

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Salvemini, militant historian, and his publications on Fascism

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Abstract

This essay analyses Salvemini's major works on Fascism, namely *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* (1927), *Mussolini Diplomate* (1932) and *Under the Axe of Fascism* (1936). The focus of this analysis is twofold: to explore both Salvemini's methodology and the events leading to the publication of these works. In *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy*, Salvemini examines the origins and the rise of Mussolini's movement, highlighting the complicity of the monarchy, the army, and industrial magnates. In *Mussolini Diplomate*, he analyses Fascist foreign policy from 1922 to 1932, in which Salvemini is unable to identify a consistent strategy, but only a propagandistic approach aiming to foster diplomatic relations. In *Under the Axe of Fascism*, Salvemini dissects Fascist economics, debunking the idea that the corporate state was an original and equitable compromise in the conflict between capital and labour, as was being portrayed abroad. An analysis of these three volumes brings into focus some noteworthy aspects of Salvemini's so-called 'historiographical workshop', which have hitherto been overlooked by historians (such as his adept use of sources and his endeavour to combine social sciences and economics), as well as underscoring his ability to forge cultural and intellectual networks, an essential element for undertaking such a complex task.

Keywords: exile; Fascism; antifascism; historical method; transatlantic culture

Introduction

Salvemini's *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* (1927), *Mussolini Diplomate* (1932) and *Under the Axe of Fascism* (1936) form an antifascist trilogy. The first volume focuses on the origins and ascent of Fascism, highlighting the complicity of the monarchy, the army, and industrial magnates in supporting Mussolini's seizure of power. The second volume asserts that, between 1922 and 1932, Mussolini lacked a coherent foreign policy strategy, instead seeking temporary international successes through the use of Fascist propaganda. The third volume shifts its focus onto the Fascist economy and critiques the corporate state, portrayed abroad as an original and equitable solution to the conflict between capital and labour (Salvemini 1927, 1932a and b, 1936a and b, 1961, 1974; Tranfaglia 1988). Throughout the decade in which these volumes were published, Salvemini lived what he referred to as his 'third life', to quote a famous letter to his friend Mary Berenson (Salvemini 1988a, 436–437). During this period, Salvemini resided in exile between London and Paris, ultimately moving to Harvard in 1934. In publishing these studies,

Salvemini contributed to the antifascist struggle by debunking Fascist propaganda, which had found support among conservative circles in France, Britain, and the US. These volumes stand as the most significant outcome of Salvemini's international commitment, as they bear witness to his activity as an antifascist in exile and, at the same time, show his commitment to historiographical accuracy.

Whereas scholarly research has extensively explored the content of Salvemini's works on Fascism, there remains a need to explore both the methodology adopted and the complex networks of international relations in which these works were written, published, and shared. This essay aims to reconstruct the context in which these books were published, highlighting Salvemini's historiographical methods and sources, such as his use of the press, statistical data, and documentary evidence, all of which he used consistently. The essay then goes on to analyse the shape which these works assumed in postwar years, when Salvemini tried to give *Mussolini Diplomate* and *Under the Axe of Fascism* a more definitive structure as accomplished and stable analyses of the Fascist phenomenon.

Studying the events which led to the publication of these works and their development over the years allows us to better understand their impact after the war, when the dictatorship – and the studies which analysed it – began to be assessed in a completely different political scenario (Zunino 2003). For instance, regarding the analysis of Fascist economics, Salvemini's works had an impact on the writings of Ernesto Rossi, one of Salvemini's pupils who worked together with him on the political journal *Non Mollare*; Rossi was a political prisoner from 1930 until the fall of the regime. In the 1950s, he expanded upon Salvemini's interpretations, especially in relation to Fascist economics: Rossi explored the connection between politics and major industrial groups, as well as the link between tendencies towards monopolies and the speculative manoeuvres carried out by the Italian middle class, which had previously been supported by Mussolini. The bourgeoisie later continued to pursue its own interests with ease even after the proclamation of the Republic (Rossi 1955). At the same time, in the following two decades, writers and historians aligned with *azionismo* and socialism would consider Salvemini's works as crucial to the study of Fascism. They turned to Salvemini's analysis as points of reference in their own research (Bocca 1977; Collotti 1999). Indeed, these three volumes continued to be regarded as 'milestones in the literature on Italian Fascism' (Vivarelli 1974).

The publication of *Mussolini Diplomate*

From the early 1920s, after a disappointing experience as MP and the intellectual and personal crisis that followed, Salvemini devoted himself to the study of Italian foreign policy. In 1922 he returned to the study of Cattaneo and federalism; the following year, he edited the collection of Leonida Bissolati's writings and speeches on foreign policy (Bissolati 1923; Tagliacozzo 1959). In October 1923, at King's College London, he delivered a series of lectures on Italian foreign policy from 1871 to 1915. Most of his 1923 journalistic output focused on international issues. This marked a turning point for Salvemini, with European diplomatic relations becoming one of his primary areas of concern. In 1927, commenting on whether Fascism was about to collapse, he responded:

If one cannot hope for a change either by the clergy, or by the army, or by industrialists, or by internal party quarrels, or by a revolutionary organisation, where will one find the opportunity that will overthrow the Fascist regime? I am convinced that it will be found in foreign policy. This is the weak point of the Fascist regime, and this is where disaster will come from. (Salvemini 2002, 64).

