

THE ROLE OF MILITARY HISTORY IN THE ITALIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

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degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Military History

by

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF MILITARY HISTORY IN ITALIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, by
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This thesis aims to explain the reason and the historical framework that led to the diminishment of the importance of the military history in the Italian military intelligence. Although the entire military community agrees that military history is a fundamental component for analyzing the environment and better addressing future challenges, too often in Western military organizations this hardly finds a place in military intelligence. In particular, in Italy, the study of war events starting from 1925 (the date of establishment of Joint Italian military intelligence) has seen less and less space until it became marginal. To understand the reason for this decline, it is necessary to analyze the historical, political, and cultural roots of this choice made by the ruling class between 1925 and today. The thesis will demonstrate that studying history and contextualizing past events in the present is essential to face future challenges better. Therefore, to fully understand the operating environment, it would be appropriate to restore the importance of military history within the intelligence branch and in all military contexts at all levels. It would be appropriate to give more space in the training program of the intelligence operators, importance during the planning process, and relevance during the intelligence cycle.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although the entire military community agrees that military history is a fundamental component for analyzing the environment and better addressing future challenges, this infrequently finds its proper place in Western military intelligence organizations. In particular in Italy, the study of war events starting from 1925 (the date Joint Italian military intelligence was established for the first time in the Italian Kingdom) has seen less and less space until it occupies a marginal position in the military intelligence. It is important to understand the reason of this diminishment to give again the right importance to the study of history, and it is necessary to analyze the historical, political, and cultural roots of this choice made by the ruling class.

The history of Italian military intelligence follows three fundamental stages. The first was during the Fascist era from 1925, when the joint intelligence branch was established in the Italian Kingdom armed forces for the first time, to 1945. The second is the First Republic from 1946 to 1994; within this phase were three sub-phases linked to three crucial reforms in 1949, 1967, and 1977. Finally, the third phase is the Second Republic from 1994 to today which touches on the most complex reform of the Italian intelligence system, which took place in 2007.

In particular, the first chapter will analyze the role of military history between 1925 and 1945. The first chapter starts on 15 October 1925, when the *Servizio Informazioni Militare* [Military Intelligence Service] (SIM) was born. For the first time since the unification of Italy, military intelligence was placed directly under the Chief of the General Staff, and all the intelligence services of the Royal Italian Army, the Navy,

and the Royal Air Force were brought together. The organization was headed by Colonel Attilio Vigeveno, an officer of the Mountain Troops Corps and a great expert of military history. Colonel Vigeveno is considered the father of the SIM organizational structure, an important starting point for understanding how essential military history was for the military intelligence of that period. Indeed, Colonel Vigeveno, in addition to being a prolific author of military history, also taught this subject at the Italian Military Academy of Modena and was well aware of how fundamental history was to understand the events of the past, comprehend the present, and facilitate future choices. Thus, he decided to structure the SIM in 5 sections, the first, named “Situation,” with mostly offensive assignments and dedicated to the analysis of information collected; the second office was for collection; the third with counterintelligence functions on the national territory; the fourth dedicated to personnel; and the fifth to decoding, photographic (what we now call Imaginary Intelligence/IMINT).¹ It is precisely in the first section that officers with a military history background were placed.²

The second part of the first chapter explores the period before Second World War and, in particular, the Italian colonial campaigns. It will analyze how the history discipline influenced intelligence in Spain and in the Italian Colonies.³ More precisely,

¹ Maria Gabriella Pasqualini, *Carte Segrete dell'Intelligence Italiana. Il S.I.M. in archivi stranieri* [Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence: The S.I.M. in Foreign Archives] (Rome: Ufficio Storico Stato Maggiore della Difesa, 2014), 38.

² Ibid., 38.

