americans with perhaps two months service, and many who have not heard a shot fired, have several [...]” See NARA, RG 226, E 14, B 294, F 55984, “Arthur Howe: Personal observations on conditions in Italy.”

Allies, while the Americans were open to a compromise solution, the British would rather not deal with “Mussolini’s Red Cross.”²⁷

Obviously, the mantra of the special relationship was an excellent propaganda tool to persuade the Axis that the US-UK alliance, based on hundreds of years of common history and language,²⁸ was the most solid guarantee of a monolithic war action against the Italians, the Germans, and the Japanese.

Yet, this was not the case, as Eisenhower’s judgment points out, as far as the Italian armistice is concerned. The stormy management of the Italian armistice and the Anglo-American directorate of the Boot were the “dress rehearsal” of the future administration of liberated Europe.²⁹ Not so surprisingly, observing what happened in Northern Italy, my research sheds light on the different ways Britons and Americans dealt with the RSI.

Between 1943 and 1945, and more particularly, as the UK was becoming more and more economically dependent on its ex colonies’ fi-

27 PRO-NA, ADM 1/16015, “International Law (51): Repatriation of Italian Civilians from Split, Yugoslavia, to Northern Italy.” Precisely, the exchange of June 1944 letters between Sir Nigel Law, Foreign Office, and Carlos J. Marshall, US Embassy in London. The request of a safe corridor by Mussolini’s Red Cross is not considered viable by the FO, while the Americans were trying to find a solution to Salò’s request: a request that was made in March 1944 and through the intermediary of the ICRC in Geneva.

28 For an original and exhaustive study of the description of the Anglo-American common history and the clashes and/or frictions between the United States and Great Britain during World War II, the best scholarly work is Kathleen Burk’s *Old World, New World*. Examples of the above “frictions” can be found on p. xiii (preface), and pp. 485-528. Additionally, other examples can be found on p. 499 (on the parallel between Romans and Americans), p. 500 (on American inferiority complex), p. 505 (on colonial possessions), and p. 507 (on the US greedy attitude toward the Lend-Lease to despoil Britain of its military bases around the world).

29 See Bruno Arcidiacono, “The ‘Dress Rehearsal’: the Foreign Office and the Control of Italy, 1943-1944,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1985, pp. 417-27; Id., “La Grande Bretagne et les États-Unis face au problème de l’armistice avec l’Italie et du contrôle du territoire italien libéré,” *Relations Internationales*, No. 10, 1977, pp. 143-61; Id., *Le “précédent italien” et les origines de la guerre froide. Les Alliés et l’occupation de l’Italie, 1943-1944* (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 1984), pp. 41-97, and pp. 226-77.

nancial support, the United States emerged as a global superpower, and definitely the senior partner of the Anglo-American war alliance.³⁰

The question whether American and British politicians and military in London or in Washington, as well as their associates in Italy, had some relations with or had some talks with their RSI counterparts while the other half of the Peninsula was given the unprecedented status of co-belligerent to fight against neo-fascist and Nazi troops, will be the object of the next pages.³¹

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- 30 Although the Mediterranean theatre of war was considered a sort of exclusive British chessboard, after Eisenhower's departure for England to organise the Normandy invasion, and the appointment of British Generals Wilson and Alexander as SACMEDs, especially with the appointment of the latter in the fall of 1944, the English became the junior partner in that theatre. Consequently, although they contributed most of the deployed troops, they lost some drive in the conduct of war in Italy.
- 31 On April 17, 1944, under the impulse of Prince Lt. Gen. Humbert, and after the sacrifice of hundreds of soldiers of the new Italian Royal Army's embryo (i.e., the 1° Raggruppamento Motorizzato commanded by Brig. Gen. Vincenzo C. Dapino) during the Battle of Montelungo on December 8-16, 1943, the CIL (Corpo Italiano di Liberazione) was constituted under the command of Brig. Gen. Umberto Utili. These Italian soldiers, faithful to the king, helped the Allies to liberate many cities and fought against the Germans. In so doing, they redeemed Italy's honour with their blood, together with many white or monarchical partisans. On the other side of the hill, the majority of the RSI troops were convinced to fight for the same reason.