Before devoting himself to the study of foreign policy, Salvemini had already consolidated his international role as a commentator on Fascism from a historical and political point of view. In the spring of 1927, his *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* was published in the United States; thereafter, Salvemini completely rewrote it ‘from cover to cover’ (Salvemini 2002, 86) in order to publish it in London the following year. In his book of memoirs *Dai ricordi di un fuoruscito*, Salvemini (2002) provided details about the years 1927–8 that shed light on the context in which *The Fascist Dictatorship* was published; very few details are available about the publication of the other two books. Nevertheless, an analysis of these latter yields interesting details.

In *Mussolini Diplomate*, Salvemini analyses the first ten years of Fascist foreign policy. The volume was published in French in Paris in January 1932; the Italian version came out in August of the same year; then it appeared in Switzerland (Salvemini 1937) and finally, another Italian edition followed, with some modifications and additions (Salvemini 1945, 1952a). In the various editions of the volume, Salvemini’s thesis remained the same: when, a few years later, he had had the opportunity to carry out research on new sources and refer to a wider bibliography, his analysis remained valid. The methodology that Salvemini adopted in the first version reveals that as a historian, despite facing challenging difficult cultural and political circumstances, he was able to research and sift through a vast mass of documents to elaborate an interpretation that remains valid to this day, without compromising his commitment to political struggle (Collotti 2000, 20). The historical context in which *Mussolini Diplomate* was written allows us to assess Salvemini’s historiographical method, considering that the book was written in exile and the scarcity of the sources at his disposal.

The core and documentary material of the text derived from *Mussolini’s Italy*: an ambitious project, a collection of essays which in December 1930 Salvemini had intended to co-edit with his friend and colleague at Harvard, Giorgio La Piana (Torchiani 2015). *Mussolini’s Italy* sought to engage non-communist antifascist intellectuals working in Italy, France, England and the United States (such as Carlo Sforza, Francesco Ferrari, Egidio Reale, Silvio Trentin, Emilio Lussu, Lauro de Bosis and Andrea Caffi), analysing the first ten years of the Fascist regime from different perspectives (Torchiani 2015, 128–139). The study of foreign policy was initially assigned to Sforza, then to Salvemini, Caffi and Reale. Between August and November 1931, Salvemini gave the project a new structure: Reale was to focus on the League of Nations, Caffi on national minorities and Fascism. Salvemini was to devote himself to Fascist foreign policy (Salvemini 2015, 47–56; Signori 2007, 563–577). Eventually, the ambitious project failed: Salvemini decided to make use of the sources he had managed to collect under such challenging circumstances and publish a volume on foreign policy.

At the end of 1931, while in Paris, Salvemini told La Piana that *Mussolini Diplomate* would be published by Bernard Grasset (Salvemini 2015, 62): its *Cahiers Verts* series, edited by Daniel Halévy, published texts discussing the state of democracy in Europe (Bothorel, 1989). These included Curzio Malaparte’s *Technique du coup d’Etat*, a book that Salvemini himself had wished to review. Both Malaparte and Salvemini sent a copy of their books to Mussolini, who read and annotated the texts (Franzinelli 2010, 211–218), as will be discussed later. Salvemini’s friendship with Halévy dated back to the beginning of the century, when the French intellectual had frequented Florentine cultural circles (Salvemini 1988b). The two would meet again in France, when Salvemini took part in the *Congrès International des écrivains pour la défense de la culture* in June 1935, delivering a speech that stressed the need for a strenuous defence of liberal democratic institutions against Fascism while denouncing the totalitarian nature of the Stalinist regime (Vivarelli 1997; Teroni 2002, 82–92). Daniel Halévy was the younger brother of the renowned historian Elie, who knew Salvemini well – he offered to support Salvemini in the trial against

Non Mollare and the two discussed at length the genesis of the Italian dictatorship, its features, and also its foreign policy (Griffo and Quagliariello 2001).

Salvemini also planned an edition of *Mussolini Diplomate* for the American and British public, encouraged by Grasset, who had foreseen great opportunities for the book's distribution during Thanksgiving in 1932. Through La Piana, Salvemini sent a copy to Professor Arthur Livingston, who had already been proactively translating and distributing the works of several European and Italian authors in the United States, including Croce, Pirandello and Borgese. Salvemini was sure to propose a 'pleasant reading (I would say) of political, historical and sociological interest' (Salvemini 2015, 71). According to the Fascist political police, between March and April 1932, Salvemini travelled to Switzerland to promote the book, and in mid-June he returned to the United States to deal with an unspecified publisher, interested in publishing it together with *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* in a dual English and German edition (Salvemini 2017, xiv). The latter volume had already been translated in Barcelona in 1931 under the title *El terror Fascista*. It is interesting to quote what the author himself wrote about this text, which in the London edition appears with a preface by Liberal politician Ramsay Muir:

I spent the whole year 1928, except the summer, in London. From there, Luigi Villari, taking advantage of his father's name ... flooded England with books, conferences, letters to newspapers, in which he told all the tall tales that came into his head about the shame of pre-Fascist Italy and the Mussolini miracles that had made that filth a masterpiece of order, decency, universal happiness, a country of Samurai. To his book *The Awakening of Italy*, I opposed my *Fascist Dictatorship in Italy*, published in the United States in the spring of 1927. But I was not satisfied: during 1928 I redid it from cover to cover, and published it in London. Of this volume I had some copies made with obscene book covers, and sent them to Italy. Being obscene books, I was sure the Fascist censors would let them pass. I sent a copy to Benedetto Croce and it arrived. (Salvemini 2002, 86)

In August of the same year, *Mussolini Diplomate* was published in a slightly modified edition by the Italian Editions Contemporaines in Paris, founded by Ettore Carozzo, an engineer from Livorno, who had already published important works by antifascists in exile: Sforza's volume *I costruttori dell'Europa moderna*, Luigi Sturzo's *Tetralogia del cristianesimo*, and the two volumes of Francesco Saverio Nitti's writings on democracy. In Paris, Carozzo printed serial novels, was the owner of a popular bookshop (the Librairie Moderne with branches in Brussels and Bordeaux) and of an active printing house. Influenced by the suggestions and editorial advice of Sturzo, who was of a Popular Party political orientation, Salvemini enlisted the participation of a number of leading academics known to him and belonging to both Catholic and liberal antifascist movements, including Giuseppe Donati, Francesco Luigi Ferrari, Fausto Nitti (who also ran the Bordeaux bookstore warehouse), Alberto Cianca and Andrea Caffi, although many spies also succeeded in infiltrating his organisation (Salvemini 2017, xv–xx).

The two versions of *Mussolini Diplomate* published in 1932 differ only in a few parts: one chapter from the Italian edition does not appear in the French one (VII), the order of chapters XVIII to XXI differs and the arrangement of contents in the last chapter (XXVIII) changes. Salvemini's papers contain no trace of the manuscript for the 1932 book: Salvemini gave the Italian version to Grasset who translated it into French. It is likely that the Italian version used by Editions Contemporaines was destroyed at the behest of Fascist spies, who also persuaded Carozzo to change his editorial stance (Salvemini 2017, xv–xxv). Salvemini's letter to La Piana of 4 December 1931 reads: 'I wonder, indeed, whether it would not be a good idea to also publish the book in English I

have found the publisher here for the French edition, and as the chapters are ready, I will send a copy to you and one to the French translator'. A month later he added: 'By arranging the French text, I have suppressed some unnecessary parts, given a better order to some others, etc.' (Salvemini 2015, 62).

The sudden disappearance of the Italian volume also explains why the reviews refer to the book in French (Tarchiani 1932, 61; Ferrari 1932, 408; Nenni 1932; Nenni 1987, p. 115). *Mussolini Diplomate* circulated in France, England and the USA in an interesting triangle between the author, Carlo Rosselli and Sturzo who, once he received it in London and appreciated its content and style, unsuccessfully attempted to bring out a German edition through Berta Pritchard, a refined polyglot, translator and Sturzo's secretary in England (Grasso 2009, 20). Salvemini wished to publish his book with the Freiburg publishing house Herdersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, but the German route was so arduous that, as he wrote to Carlo Rosselli: 'until I find a publisher, I will not spend three months of my life adding the history of the last three years to the book' (Signori 2009, 220). In the spring of 1933, Rosselli followed Salvemini's footsteps by promoting the book, then holding a conference in London on Fascist foreign policy. Finally, in 1934, Sturzo helped Salvemini to collect the royalties from the book published by Grasset (Grasso 2004).

A new edition of *Mussolini Diplomate* appeared in 1937, when the Swiss Nuove Edizioni di Capolago, run since 1936 by Ignazio Silone and Egidio Reale, reprinted the text of the Italian version, but with slight modifications. The book fitted in well with the publisher's collection, which aimed to achieve an understanding of the contemporary European situation. The following year, on another trip, Salvemini travelled between England, France and Switzerland, and resumed his research into Italian foreign policy. While passing through Switzerland, he met Carlo Emanuele aPrato (Salvemini 2015, 151), who had in his possession some diplomatic documents on the Libyan War and Italy's entry into the First World War (Salvemini 2017, xxiv).

The precipitous turn of events in Europe prompted Salvemini to resume his analysis of Fascist diplomacy and therefore broaden the investigation up to the downfall of Spain (Signori 1996, 141). The first expanded edition of *Mussolini Diplomate* was published in Argentina in 1943 under the title *La derrota de Maquiavelo*. The book covers the period up to the outbreak of the Second World War and is divided into 15 chapters: the first seven are a summary of *Mussolini Diplomate*, while the others chronicle Italy's aggression against Ethiopia, its role in the Spanish Civil War, relations between Italy and Germany, and Italy's position in the world war (Salvemini 1943). The socialist exile Giuseppe Parnagnoli, whom Salvemini had known since the beginning of the century, played a leading role in the publication of *La derrota* (Salvemini 2003, 160). After moving to Buenos Aires, Parnagnoli became a leading exponent of the antifascist movement: he founded the Circolo Matteotti and ran publishing businesses, aiming to foster close ties with the remaining socialists in Europe. In 1925, Parnagnoli was mentioned as a 'subversive element' in Cesare Rossi's *Memoriale*. Rossi, who had served as the head of Mussolini's press office, provided Salvemini with some important revelations during their time in Paris in 1927, which Salvemini subsequently added to the latest edition of *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* (Salvemini 2002, 75). Salvemini eventually returned to studying the origins of Fascism, a topic that would later become his Harvard Lectures (Salvemini 1961), revisiting crucial events such as the Matteotti murder.