³ Italian colonialism began in the late 19th century with the peaceful takeover of the African ports of Assab and Massawa on the Red Sea. Following the partition of Africa by the European powers (1881-1914), the Kingdom of Italy held control of Eritrea and Somalia, as well as of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and the Aegean Islands, subtracted from the Ottoman Empire in the course of the Italo-Turkish war (1911-1912). There was

this period is called “the Roatta era” as from 1934 to 1939, the director of military intelligence was Colonel Mario Roatta.⁴

General Roatta had long experience in intelligence, especially in the “situation” section, and with the support of Benito Mussolini, he brought about reform and strengthened the organization. He obtained double the budget compared to the previous years and increased the number of sections from 5 to 7 by inserting the “withdrawal” section (which specialized in stealing documents from foreign diplomatic offices) and the “connection with military attachés” section. These changes were dictated by the

also an Italian concession in Tientsin, China, since 1901. During the First World War, an Italian expeditionary force previously occupied southern Albania to prevent its conquest by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, establishing a protectorate there (1917-1920). During the fascist regime, the Kingdom of Italy expanded its possessions. In 1934 Cyrenaica and Tripolitania were united in Italian Libya. With the 1935-36 war in Africa, Italy conquered Ethiopia, which was united with Eritrea and Somalia to give life to Italian East Africa. On this occasion, Vittorio Emanuele III assumed the imperial title of Ethiopia, and the birth of the Italian Empire was officially proclaimed. In 1939 Albania was again invaded and annexed to the Italian Empire. After Italy entered World War II in 1940, the metropolitan territory of the kingdom, together with that of the colonies and military occupation zones, reached its maximum expansion. In addition to those mentioned so far, the Italian territories then extended from southern France to the protectorates and occupations in the Balkans (Slovenia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Montenegro, Greece) to British Somalia. However, the historical colonies and the more recent acquisitions were lost due to subsequent war events. Although after the fall of fascism (25 July 1943) Italy had sided with the Allies with the armistice of Cassibile (8 September 1943), the peace treaty of 1947 imposed the loss of all the colonies with the sole exception of Somalia, in 1950 assigned to the newborn Italian Republic under the form of a trustee of the United Nations. In 1960 the trusteeship ended and Somalia gained independence, thus marking the end of the Italian colonial eighty years.

⁴ Andrea Vento, *In Silenzio Gioite e Soffrite* [In Silence Rejoice and Suffer] (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2014), 179.

expansionist aims of the Kingdom of Italy and by the increasing foreign opposition to fascist foreign policy.⁵

Therefore, Roatta did not modify the peculiarities of the Situation section but enhanced its use, directing attention to the countries of the Horn of Africa and Albania to support the Italian imperialist effort. In Spain, it supported the revolution of General Francisco Franco in the Iberian Peninsula (in which Roatta personally participated as Commander of the Italian Voluntary Troops Corps (CTV) in the Spanish Civil War).⁶

The third part of the first chapter focuses on the role of military history in Second World War intelligence. In this period, the SIM was greatly strengthened and performed well during the conflict against the Allies but at the same time was able to serve with distinction during the war of liberation alongside the Allies after the armistice of September 8, 1943. General Cesare Amè, an officer with almost thirty years of experience in military intelligence services, was the organization's new head. General Amè grew professionally in the early years of the SIM under the protection of Col. Vigeveno, who became his mentor. His way of acting within the institution was inspired by this relationship between the two, but above all by the significant reform he carried out in 1940. Indeed, the SIM was completely renovated to better cope with the war requirements. Despite some change made by General Amè, the role of the military

⁵ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 76-81.