2. The View from the White House

Thanks to Diggins's work on America and Fascism,³² scholars know that FDR was a critical admirer of Mussolini's social policies and achievements³³ whose most famous outputs were INAIL, INPS and IRI.³⁴ Specular and experimental reforms in the US brought about the creation of the NRA, Public Works and finally the Social Security Administration. Mussolini and FDR were both pragmatic politicians and witty jug-

32 John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), passim.

33 Although, as for birth and political culture, FDR and Mussolini were at the antipodes, in the period 1933-35, they shared some common goals and ideas, not to mention the similarities of the National Recovery Administration (NRA) with fascist corporatism and the IRI (Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale). In fact, as stated by Diggins, Brig. Gen. Hugh S. Johnson, president of the NRA, "carried with him a copy of Raffaello Vigone's *The Corporate State*, spoke respectfully of Fascism, and upon resigning [pressured by Secretary of Labour Frances Perkins, because of his alleged admiration for the duce and supposed alcoholism] invoked in a farewell speech what he called the 'shining name' of Mussolini." See Diggins, p. 280; Frances Perkins, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (New York: Viking Press, 1946), p. 206; Maurizio Vaudagna, "Mussolini and Franklin D. Roosevelt," in Cornelis A. van Minnen and John F. Sears (eds.), *FDR and His Contemporaries: Foreign Perceptions of An American President* (New York: St. Martin's Press and RSC, 1992), pp. 157-70. See also Hugh S. Johnson, *From Egg to Earth* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1935), pp. ix-xii; John K. Ohl, *Hugh S. Johnson and the New Deal* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985), pp. 194-217 (Chapter 11, "Labour Policy").

34 The Istituto Nazionale di Previdenza Sociale (INPS) or Italian Pension Service was founded in 1933 as a result of a merger with a previous insurance fund. From 1933 through 1939, INPS created the unemployment insurance and family cheque schemes, lowered the retirement age to 60 for men and 55 for women, and established the pension's reversibility scheme from the deceased insured person to his or her spouse or children. The Istituto Nazionale per l'Assicurazione contro gli Infortuni sul Lavoro (INAIL) is the national agency created to insure workers in case of on-the-job accidents. It was founded in 1935 as a result of a merger with another insurance fund. The Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale (IRI) is the national agency in charge of the rescue of large companies on the verge of bankruptcy and hence facing considerable lay-offs. Initially, it was founded in 1933 to rescue the major Italian banks (i.e., the Banca Commerciale Italiana, the Credito Italiano and the Banco di Roma).

glers able to charm and use people and collaborators to attain their goals.³⁵ Yet, with fascist Italy's aggression of Ethiopia, Roosevelt's opinion swayed. While the criticisms that emerged were kept mild in order to keep the Italian-American electorate faithful to the Democratic Party in 1936 and in 1940; later on, with the declaration of war and the invasion of Sicily, things changed considerably.³⁶

As far as the most important source of information concerning the foreign relations of the United States of America (i.e., the official diplomatic papers of the United States edited by the U.S. Department of State's Historical Office), rarely can one find a note or a paragraph about the RSI.³⁷

However, mention is made of Mussolini's republic a couple of times; e.g., on the currency arrangements during the invasion of Italy and the "occupation of enemy-occupied territories" by the United Nations armed forces, and the implicit comparison of the situation in German-occupied Northern Italy, where the occupation inflated money disappeared in about one month to give way to a stronger "Republican lira."³⁸ Again, the RSI is mentioned in the *Substantive Preparatory Papers* of the Cairo Conference on November 22-26, 1943. While the National Republican Government is proclaiming the new name of Northern Italy as