In December 1945, the study on foreign policy was finally published in Italy as well: a rushed edition, which however marked a significant step towards the final version (1952a). In 1945, the Roman publisher De Luigi had already published the second edition of one of Sforza's books (*Costruttori e distruttori*) and at the same time announced Salvemini's volume, which analysed the regime's entire foreign policy, from 1922 to 1943. Indeed, the final version was not dissimilar from the previous one: it is a slight

stylistic reworking of the 1932 Italian edition, limited to the first ten years of Fascist dictatorship, although Salvemini aimed to expand the analysis in a second volume. The volume was divided into 21 chapters and the sixteenth discusses the Lateran Treaties.

Disappointed by the quality of the edition, Salvemini decided to make this work part of a wider study (Salvemini 2015, 522; Rossi and Salvemini 2004, 520). After the end of the war, new editions of *Mussolini Diplomate* appeared: a Laterza edition in 1952 (similar to the 1932 Italian edition) and as *Prelude to World War II*, published in the United Kingdom in 1953 and in the United States in 1954. It expanded on *La derrota* and was intended for an English and US audience, going as far as the taking of Ethiopia and the alliance between Mussolini and Hitler.

When Salvemini visited Italy in 1947, the journalist Gaetano Baldacci revealed to him that 'Mussolini read and annotated many books' (Salvemini 1952a, 497; Salvemini 1968, 100), among them the first edition of *Mussolini Diplomate*, as mentioned. Mussolini's notes (seven in total) concerned dates or translation issues with the text. In the 1952 edition, Salvemini added the appendix *Mussolini storico di sé stesso*, aiming to counter Mussolini's criticism. He also analysed the lynching of Anteo Zamboni (marked by the dictator in the text with a conspicuous question mark) referring to newly available sources (Salvemini 1952b, 497). In 1951, Salvemini assigned his volume to Laterza, which republished *La rivoluzione francese* and also showed considerable interest in *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* (Salvemini 2017, xxxi). In June of that year, he was still convinced that he would be able to finish the first of the planned volumes (dedicated to the years 1922–34) by the summer and complete the rest of the study (covering the years 1935–6) by the end of the year. The work was originally to be entitled *Preludio alla seconda guerra mondiale (Prelude to the Second World War)*, but in October 1951 Salvemini decided to conclude the book with an analysis of the years 1922–32 and announced the imminent publication of the volume on the conquest of Ethiopia; in December he eventually returned to the title *Mussolini diplomatico (1922–1932)* (Salvemini 2017, xxxii).

Even in the latest version of the book, Salvemini confirmed his initial thesis, discussed in 28 chapters derived from the 1932 *Mussolini* and from part of the 1945 edition. While revising the drafts, he realised that he could not complete the other volumes, so he inserted some reflections, long notes, appendices and bibliographical references that allowed him to assess Mussolini's entire foreign policy: useful materials, which however give a sense of incompleteness to a text that remains firmly focused on the first decade of the Fascist dictatorship, as Salvemini himself confessed when presenting his latest work:

The book *Mussolini diplomatico (1922–1932)* can be considered as the fourth edition, redone from cover to cover, of a book, which was first published in French in 1932, then in Italian in the same year, and then again in Italian in 1945. The first two editions remained unknown, or almost unknown, in Italy, given the bad conditions of the time; of the third, published in the confusion of 1945, I fear news has escaped many. This new edition, updated with the help of sources published in recent years – mainly English and American documents – will, I believe, remain the last. Not because I consider it the *non plus ultra* of what can be said, but because I cannot believe that I will still have the time that would eventually be needed to redo it. Another volume will follow: *The Conquest of Ethiopia: 1933–36*. As far as I know, this will be the first in which the subject has been methodically treated. I would have liked to follow it up with a third volume on *The Spanish War, 1936–39*, for which I had collected a lot of material. But with 79 years on my shoulders, I see that I cannot do it. I hope others will undertake the work I must give up. '*Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda*' ('From a tiny spark may burst a mighty flame'). (Salvemini 1952b, 16)

The '*gran fiamma seconda*' is in a letter from Salvemini to Angelo Tasca dated 22 December 1952: Salvemini wanted to give Tasca some research materials to study the Spanish war, while he wanted to give documents on domestic politics to Nicola Chiaromonte (who had already helped him find materials for *Mussolini Diplomate*). Salvemini wrote to Tasca on 11 April 1952:

Four trunks, or rather two crates and two trunks, should have been sent from Cambridge (Mass.). The two trunks are for you, and contain materials for the history of Italian foreign policy from the spring of 1936 to the summer of 1939. And the two trunks are for Chiaromonte: they contain materials for the history of domestic politics, from 1922 to 1926, to follow up your book. (Signori 1996, 220)

Salvemini, who was particularly concerned about the fate of his papers, which he would also follow closely the subsequent year, returned to mentioning Chiaromonte at the end of 1952, giving us further details:

There should be other two sheet metal trunks, closed with padlocks. They were destined for Chiaromonte, who left for America when the two trunks arrived in France. The world is made of stairs, those who go down them and those who go up them. This is precious material for the history of the Fascist dictatorship: books, pamphlets, newspaper cuttings, manuscripts of mine and others, documents of all kinds. Chiaromonte (or others if Chiaromonte does not want to deal with them) will be able, if they wish, to break the locks, without bothering to look for the keys, which who knows where they have ended up in my wanderings as a sick man! It is enough for me to know that those two boxes are with you. And it is enough for you to know what they contain, and that you must keep them at the disposal of Chiaromonte, or others who are capable of using them in his absence. In the meantime, it would please me to inform Chiaromonte in America that that material, intended for him, is with you. (Signori 1996, 221)

Tasca would inform him the following year that 'Chiaromonte ... has definitively renounced' the continuation of the research path suggested by Salvemini (Signori 1996, 283). In 1954, Salvemini finally abandoned the idea of composing further volumes on foreign policy.

The case of *Under the Axe of Fascism*

Salvemini began to approach the analysis of Fascist economy at the end of 1927: he was in exile in London. Shortly afterwards, he would publish *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy*, in which he dedicated a few pages to economic issues. The topic had attracted the attention of antifascist intellectuals as early as the beginning of the dictatorship: Giacomo Matteotti had dismantled falsehoods spread by the regime, including the myth of the balanced budget, by comparing Italy's economic performance, its budget and wages with that of other countries. Matteotti's analysis was particularly incisive, as he was able to identify twists and turns in Mussolini's economic and fiscal policy which were to the detriment of the working classes (Matteotti 2020).

Salvemini studied Matteotti's works thoroughly, appreciating his analytical method based on the study of documents and sharing his conclusions (Salvemini 2001; 253, 358). Parallel to the infamous polemic with George Bernard Shaw in 1927, in which he had also touched on some of the economic aspects of Fascist policy, he began to dismantle

another myth disseminated by Fascist propaganda abroad: that Mussolini's rise to power improved Italy's economic conditions.

At the beginning of 1927 in New York, he participated in the well-known debate with Bruno Roselli. On that occasion, Salvemini analysed some aspects of the Italian economy and in particular the Labour Charter, holding a lively debate with Thaon di Revel and providing readers with data and figures on the budget, its deficit, and the weakness of the economic system (Salvemini 2002, 148). The following year in London he returned to the issue. In the newspaper *The Observer* and the periodical *Time and Tide*, publications in which Salvemini frequently debated with the Fascist propagandist Luigi Villari (Gussoni 2020, 78), he began discussing the topic that he would study in his volume. In two interventions of March 1928 published in *The Observer*, entitled *Fascism and Labour*, Salvemini confronted Villari on the *magistratura del lavoro* and the disputes between ship-owners and seafarers (Salvemini 1966, 356). In *Time and Tide*, he reviewed Croce's *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915*, describing it as 'a precise and well-structured volume, full of practical sense' (Salvemini 1966, 358), dwelling in particular on the economic advancements of the liberal governments, deliberately omitted by Fascist propaganda. Salvemini was the first Italian historian to use, with particular expertise and narrative effectiveness, the index numbers for the calculation of the cost of living elaborated by the Statistical Union of Italian Cities (established in 1907), which had outlined the evolution of the economic situation of individual cities for about 20 years (Gaspari 2022, 107).

Salvemini's article *The Corporative State in Fascist Italy* appeared after he gave a lecture in London on 31 March at the National Liberal Club Political and Economic Circle (Cantarella 1984, 171). In the text, Salvemini expanded the main points he had tackled in previous articles. He highlighted the features of Fascist corporativism by introducing the idea that it was a result of Mussolini's dictatorial leadership and power, a topic that he would then explore in the book:

Mussolini himself wields the sceptre of command always ready to intervene in leadership activity as *duce* of the Fascist party, as minister of the interior, as minister of labour, and as head of government. As *duce* of the Fascist party, he can prevent anyone who does not possess a sufficient dose of 'undoubted national loyalty' from becoming a member or leader of employers' and workers' organisations. As minister of the interior, he can annul all appointments and exclude all solutions made by the leaders of all organisations. As minister of labour, he is the head of the corporations and can do whatever he likes. (Salvemini 1966, 372)

In November of the same year, he spoke at Birmingham Commercial College (Cantarella 1984, 173), then deposited the material on the Matteotti murder – that he had used for *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* – in the London School of Economics Library (Salvemini 2002, 22). However, he returned to explore the Fascist economy for *Mussolini's Italy*. On 15 February 1932, he wrote to La Piana: 'And in the meantime I am going ahead pulling the cartwheel of the economic chapter, which is of an appalling difficulty' (Salvemini 2015, 69). The failure of the project led him to reuse the work for three long articles that appeared in *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, which would then be reused to prepare *Under the Axe of Fascism: Capital and Work in Fascist Italy. I. The legally recognised organisations. II. La collaborazione di classe* (8 August 1933); *III. Dal sindacalismo allo 'Stato corporativo'* (9 November 1933); *La realtà dello Stato corporativo* (10 February 1934).