⁶ Ibid., 72.

history did not change, especially concerning the professional bond that General Amè had with Colonel Vigevano.⁷

In this chapter, a clear turning point is identified, which marks a first decrease in the role of history in Italian military intelligence. Indeed, due to the war requirements, the more experienced officers of the SIM were called to command the mobilized units, and the training of new personnel, for a matter of time, could not be complete from the historical point of view.⁸

The second chapter, which will include the period 1946-1994, the so-called First Republic, will address the three major military intelligence reforms that led to the creation of the *Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate* [Armed Forces Information Service] (SIFAR) in 1949, the *Servizio Informazioni Difesa* [Defense Information Service] (SID) in 1967, and the *Servizio per le Informazioni e Sicurezza Militari* [Military Information and Security Service] (SISMI) in 1977. This chapter will explore how two significant factors have negatively influenced the role of military history in Italian intelligence.⁹

The first is of a cultural nature and has the change in Italian culture as its cornerstone after World War II. With the creation of the Italian Republic as a democratic country aligned with the Western bloc, it was necessary to embrace Western culture and lifestyle fully. Thus, it was necessary to cancel or make ephemeral the monarchical and

⁷ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 117.

⁸ Ibid., 209.

⁹ *Stato Maggiore della Difesa* [Italian Joint Special Staff], *SIFAR, Il servizio informazioni militare italiano dalla sua costituzione alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale* [SIFAR: The Italian Military Intelligence Service from Its Establishment to the End of the Second World War], (Roma: Stato Maggiore della Difesa, 1957), 96.

fascist history that had characterized the previous years.¹⁰ Two elements played an essential role in this situation: the Marshall Plan and the so-called historiographical crisis.

The second is of a military nature and refers particularly to national security. Indeed, between 1949 and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, the Italian national security apparatus was centered on defending the national territory. This has led to focus attention on two elements. The first was the defense of territorial integrity against a probable invasion through the Iron Curtain. The second was the need to preserve free institutions undermined by internal threats.¹¹ Hence, by analyzing the methods of facing national security threats, it is noted that military history was not a tool used by Italian intelligence to defeat the enemies of that time.

The third chapter will cover the so-called Second Republic, from 1994 to the present. A critical factor in this period is the 2007 reform of national intelligence which has *de facto* demilitarized the national intelligence system by opting for the geographic division rather than sectoral division of intelligence. Thus, starting in 2007, two agencies have comprised national intelligence.¹²

¹⁰ Riccardo Fubini, *Dopoguerra e crisi della storiografia italiana* [Postwar Period and Crisis of Italian Historiography] (Florence: Casa Editrice Leo S., 2004), 744.

¹¹ Giuseppe De Lutiis, *I servizi segreti in Italia. Dal fascismo all'intelligence del XXI secolo* [The Secret Services in Italy: From Fascism to 21st Century Intelligence] (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 2010), 19.

¹² Alfonso Montagnese and Claudio Neri, “*L’evoluzione della sicurezza nazionale italiana*” [“The Evolution of Italian National Security”] (Information and Internal Security Agency, Rome, February 2016), 6, <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/evoluzione-sicurezza-nazionale-Montagnese-Neri.pdf>.

In particular, the first part of this chapter will analyze the void created by the end of the First Republic, both at a cultural and institutional level, which had a profound impact on the study of history in both civil and military environments. At first, it was thought that the end of the First Republic and the end of some political ideologies that arose after the war eliminated the ideological vision of history to embrace a more multidirectional approach to the study of history capable of reading historical events from multiple points of view. Instead, nomothetic approach to history was born with the Second Republic, which led to the crisis of the imperialism of history among human sciences. History was no longer considered the most important subject of the human sciences because Italian historians have gone from an idiographic approach to a nomothetic approach to history.¹³ Thus, in Italian schools of all types and levels, starting from the 90s, there has been a reduction in teaching hours dedicated to historical subjects. In addition to making history less important in Italian society, this also impacted the new civil and military management generations. Indeed, as noted by various civil and military professors, the background of historical knowledge with which the students arrived at the university level was considerably lower than in previous decades.¹⁴ Despite formal

¹³ The social sciences or human sciences are that set of disciplines that deal with studying the human being and society. The human sciences are a composite field, including many different disciplines that study man from different perspectives. In Italy, until the 1990s, history has always played the primary role among these sciences both in terms of hours dedicated to its teaching and as a hierarchy in educational institutions. The nomothetic approach aims to discover reality regulated as a whole by universal laws. Furthermore, Italian historians tried to grasp the elements of commonality to deduce those general rules that can explain the constants of repetitiveness and reproducibility, typical conditions, for example, the validity of the experimental method.