35 Vaudagna, "Mussolini and FDR," p. 158.

36 An interesting attack on Mussolini and the way Roosevelt considered the RSI is exemplified in the "Fireside Chat" of June 5, 1944, the day after the liberation of Rome by the American (and British) troops and the day before the landing in Normandy: "We can still see there the monuments of a time when Rome and the Romans controlled the whole of the then known world. That, too, is meaningful for the United Nations are determined that in the future no one city and no one race will be able to control the whole of the world." And again: "The Italians, too, forswearing a partnership in the Axis which they never desired, have sent their troops to join us in our battles against the German trespassers on their soil [...]. *In the North of Italy, the people are still dominated and threatened by the Nazi overlords and their Fascist puppets* [emphasis is mine]."

37 U.S. Department of State, Historical Office. *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS): Diplomatic Papers, 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961-1968).

38 *FRUS, 1943*. Volume I, General, p. 1039, and pp. 1029-1049, passim. On RSI's stable currency and monetary policy, see also Riccardo Lazzeri, *Economia e Finanza nella RSI, 1943-1945* (Milano: Terziaria, 1998), p. 75, and pp. 78-81.

the Italian Social Republic, the Allies under the “Point no. 4/e” on Italy, state that:

The Germans appear to have the situation behind their lines in Italy reasonably well in hand, although some Italian units continue to resist in the Alpine area, particularly on the French and Yugoslav frontiers, and some sabotage continues. The Mussolini Government appears to have acquired relatively few supporters.³⁹

As far as the diplomatic recognition of the RSI by the Axis satellite powers is concerned (after January 1944 most had established diplomatic representation in Northern Italy, sited in Venice, Verona, Milan, Brescia, and on the shores of Lake Garda), only the Finnish Government refused to recognise the neo-fascist Italian Social Republic by remaining in Rome and “instructing its mission to await the return of the Italian King.”⁴⁰

The only significant series of references and documents concerning the activity of the RSI is evident in relation to the “Concerns of the United States over the control of Venezia Giulia.”⁴¹ The problems of the future of this macro region and the role of the fascist republic in maintaining some strongholds against the Yugoslavs are thoroughly analysed in the American diplomatic papers.

39 *FRUS, 1943*. Volume on the Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, p. 225.

40 *FRUS, 1944*. Volume I, General, p. 1474. Switzerland and Spain, although not recognising Salò, held commercial missions to Northern Italy, while the Vatican refused to recognise *de jure* a state that was born during the war and in so doing appealing to international law prohibiting this kind of recognition. A defiant position was that held by the Vichy Government that did not recognise the RSI until Pétain was in power. Marshal Pétain, from 1940 through 1944, reciprocated the behaviour of Mussolini and Victor Emmanuel during the armistice and the occupation of half of France: i.e., they ignored each other. Yet, especially after the hero of Verdun's confinement to Sigmaringen (Germany), Salò and Vichy experienced a military rapprochement through the latter's Milice Française that fought with the RSI Armed Forces in Valtellina against the Italian partisans. See Marino Viganò, *Il Ministero degli Affari Esteri e le Relazioni Internazionali della Repubblica Sociale Italiana, 1943-1945* (Milano: Jaca Books, 1995), pp. 183-206. See also Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, “Le gouvernement de Vichy face à l'Italie,” in Jean-Baptiste Duroselle and Enrico Serra (eds.), *Italia e Francia, 1939-1945*. Volume I (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1984), p. 96.

41 *FRUS, 1945*. Volume IV Europe, pp. 955-1331.

Among the memoirs and papers of FDR, not to mention those of his cabinet members, there are no relevant statements or written declarations concerning the RSI and eventual peace feelers or the like through 1943-1945. However, among the papers of and works by Frances Perkins (Secretary of Labour),⁴² there were some minor references to the policies of Mussolini concerning welfare and labour. Some allusions were contained in documents of the 1930s and, to a lesser extent, in others written during the last two years of the war.⁴³

Undoubtedly, the most interesting aspect of the relations between the republican fascists and the Americans during the war was the military one.