The publication of these essays (Cantarella 1984, 183) took place during a very significant phase of the author's life. In 1933, he contacted the American economist Alvin Saunders Johnson, who had helped many European antifascist intellectuals by founding the New School for Social Research in New York, which he had been directing since

1919. Salvemini was awarded a visiting professorship (Salvemini 2015, xlviii) and, while there, he devoted himself to the study of economic issues. He fitted well into this progressive environment: at the end of 1933, he published a brief profile of Mazzini in the Italian history section (edited by Giulio Einaudi and the economist Augusto Graziani) of the *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences* (Cantarella 1984, 181), a work that was very much influenced by the birth of the New Deal (Lentini 2003). The *Encyclopaedia* was edited by Johnson himself and Edwin Robert Anderson Seligman, two intellectuals who made efforts to facilitate Salvemini's exile in the USA (Signori 2009, 176).

Assisted in his research by David Fellman, Max Ascoli and Giorgio La Piana (Salvemini 2015, 35), Salvemini prepared the draft of *Under the Axe of Fascism* in 1934-5. Intended for an English and US readership, it was published in 1936 in London by Gollancz (who would publish *Prelude* in 1953) and in New York by Viking Press, where Johnson had considerable influence: his autobiography would appear there in the 1950s (Johnson 1952). In 1937, Viking also published Borgese's *Goliath: the March of Fascism*, which Salvemini would later ask Thomas Mann to promote (Salvemini 2015, 145).

Drafts were sent to Walter Lippmann, Guido Ferrando, and the novelist Harry Sinclair Lewis (Nobel Prize for Literature in 1930), asking them for their opinions on the work and hoping for a review. He confessed to Lewis that the study had 'occupied three years of my life. But I know of no other way to fight on behalf of my faith than by making known the truth about Italy' (Salvemini 2015, 124). The volume received several reviews, especially in the United States (notably those by Florinsky, Livingston, Jaszi, Jewett, Stewart, Barnes, and Cantarella and Borgese themselves) and in European antifascist circles it was to become widely known thanks to Carlo Rosselli's recommendation that this book was the 'purest Salvemini' (Cantarella 1984, 325).

The US edition of the book was dedicated to Johnson, using a quote from Tacitus' *Agricola* in Latin, which reads 'not out of partisan spirit or ambition, but only out of duty of conscience' (in the London edition this quotation does not appear). The relationship between Salvemini and Johnson was indeed significant. In an unpublished letter to Salvemini dated 29 January 1937, Johnson wrote:

I thank you with all my heart for your fine and generous letter. It has been a great honour to us to have you associated with us in the last two years. I wish with all my heart that the association could continue indefinitely, but on terms less onerous to a great scholar, who should be exempt from all other duties in order that he might put into imperishable forms the acquisitions of a lifetime of study and thought. I hope that such an opportunity will be formed for you. I wish it might be in New York so that from time to time, I might see you and take courage from the gallant spirit that always animates you.¹

Further details emerge from their correspondence. In 1941, Salvemini approached Johnson, trying to get Julien Luçhaire (former husband of Fernande Dauriac, Salvemini's wife since 1916) and his wife Antonina Vallentin (who, being Jewish, was forced to hide in France from the Nazis) into the New York school. Luçhaire had been professor of Italian language and literature at the University of Grenoble and founder in 1908 of the Italian-French Institute in Florence. Vallentin, who was also known as Antonina Silberste (after her first husband's surname), came from a Polish Jewish family in Lviv. A painter, translator, writer and art critic, and a journalist in Berlin, she was close to prominent intellectuals such as Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, and Lion Feuchtwanger. In 1940, she published a volume on German atrocities in Poland (*Les atrocités allemandes en Pologne*). Salvemini asked Johnson for accommodation at the Rockefeller Foundation for them, but without success due, to the enormous bureaucratic complications caused

by the wartime context, but also because Luchaire's profile as a scholar did not meet the demands of the US school. The historian wrote to his US colleague on 3 June 1941:

They are living in unoccupied France under a cloud of hostility because they do not approve of Pétain's policies. Would it be possible to give Monsieur Luchaire an appointment with the help of the Rockefeller Fund which has been entrusted to you? It seems to me that no people are more worthy of being saved.²

It must also be remembered that it was at this time in France that Jean Luchaire, Julien's son, had begun the collaborationist activity for which he would be executed in Paris in 1945 as a traitor to his country (Fantarella 2018).

Another interesting aspect relates to the genesis of the volume. Salvemini, again in 1941, asked Johnson to facilitate the entry into New York of Louis Franck (or Rosenstock Franck), an antifascist Alsatian engineer who had combined public service with economic and social studies. Franck's first work on Italian corporatism, published in the 1930s (Rosenstock Franck 1934) had a great impact in French antifascist circles. Salvemini had been in contact with him since 1932 through the French economist Bernard Lavergne: he sent him several pamphlets on Italian economic policy (Franck 1990, 8–9), then through Carlo Rosselli he delivered him some notebooks by *Giustizia e Libertà*. In his *Under the Axe of Fascism*, Salvemini described Rosenstock Franck's first book as 'the best study so far on the relations between capital and labour under the Fascist dictatorship' (Salvemini 1974, 14) and quoted it extensively. This is how Salvemini portrayed him in a letter to Rosselli on 23 January 1933:

Rosenstock. He is a serious man, not brilliant, but well prepared. I hope he does very serious work on the corporate state. I will give him all the help I can. A volume done by a French technician will have more effect than a book signed by us. You too help him as much as you can (Signori 2009, 150).