¹⁴ Giuseppe Galasso, *Storia della Storiografia Italiana* [History of Italian Historiography] (Bari: Laterza, 2017), 167.

efforts to restore importance to the study of past events to better understand the dynamics of the present and better face future challenges, the idea that the study of history is superfluous is still persistent today, as if it were a luxury bequeathed for few people. The example is how events such as historical staff rides are considered mere military tourism. Today, despite the indications of the army chief of staff, the efforts to revive the study of the military history in the training institutes of the Italian army seem not to be successful.¹⁵

The second part of the third chapter will analyze the recent milestone of recent national intelligence. *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)], commonly referred to as the Italian intelligence reform of 2007. This law has completely upset the structure and the *modus operandi* [operating mode] of Italy's intelligence apparatus. The law gave birth to the *Sistema di Informazioni per la Sicurezza della Repubblica* [Republic Security Information System] (SISR), which was placed directly under the Prime Minister, who has the task of appointing the directors and deputy directors of each agency. In addition, *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)] established the Department of Information for Security (DIS) as controller of the two new agencies: the

¹⁵ Captain Giovanni Cerino Badone, *Nota Dottrinale. La Storia Militare. Uso e Metodologia* [Doctrinal Note, *Military History: Use and Methodology*] (Rome: Command for the Training, Specialization, and Doctrine of the Italian Army, 2018), 2.

Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Esterna [External Information and Security Agency] (AISE), and the *Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Interna* [Internal Security and Information Sgency] (AISI), overcoming the traditional distinction of the competence of services between civil and military, adopting a regime of territorial responsibility.¹⁶

Military intelligence activity is instead carried out by the *II Reparto Informazioni e Sicurezza* [2nd Information and Security Department] (II RIS) as part of the Joint Special Staff, therefore not integrated into the SISR. Its function is limited exclusively to activities of a technical-military nature or military police, particularly in managing the collection of intelligence suitable for protecting the outposts and activities abroad of the armed forces in coordination with AISE. Thus, the II RIS are entrusted with intelligence and general security tasks in Italy and, in particular, any valuable information activity for protecting the garrisons and the activities of the armed forces abroad. This allows it to operate in war theaters or in crisis areas where Italian military personnel are employed. According to Article 8 of *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)], the RIS has the merely technical and functional task of addressing intelligence only at the strategic level. Two essential organs of the II RIS are the *Centro Intelligence Interforze* [Joint Intelligence Center] (CII) and the *Centro Interforze di Fromazione Intelligence e Guerra*

¹⁶ Montagnese and Neri, “The Evolution of Italian National Security,” 6.

Elettronica [Joint Force Center for Intelligence Training and Electronic Warfare] (CIFIGE).¹⁷

Within the CII, the territorial intelligence office is of particular importance for the treatment of this research. This office has the task of updating the Italian defense summit on the operational environment in which the Italian troops are deployed. Analyzing the work of this office, we note the prevalence of the conduct of current intelligence over basic intelligence. This leads to a vision of military intelligence more inclined to update daily events rather than a study of the root of the events. Hence, since the study of history focuses on analyzing the origins of certain phenomena, as a rule, military history does not find space in this new concept.¹⁸

Regarding the training of personnel operating in the Italian military intelligence, the CIFIGE has the task of training the personnel of all the armed forces who will have to operate in the defense intelligence assets. Even in training, the importance of military history is practically nil. Indeed, analyzing the training programs of this institute, it is noted that in all the intelligence training, from basic to advanced, there is no aspect concerning military history.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 9-35.

¹⁸ *Centro Interforze per la Formazione Intelligence e Guerra Elettronica* [Joint Intelligence and Electronic Warfare Training Center], *Three-Year Training Offer Plan 2020-2024* (Rome: Italian Joint Special Staff, II RIS, Centro CIFIGE, 2021), 2-10.