42 "Madam Secretary," the first woman cabinet officer, was instrumental in the establishment of the Social Security system in 1935 and the passage of the Fair Labour Standards Act of 1938, both inspired by the fascist welfare system or corporatism. See Frances Perkins, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1946), pp. 201-20.

43 Ibid.

3. The US Military in Italy: Covert Operations and Secret Contacts with the RSI

To accurately judge the role of the United States and its influence in the *in fieri* Republic of Italy, and in the process of its creation, one must start from the Italian Social Republic.⁴⁴ This has been a research topic for many scholars, especially in the last score of years. Taking in all the different interpretations, it is clear that the US was the main protagonist in the reconstruction of Italy and, of course, of the whole of Western Europe. Actually, its influence extended far beyond classical international relations: the US acted as both the stepfather (officially speaking) and the illegitimate father (unofficially speaking) of the newly born republic.⁴⁵ In the latter case, especially after studying the OSS files opened to the public in the mid-1990s and in the first years of the 21st century, this fatherhood is widely recognised.

Once the role of the UK as a main actor in the Peninsula⁴⁶ was diminished (especially when the US demanded the dissolution of the armistice régime at the end of 1944), British and US timing on the new policy toward a “democratic Italy” differed consistently,⁴⁷ and the US was ready to better sell its ideas and plans for the reconstruction of Italy to its allies.

The prodromes of this dominant US influence in Italy can be traced not only in the American commitment to Italian recovery through the restoration of “stability and economic prosperity,”⁴⁸ but also in the un-

44 Pietro Galletto, *Dai Comuni medievali alla Repubblica Italiana. Il lungo cammino dell'idea repubblicana in Italia* (San Zenone degli Ezzelini, Treviso: G. Battagin Editore, 2001), pp. 1069-79. See also Scardaccione, *Verbali*, pp. xvii-xxxvi.

45 Miller, *The United States and Italy*, pp. 86-87, p. 96, and pp. 102-04; Roberto Faenza and Marco Fini, *Gli americani in Italia* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1976), *passim*.

46 Moshe Gat, *Britain and Italy, 1943-1949* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1996), pp. 3-4, pp. 68-92, and pp. 93-128.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 93. N.B. In the joint statement made by Roosevelt and Churchill on September 26, 1944, the Allies mainly took away the word “Control” from the ACC and the British and US representatives within the Allied Commission became high commissioners to Italy.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 101. The British, on the other hand, continued to advocate a policy aimed at dominating and weakening Italy. See also PRO-NA, FO 371/49751, Foreign Office to Eden, February 4, 1945, “Reorganisation of and new directive for the Allied

dercover relations that the US established – at best without the British official consent at worst with the disagreement of the latter – with the RSI or some of its most representative military figures. Whereas the politicians could not officially meet on a common basis, the military urged a contact to think of the post-war situation. The main concerns were, of course, the preservation of the Northern Italian industrial complex and the Italian-hood of the whole Venezia Giulia, Istria and maybe the Dalmatian coast up to Zara; that is, the borders of the 1920s.⁴⁹

About one year after the landing of the US Armed Forces in Sicily the OSS started to weave the framework of undercover contacts between the Decima MAS and its counterintelligence agents. Borghese's troops and network were vital for the establishment of the organisation that will later be known as Gladio; i.e., the Italian branch of the European, Western bloc, anti-communist stay-behind army sponsored by NATO.⁵⁰

The Decima, whose autonomy and uniqueness had always been fearlessly shouted from the rooftops, was a complex military unit. Behind the façade of volunteering, the Decima hosted persons from all walks of life. From partisans to party members, from deserters to draft dodgers, from Alpine sappers to ship-less seamen, from civilian secretaries to certified accountants, from film stars to wheeler dealers: whoever pledged allegiance to the “democratic” and “revolutionary” Commander Borghese and his nationalist corps could decorate his or her uniform with the Decima MAS insignia.