The portrait of Salvemini that Rosenstock himself wrote in 1979, thinking back to the very moments when his work on the regime was born and the moments afterwards, is equally interesting:

How can one resist the warmth of his gaze, the ardour and malice of his speech, the liveliness of his jokes, the clarity of his analyses and, above all, his evident intellectual honesty? ... I saw Salvemini quite often, both in 1933 during a meeting in Pontigny, and at home during the Ethiopian war, and finally in the United States during the war years, when he was a professor at Harvard: brilliant as ever, he exuded a special charm. I owe to him my meeting, at Harvard in 1935, with Judge Felix Frankfurter who was then one of President Roosevelt's advisers and the idol of American progressives (Franck 1990, 9–10).

Johnson wrote to Salvemini about Rosenstock Franck on 17 September 1941:

I would gladly help Mr. Louis Rosenstock Franck to obtain his immigration visa. My office asked the Foundation who took care of all the necessary steps for Franck's invitation and application for a visa. We were told that they will again look into the case and as soon as there is anything I can do, they will let me know.³

After the Second World War, Salvemini aimed to publish *Under the Axe of Fascism* in Italy. The opportunity came in 1947 thanks to Franco Antonicelli and Alessandro Schiavi. The

latter was preparing the edition of Turati's letters and other documents on Italian socialism, and asked Salvemini for advice. In February 1947, he presented him with the plan to publish Turati's correspondence, then asked his opinion regarding a possible publication of the letters in the USA. Salvemini replied on 16 March, supporting the idea of publishing Turati's letters, but at the same time warning Schiavi that the book would not attract the attention of the US public:

Unfortunately, I cannot send you any consoling news about the possibility of publishing the correspondence here. First of all, a work in Italian would find no English publisher here because the Italian language outside Italy is a Polynesian dialect unknown to the vast majority of humanity. As for an Italian publisher, if the book were a book of novenas, or a novel by Mastriani, or a novel by Carolina Invernizio, a publisher I think would be easy to find. But for Turati's correspondence there is no hope for an Italian publication, nor would there be any hope for an English translation. The indifference to things Italian is unwavering in this country. Everything they tell you about the interest of the United States in Italian affairs is mystification of the worst kind. A certain number of capitalists are interested in things Italian because they hope to make money from it, but the average public is busy with other things. The population of Italian origin comes from southern Italy and comes from the most uncultured, most unfortunate classes in southern Italy. What would they understand in the correspondence between Turati and Kulichoff? ⁴

In a letter of 3 February 1948, Schiavi mentioned that the Italian translation of *Under the Axe of Fascism*, which he was ready to prepare, could be sent to De Silva, the publishing house directed by Franco Antonicelli, who was close to Salvemini, and who the following year was to publish *L'età giolittiana* by William Salomone, introduced by Salvemini. The Italian version was shorter, and some chapters were omitted, or summarised within other chapters. Its conclusion is dated 23 January 1947; the book, however, was to be published in July 1948. Salvemini essentially adapted the final three chapters of the original edition ('Sorel and Mussolini', 'The End of Laissez-Faire', and 'Fascism, Capitalism, Bureaucracy'). Salvemini met Antonicelli in Turin in the summer of 1947 and it is reasonable to assume that they discussed the project together (Salvemini 1968). Schiavi wrote to Salvemini:

Dear Salvemini,
I sent the translation of your volume to De Silva, having studied, as well as to understand, how to render the Italian form in such a way that one does not notice that it is from another language I thought I should preface the Italian edition with a 'Translator's Foreword' that would clarify a historically misunderstood point, provide some unpublished documents on public opinion during Fascism, and interpret the impression of the post-Fascist reader in the light of today's events. Although I sent it to the publisher, I warned that no composition should be done before your judgement, which must be expressed without regard to me, whether you edit, remove or reject the manuscript. ⁵

Schiavi, speaking of a 'Translator's Foreword', refers to a long text of about 30 pages, eventually cut from the printed edition: a reference to it remained in the text by mistake (Salvemini 1948, 185). In this text, Salvemini extensively analysed the affair of Emilio Caldara, the first socialist mayor of Milan and later an Aventinian deputy, who discussed with Mussolini the project for a review of labour issues in 1934: this stirred much debate among antifascists and Salvemini had also mentioned it in the first edition of the book

(Cartiglia 1973). The incipit of the extensive document written by Schiavi, still unpublished, presented the volume with these words:

Why publish, translated from English into Italian, this book by Gaetano Salvemini that came out in the USA more than a decade ago? Are not corporations now outdated, judged, forgotten in Italy and beyond? It is never useless, on the basis of the facts diligently collected, stripped down, and exposed by the historical acumen that is the author's special gift, sufficiently detached by his distance from the scene so as to judge them from the other side, while keeping alive in his heart the heartfelt passion for the sad events of his land, it is never useless, we said, to represent to the new generation an event that seemed to set a milestone in the history of Italy and the world, and which was reduced to a miserable *flatus voci* that came out of the puffed-up cheeks of a papier-mâché director of operations, bolstered by the regime's procurers and profiteers and also by not a few naive people from beyond the Alps attracted and deluded by the Roman 'gibigiana'.⁶

Further elements can be gathered from a letter sent by Antonicelli to Salvemini on 6 July 1948, shortly before the text was published:

I now reply to you about your book, which I publish. No one told me that you repudiated the title *Sotto la scure del Fascismo* (*Under the Axe of Fascism*) and as such I have already announced it with the subtitle '*Che cosa fu lo Stato corporativo*' ('What was the corporate state?'). I told you that the first title is vulgar: more than vulgar it is generic. But the fact remains that the title has enticed, judging by some requests, and that the other title would leave the public indifferent. Serious books do not sell at all: selling a thousand copies is a gamble. Stimulating the public – I did not do it on purpose – is a necessity. Despite your good reasons, I would advise you to accept the vulgar title, shrug your shoulders. The important thing is to get people to read it. I naturally defer to your will: just know that the publisher – through no fault of his own – has already announced that title. The translation is decent. It was difficult – and not really useful – to receive the original texts for quotations. But this is newspaper prose and the textuality has no documentary value.⁷

The short text that Antonicelli put as a preface to the edition that was eventually published appears more convincing, because it presented the innovative traits of Salvemini's investigation, while considering Salvemini as a moral model:

The absolutely and, one would like to say, fatally demagogic nature of Mussolini's maximalism, through the Duce's own statements, his work in the government and in the public arena, finds in these pages the most real portrait that a writer has left us so far. To paint it, no one could be better suited than Gaetano Salvemini, who represents in politics, as in his studies, as in his moral life, the last great teacher and educator that Italy had, the human type most constitutionally opposed to Mussolini, the most anti-demagogical and anti-rhetorical: all things and concreteness (Salvemini 1948, x).

Conclusion

The events discussed in this essay reveal the importance of studying the contexts in which Salvemini's books were written and published: they allow a better understanding of his

historiographical methods and of the significant relationships he established as an influential antifascist in exile. During the American years, Salvemini became an international scholar, well-integrated in academic and cultural milieux, while keeping close connections with Europe and Italy. Salvemini's experience in these years is representative of that complex phase in which the flight of thousands of intellectuals radically changed the cultural geography of the West (Hughes 1975; Hughes and Timm 2003). His interest in bringing these works on Fascism back to Italy after the end of the Second World War was a moment of reconciliation following his complex estrangement from his homeland (Camurri 2009; Said 2000).

In the light of the new historiographical acquisitions, and with reference to Salvemini's main works on Fascism, a broader systematic and organic collection of his work is therefore necessary. Most of Salvemini's writings on Fascism – except for *Mussolini diplomatico*, which was reissued in 2017 – are only available in the three volumes of the Feltrinelli edition, released from 1961 to 1978 (Bucchi 2009). *Mussolini diplomatico* is not even presented with its own title in the Feltrinelli edition of Salvemini's works; indeed, there is no mention whatsoever of its history – *Preludio alla seconda guerra mondiale* was preferred as the title (Salvemini 2017). With regard to this collection, still an important reference source, it is important to mention Vivarelli's opinion: almost all the individual texts in the series are arranged according to their content. This has often prevented us from finding elements of continuity or evolution in the unfolding of the historian's thought, obscuring the circumstances that led to the genesis of certain works, and which it would in fact be useful to explore.

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Notes

1. The unpublished letters quoted in this article are held in the Gaetano Salvemini Archive (henceforth referred to as AGS) held at the Istituto Storico Toscano della Resistenza e dell'Età contemporanea in Florence. Box 101, letter from Johnson to Salvemini, New York, 29 January 1937.
2. AGS, Box 120, letter from Salvemini to Johnson, Cambridge, MA, 3 June 1941.
3. AGS, Box 120, letter from Johnson to Salvemini, New York, 17 September 1941.
4. AGS, Box 120, letter from Salvemini to Schiavi, Cambridge, MA, 16 March 1947.
5. AGS, Box 120, letter from Schiavi to Salvemini, Forlì, 1 April 1948.
6. The document from which the quotation is taken can be found in the correspondence with Schiavi.
7. AGS, Box 113, letter from Antonicelli to Salvemini, Turin, 6 July 1948.

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Italian summary

Il saggio analizza il metodo di lavoro e le vicende editoriali delle più organiche opere di Salvemini sul fascismo: *The Fascist dictatorship in Italy* (1927), *Mussolini Diplomate* (1932) e *Under the Axe of Fascism* (1936). Nella prima lo storico si sofferma sulle origini e l'affermazione del movimento mussoliniano, mettendo in evidenza le complicità che Mussolini aveva trovato nella monarchia, nell'esercito e nella grande industria. Nella seconda, Salvemini analizza la politica estera fascista del decennio 1922–32, sottolineando la mancanza di un preciso piano di politica estera del regime, ma solo modalità di approccio propagandistiche e strumentali nelle relazioni diplomatiche. Nella terza, lo storico si concentra sull'economia fascista, demolendo lo stato corporativo spacciato all'estero come una originale ed equa composizione del conflitto tra capitale e lavoro. L'indagine su questi tre volumi permette di mettere a fuoco sia alcuni tratti propri del cantiere storiografico di Salvemini non pienamente indagati (sull'uso delle fonti e in riferimento al suo approccio alle scienze sociologiche ed economiche), così come la capacità di calarsi in particolari reti culturali e intellettuali che sono per lui di fondamentale importanza per il suo lavoro.