¹⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "Course Catalogs." NATO School Oberammergau, accessed 7 April 2022, <https://www.natoschool.nato.int/Academics/Resident-Courses/Course-Catalogue?department=INTEL#3aid-aid>.

A slight boost to the role of history in the Italian secret services comes from the desire to provide further transparency to national intelligence services. This denotes the most significant difference between the old Italian intelligence system and the one currently in force. Indeed, *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)] allows Italian intelligence to use institutional communication. Thus, it becomes essential for the Italian secret services to inform an audience made up of citizens, private companies, universities, and public opinion through multiple communication tools.²⁰ One of the most effective communication tools is the website of the SISR. The online publication of the journal GNOIS represents a fundamental element for this research. Indeed, in all the issues of this magazine, considerable historical insights suggest that there is an intention to increase the role of history in intelligence. Furthermore, the website contains numerous publications and books of a historical nature, which are identified as works of extreme value, fundamental for the success of the intelligence activity.²¹

A further element of openness to the outside world of Italian intelligence, which has contributed to a minimal increase in the role of history within intelligence, is the relationship that SISR has established with the major Italian universities. In particular, the

²⁰ Montagnese and Neri, “The Evolution of Italian National Security,” 6.

²¹ GNOIS is the magazine of the Information and Internal Security Agency, was born in 2004 as an evolution of “*Per aspera ad veritatem*” - established in 1995 by the then SISDE - to promote and disseminate the culture of intelligence. Information and Internal Security Agency, Italy, *Gnosis*, accessed 18 March 2022, <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/category/gnosis.html>.

program called Academic Outreach takes the form of diversified forms of collaboration with universities, think tanks, and research centers. These are used to carry out educational activities and research projects on issues related to national security. Thus, the history study falls within the broader concept of a multidisciplinary approach to intelligence.²²

Nevertheless, the role of military history does not find the proper importance in modern intelligence because nowadays, we are more inclined to give significance to current intelligence rather than basic intelligence. This leads to a superficial and not in-depth analysis of the events failing to understand the roots of the problem.

An example is a judicial case that occurred between 2018 and 2019, when Italian intelligence investigated some massacres in the 1970s perpetrated by far-right terrorist organizations. During the investigations, it was found that some army officers had collaborated with the criminals by providing information and coverage. Fortunately, the culprits were identified even though almost 50 years had passed. They were former officers who, on September 8, 1943, had decided to serve the RSI instead of the Kingdom of Italy. Following analysis, it was discovered that the delay in the investigation was also caused by an incomplete historical education of the staff following the case. Indeed, the intelligence operators were not aware of a rule that sanctioned those who had joined the RSI, despite having all the requirements to aspire to the rank of General, they could never go beyond the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, generating in them a high degree of

²² Information and Internal Security Agency, Italy, “Collaboration with Universities,” accessed 28 March 2022, <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/cultura-della-sicurezza/collaborazione-con-le-universita.html>.

frustration. This point contributed to bringing this personnel closer to the world of the Italian far-right. The fact that the intelligence operators were not aware of that rule is part of the concept of making the Italian fascist and monarchical history vague and it has led to a waste of time and resources which in the intelligence field can have serious consequences.²³

In conclusion, military history is essential to foster the development of a systemic vision of warfare, tactics, operational art, and, consequently, planning activities. The study of history helps train the military officers and professional soldiers, increasing their critical capacity, improving their learning, analysis, and the possibility of elaborating syntheses of complex events and situations. In short, the study of history compensates for the lack of experience of individual soldiers.

²³ A Major of the Italian Army who was part of the investigation staff was interviewed. For security reasons prefers to remain anonymous.