Commission: Anglo-United States policies toward Italy: conditions in Italy: Italian peace proposals,” Miller, *The United States and Italy*, pp. 107-08.

- 49 On the controversial aspects of “Slav-hood vs. Italian-hood,” not to mention the harsh fascist-isation of those areas and the relative ethnic, political and class clashes, see Boris Pohar, *Necropoli* (Roma: Fazi Editore, 2007), passim. On the British and American attitudes, mind-sets, and actions concerning the Julian border problem, see Anton Giulio de’ Robertis, *Le Grandi Potenze e il confine giuliano, 1941-1947* (Bari: Laterza, 1983), passim.
- 50 Ganser, *NATO’s Secret Armies*, pp. 63-85 (Chapter 6, “The Secret War in Italy”): particularly pp. 63-65 on Gladio’s prodromes. See also Timothy J. Naftali, “Artifice: James Angleton and X-2 Operations in Italy,” in George C. Chalou (ed.), *The Secret War. The Office of Strategic Services in World War II* (Washington, DC: NARA, 1992 and 2002), pp. 225-226; Id., “X-2 and the Apprenticeship of American Counterespionage, 1942-1944” (Cambridge, MA: Department of History, Harvard University, 1993), pp. 560-600 (Chapter 13, “Humphrey Beagle Meets T. S. Eliot”), passim.

Additionally, Borghese sincerely wanted to eliminate the Pavolini-influenced, Nazi-friendly RSI Government whose partisan-blood-thirsty image was at the antipodes of Decima's original and exclusive nationalist credo. The June 1944 planned coup, as stated by Borghese's main associate, the lively nonagenarian Nino Buttazzoni, in a recent, revealing interview, is the proof of the above-mentioned political design: a design that Borghese decided to postpone and keep in a drawer for a better time.⁵¹ He so did, most probably, because Mussolini planned to recover his independence and detach himself from the Nazi's yoke as it is witnessed by the determination to constitute an independent Republican Alpine Redoubt in Valtellina and his many tentative talks with the Allies, in particular with the British (e.g., Porto Ceresio and Montecolino meetings). Borghese was, indeed, ready to sacrifice part of his autonomy to the nationalist cause, but to deal not only with the OSS or the Southern Navy, but also with the partisans; precisely with the socialist and "white" (i.e., Catholic, royalist partisans, mainly those resulting from the disbanding of the Italian Armed Forces after 9/8) partisans with whom the Decima occasionally did "business" such as smuggling, food procurement and arms thefts near the Swiss border between Como and Varese: e.g., Osvaldo Valenti's activity near Como in the fall of 1944, the contacts between the Decima and the Osoppo partisan brigade in January 1945, and the protection of Borghese by socialist partisans while hiding in Milan. In the above episodes of "common interests" between partisans and Decima marines, money and bribes, not to mention Decima's conspicuous black funds, played an important role in the bloody, final days of the "liberation of Northern Italy from Nazi-fascism," where common crimes were sugar-coated with an aura of patriotism and Resistance's mythology (e.g., the murder in Milan, on April 30, 1945, of Osvaldo

51 See Appendix 2: Interview with Nino Buttazzoni. For Borghese's clashes with the RSI Government and PFR "temporary secretary" Alessandro Pavolini, and with the Undersecretariat of the Republican Navy and the Ministry of the Armed Forces, see Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini l'alleato. La guerra civile, 1943-1945* (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), pp. 501-2. For the accusations toward the commandant of the Decima MAS and the relative suspects concerning his "personal army" and tentative coup to overthrow Mussolini's government, see NARA, RG 226, 174, B 128, F 972, "Atteggimento della Decima MAS dopo l'8 settembre 1943" and RG 226, E 108a, B 257, F jzx-1860. See also Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Come nasce la Repubblica* (Milano: Bompiani, 2004), p. 3, note 1, and pp. 32-35.