CHAPTER 2

THE FASCIST ERA (1925-1945)

Introduction

The role of military history in Italian military intelligence between 1925 and 1949 follows the evolution of the national intelligence structure. To understand the development mentioned above, it is necessary to start from the first post-war period in which various intelligence apparatuses were merged to constitute, in 1925, the first military intelligence instrument in Italian history. The *Servizio informazioni Militari* [Military Intelligence Service] (SIM), in the early years of its establishment, had given much importance to the role of military history. Indeed, the first director of this organization was Colonel Attilio Vigeveno, who had previously been a professor of military history at the Military Academy in Modena.²⁴ Furthermore, the training of Italian military intelligence personnel during the period before the Second World War was also focused on the historical knowledge of the countries in which they were going to operate.²⁵

During the phase of the world conflict, military history within intelligence slowly diminished due to the shortage of personnel and the limited time available for the training of new intelligence officers.²⁶ During the chaotic war of liberation and the first phase of the reconstitution of democratic institutions in Italy, the role of history in Italian military

²⁴ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 43.

²⁵ Ibid., 125.

²⁶ Ibid., 209.

intelligence almost vanished because the priorities were those of coping with a state of political, social, and economic emergency.²⁷

Servizio Informazioni Militari [Military Intelligence Service]
(SIM) Origin and Constitution

Before starting to analyze the first unified military intelligence service of the Kingdom of Italy, it is necessary to mention the previous situation of the Italian secret services from the pre-unification of Italy to 1925. Two aspects characterized the military secret services in this period. The first was the extreme fragmentation of the intelligence organs. The second was the lack of efficiency because these organs were still embryonic.

In the Kingdom of Sardinia, before the unification of Italy, there were several and sometimes overlapping secret services. At that time was present an intelligence body in the Ministry of the Interior (that was a military institution), of the Sardinian Army (which became the Information Office of the Royal Army and Royal Navy), the Royal Carabinieri Corps, and the Customs Guards Corps. In addition, the services relating to the Prime Ministry and the Foreign Ministry were added to these, and the King also had his intelligence service. All these bodies did not have a superior coordinating organization that could deconflict their actions and integrate the work done by each of them.²⁸

Furthermore, the primordial state of the secret services of the Kingdom of Italy immediately after the unification was affected its work. Thus, the Information Office of

²⁷ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 270-279.

²⁸ Colonel Tullio Marchetti, *Centotto anni nel servizio informazioni militari* [One Hundred and Eight Years in the Military Intelligence Service] (Trento: Fondazione Museo Storico Trentino, 1960), 14.

the General Staff of the Royal Army set up in 1863, was dissolved following the defeats of 1866 against the Austro-Hungarian army in the battles of Custoza and Lissa. It was reconstituted in 1890 with prevalent functions being police and counterintelligence.²⁹

The methods by which the intelligence activity was carried out were rather rudimentary. Indeed, military espionage activities were entrusted to little scout units only to observe the distribution of troops on the territory, the movements, the number of artillery batteries or cavalry units.³⁰

Starting from the early 1900s, also thanks to a moderate economic and social improvement of the Kingdom of Italy, there was an evolution of the national intelligence services. Although there was still no coordination between the various intelligence apparatuses, during the Italo-Turkish war of 1912 and during the First World War, the office of the General Staff of the Royal Army became predominant among the other secret services. The primary deficiency that occurred during these conflicts was the lack of sharing between the intelligence organizations of the different armed forces.³¹

To understand well how the SIM was structured and how it operated, we need to take a step back in history and introduce the *Ufficio Informazioni* [Information Office] of the Italian military supreme command. This ancestor of the first military intelligence organization was an office at the apex of the Italian Royal Army, which had operated continuously during the First World War. Furthermore, it had been indispensable during

²⁹ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 26.

³⁰ Ibid., 94.

³¹ Ibid., 204.

the signing of the treaty of Villa Giusti, the armistice treaty signed on November 3, 1918, between the allied and associated powers with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Colonel Tullio Marchetti, head of the *Ufficio Informazioni* [Information Office] of the Supreme Command, and a great expert of Trentino and Tyrol, had been appointed to manage the progress of the treaties.³²

The Information Office was not the only military intelligence service at that time. Indeed, the office of the Royal Navy and another intelligence agency of the Foreign Ministry were also present. All branches of intelligence did immense work before, during, and after the First World War. However, the intelligence office of the supreme command played an essential coordinating role. When the First World War began for all nations, the Kingdom of Italy, on April 26, 1915, entered into a secret agreement with the British Empire, which established the conditions for its entry into the war alongside the triple alliance. This agreement provided that at the time of the signing of the peace, the Kingdom of Italy would obtain Trentino and Tyrol, Trieste, the provinces of Gorizia and Gradisca, Istria, and some smaller islands in the Adriatic Sea which were a possession of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This makes us understand how critical the Balkan region was so for the Kingdom of Italy and, therefore, how the military intelligence effort was directed in that region. Although Tsarist Russia was an ally, the expansionist foreign policy of Russia in the Balkan region was an additional concern for Italy. The Bolshevik revolution had also initially disrupted global foreign policy. However, the new Russia

³² Marchetti, *One Hundred and Eight Years in the Military Intelligence Service*, 25.

also pursued the same type of foreign policy the Tsar undertook.³³ Thus, the Information Office of the supreme command, already during the last phases of the First World War, began a change that led to focus its attention on the Bolshevik propaganda to counter the communist expansionism.³⁴

Even after the end of the conflict, France, Great Britain, and Italy continued to send expeditionary forces to Macedonia and neighboring Anatolia and attempted to maintain influence in the Balkans. Communist Russia was for the time being kept out of the Balkan Peninsula; nevertheless, before and during the Second World War, it sought pre-eminence and real influence on those territories, succeeding in the post-war period and still maintaining it today.³⁵

Thus, on January 2, 1919, this office changed its name to become office “I” of the General Staff of the Royal Army. As of that date, the organization was made up of four sections: information, military police, press and translations, and telegram decryption. In addition, the Information Office began to reduce its staff in the post-war period because the needs significantly decreased. In those years, reforms continued to follow one another among the most important was that of a parliamentary commission for the drafting of a project on the reorganization of information and propaganda and press services abroad of the Royal Army, the Navy, and the Foreign Ministry. This project envisaged for the first time the criterion of the uniqueness of the information, propaganda and press service

³³ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 91.

³⁴ Ibid., 129.

³⁵ Ibid.

which should have been united in one body. Although this project did not materialize, it was the first concept that provided for the union of the intelligence function under a single command.³⁶

The lessons learned from the management of the Information Office in the First World War showed that the lack of single leadership produced dispersions of means and did not assure the unity of effort. Therefore, the draft provided a unified Information Office divided into sections in which representatives of all the concerned bodies had to work according to their skills. The major sections were:

1. Information, with collection and analysis duties.
2. Legislative, in charge for legal aspect of the intelligence service.
3. Counterintelligence, able to perform actives against hostile intelligence services.
4. Decoding in charge for decrypting/decoding documents and radio communications;
5. Investigations, able to perform interrogation of hostile agents and soldiers;

This first project was fundamental for creating a single military intelligence service.³⁷

A key task of intelligence services was *coscienza informativa* [intelligence awareness] at all levels, which means any information, even apparently insignificant, has its value in compiling the general situation; moreover, it must be integrated with other elements such as culture, history, military and institution organization, and so on.

³⁶ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 174.

³⁷ Ibid.

Particularly interesting in 1920 was the development of courses for intelligence students created by Army General Staff. In this course particularly brilliant officers who had experience in the Information Offices of the other armed forces were invited. During the last year of the war, these learning courses were preceded by a series of lectures organized within army commands for senior officers. The schematic notes on the topics covered in the conferences explain how these courses were organized. The cycle of classes began with a premise on the importance of the information service on the evolution of the conception of the service earlier in the course of the war. Therefore, military history had fundamental importance; indeed, the essential phase of these courses involved a connection between the historical research and the personnel assigned to the army's intelligence service. This is because it was necessary to interpret the information collected through a historical analysis of the areas distant from one's national territory.³⁸

In these years, one of the most important figures that emerged from Italian intelligence was Colonel Attilio Vigevano, who became the first director of the military intelligence service and who was a history instructor at the Military Academy of Modena. In particular within the Information Office of the supreme command, Colonel Vigevano had championed the importance of the cinema as a new form of military propaganda and documentation.³⁹

However, the post-conflict period was a difficult time of military and moral, social, and economic reconstruction. Indeed, as we shall see, the advent of fascism

³⁸ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 132.