Valenti and Luisa Ferida). In addition, Borghese's many contacts with the Southern envoys, such as those with Lieutenant Zanardi in September-October 1944, with Captain Marceglia in March-April 1945, and with Major Giorgis at the end of April 1945, added another dose of mystery to an already complicated plot. During these contacts, Borghese and Rear Admiral Giuseppe Sparzani tried to reach a deal to save the Venezia Giulia Region. Last but not least, the interest showed by the OSS in the use of Borghese's stay-behind organisation is highlighted by the protection of and interest in the person of the Roman submariner by the X-2 chief in Italy and future head of the CIA Counterintelligence, Captain James J. Angleton.

As also analysed by scholar Nicola Tranfaglia and investigative journalist Mario J. Cereghino,⁵² there is still a series of unclarified episodes that will probably be extensively examined when the Vatican Secret Archives of 1939-49 are opened to researchers.⁵³ Perhaps, the Carabinieri Archives concerning the joint operations of SIM, SIS and OSS, and the clashes or divergent points of view between the latter and SOE and FSS all over the Peninsula in the period that goes from the Anzio landing (January 1944) to the end of the war in Europe (May 1945), could also help to study this foggy period.⁵⁴

It is now evident that the Americans – particularly Rear Admiral Ellery Stone⁵⁵ who asked Italy's X-2 chief, Capt. James J. Angleton, in

52 In the spring-summer of 2004, Mario J. Cereghino and I exchanged information on our respective researches. During our correspondence, I expressed to him my doubts on the accuracy of certain OSS reports concerning the Decima MAS's presence in Sicily after the armistice.

53 Tranfaglia, *Come nasce la Repubblica*, p. vi.

54 Ibid.

55 Robin R. Winks, *Cloak & Gown: Scholars in the Secret War, 1939-1961* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996, 2nd Edition), p. 369, and p. 540, note 24. N.B. It is interesting to see that the very Catholic Stone, close to the very Catholic Borghese's family and the Holy See, sponsored the award of SMOM Croce al Merito di Seconda Classe to OSS agents Raymond G. Rocca and James J. Angleton after the brilliant *sauvetage* of Commander Borghese. Additionally, it is meaningful to see with some hindsight Stone's closeness to Italy and the Italian Navy. In fact, in April 1946 Rear Admiral Ellery W. Stone, Chief of the Allied Commission for Italy, wrote to President Harry S. Truman affirming that: "Italy has three major needs: 1) An adequate food supply; 2) Fuel and raw materials; 3) *A just peace* [emphasis is mine]. *These needs are immediate* [emphasis in the original]."

collaboration with the head of the Italian naval intelligence or SIS (Capt. Agostino Calosi and Angleton's counterpart at the counterintelligence branch of SIS, Cdr. Carlo Resio) to organise the rescue operation –, decided to save Commander Borghese from an almost sure firing-squad execution in Milan in May 1945 and then from the Italian military justice in order to hire him together with many of his most faithful men for the establishment of the future Gladio network.⁵⁶ Borghese, after hiding for fifteen days in a Milanese flat, protected by socialist partisans,⁵⁷ was rescued by Angleton and Resio and interned in Forte Boccea, Rome's military prison, and then in Cinecittà, the Roman seat of the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre (CSDIC). After some months in the hands of the Allies or better the Americans, he was sent to other detention centres among these the center on Procida Island. His trial was to begin in 1947 in front of a criminal Assise court in Rome and end two years later. Borghese was sentenced to 12 years, but then 8 and later 9

Stone remarked also that: "If Italy were to be preserved as a 'bastion of democracy' in the Mediterranean, it was necessary for the United States and British Governments to ensure that a harsh peace not be applied. Events since that date have only confirmed that recommendation. Italy, since her declaration of war against Germany on October 13, 1943, has certainly 'worked her passage.' *Her Navy carried out 900 naval missions for us* [emphasis is mine]. [...] Following the armistice, Italy contributed to our joint war effort against Germany to the full extent that we permitted her to do so. [...] *If Italy has to be given justice, she cannot be treated as a defeated enemy, but she should be treated as a junior partner in the Mediterranean, a role to which all Italians – with the exception of those under the domination of Moscow – sincerely aspire* [emphasis is mine]. We cannot hope to have Italy as a loyal partner of the democracies if we grievously injure her national pride, dismember her colonies and her frontier provinces, parcel out her naval vessels as spoils of war." See "Stone to Truman, 18 April 1946," *FRUS, 1946*, Volume II, Council on Foreign Ministers, pp. 72-79.

56 Ganser, *NATO's Secret Armies*, p. 64.

57 Marini Group's socialist partisans saved Borghese as a token of the good relationship engendered during the civil war. In the summer of 1944, six hundreds of these partisans were helped by Borghese when they deserted the partisan formation and were recruited illegally by him instead of turning them over to the Germans as prescribed by RSI laws. Besides, his closest contacts inside the socialist partisans in Milan were Sandro Faini and Corrado Bonfantini. Both helped Borghese to stay hidden in a Milanese flat (i.e., Nino Puleo's flat) guarded by socialist partisans. In the after-war years, many Gladio members were recruited among those former socialist partisans. See Sergio Nesi, *Junio Valerio Borghese: un Principe, un Comandante, un Italiano* (Bologna: Scarabeo, 2004), p. 526.

would be condoned, meant that after a rather quick liberation he was ready to go back to work for the OSS.⁵⁸

This decision and precise plan, orchestrated by the CIA's precursor, in favour of a military that decided to keep fighting under his personal responsibility and word of honour guarantee (thanks to the famous agreement between him and German Navy Capt. Max Berninghaus on 14 September 1943) with the Nazis with or without Mussolini's republic, is self-explanatory about the existence of the above plan to exploit not only Borghese, but many other Decima MAS elements in a huge stay-behind operation against a possible Yugoslav invasion in North-Eastern Italy and, consequently and conveniently, against the USSR-controlled Italian Communist Party.⁵⁹

In Italy, the laboratory test of the Cold War begins in the winter-spring of 1945 when the Americans, or better the OSS men on the spot, choose to employ and deploy officers and troops belonging to the Decima MAS within covert operations against the leftist parties (i.e., the PCI).⁶⁰ In this way, even sponsoring the rapid reconstitution of a neo-fascist party in December 1946, it united most of Decima MAS military leaders to the neo-fascist party MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano), which breathed new life into the RSI's main values. Yet, one must always bear in mind that not all Decima MAS men were rightist elements, but had more socialist or even communist leanings.⁶¹

What was the future of the elite troops of the RSI? Did they become politically persecuted opponents or were they employed, after the spring-summer of 1945, to act against the supposedly imminent "red peril" under the direct orders of US intelligence? NARA and PRO documents shed light on the manoeuvres to save former members of the Decima MAS, and about the contacts initiated in the spring-summer of 1944 between the OSS and Commander Borghese, and of the progressive assignment and posting of the commandoes (paratrooper swimmers and frogmen posted at the Vega Battalion are the plan's jewels in the crown)

58 Ganser, *NATO's*, p. 64.

59 Giorgio Cavalleri, *La Gladio del lago* (Varese: Essezeta-Arterigere, 2006), p. 21.

60 Tranfaglia, *Come nasce*, p. xxviii.

61 Giuseppe Parlato, *Fascisti senza Mussolini. Le origini del neofascismo in Italia, 1943-1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), pp. 18-21. See also Piero Vivarelli, *Salò e la Decima MAS*, a documentary film produced by Il Borghese Publishing Group and RAI-Istituto Luce (Rome, 1998); Cavalleri, *La Gladio*, p. 141.