³⁹ Ibid., 35.

marked a critical transition both in the organization and in intelligence functions. Therefore, based on the lessons learned from the past conflict (lack of coordination and lack of information sharing between the armed forces intelligence services) and on the new information needs dictated by the newborn government of Benito Mussolini, national intelligence received a new and more coordinated impulse. Hence, the intelligence functions were increasingly focused on preparing and organizing in a future war in cooperation with other ministries. It also had to provide for personnel training and had to be increasingly interested in what was happening beyond national borders. Thus, Benito Mussolini, as head of the government, also carried out the functions of the minister of war in 1924, a year before the establishment of the unified military intelligence service, and published the new directives of the Italian intelligence. They dictated various priorities, including the need for a *coscienza informativa* [intelligence conscience] previously mentioned. Furthermore, the importance of making all information flow to a single intelligence center only reinforced the value of the work already done in unified intelligence service. Finally, the importance of staff training was again underlined; in this aspect, it emphasized the importance of understanding the history of the relevant countries (France, United Kingdom, and Germany as competitors for the imperial expansion) for purposes of intelligence.⁴⁰

Based on this drive towards the unification of the national intelligence organ, on October 15, 1925, in the framework of all military or civil intelligence services organizations, with Royal decree No. 1909, the military intelligence service was

⁴⁰ Benito Mussolini, “*Istruzione sul servizio informazioni presso le truppe*” [“Instruction on the Intelligence Service to the Troops”] (Rome, 25 October 1924).

established, unified, and made joint. This legislative measure marked the first step towards modern military intelligence in the Italian service. The decree was made up of four articles. The first sanctioned that the military intelligence service would be set up under the head of the General Staff. The information services of the army of the Navy and the Air Force were unified and coordinated. Article two established that the head of the military intelligence service managed and coordinated the activities of all the services of the armed forces; this suggested that the secret services of the individual armed forces would remain on duty. The third article concerned the tasks and personnel and the means available to the SIM. The fourth article concerned the economic and financial provisions of the intelligence organ.⁴¹

It is clear that this provision was intended to structure the SIM in such a way as to unify and coordinate all the services of the individual armed forces; Despite this, the principle of unity of effort was never fully realized due to a constant lack of sharing of information. Thus, we must not neglect the particular historical context in which this secret service acted. Indeed, fascism was creating new secret services that responded to the increasing needs for political control of the kingdom and the population, introduced with special laws. An important moment in this particular activity of the regime was the creation of the *Organizzazione per la Vigilanza e Repressione Anti-fascista* [Organization for Vigilance and Repression of Anti-Fascism] (OVRA), a secret police of the regime with the task of repressing any action hostile to the fascist dictatorship. Thus, the possibility of centralizing the intelligence activity in a single body became increasingly

⁴¹ Mussolini, "Instruction on the Intelligence Service to the Troops."

difficult. Despite this, the SIM tried to operate and coordinate all services in the best possible way. The officers who made up the national intelligence corps were essential. The training of these officers was organized through annual courses that included several conferences concerning the general functions of the intelligence service in times of war and peace, the need for constant connection with other state information agencies, information processing, and informational awareness. The importance of historical analysis was constantly reiterated throughout the course as an essential part of understanding information from contexts far from the homeland.⁴²

The period between 1925, in which the military intelligence service was created, and 1937 in which the first major organizational reform took place, was characterized by a substantial difficulty in combining efforts and coordinating all the entities in charge of the intelligence function. Although the SIM was created as a joint service, the Army intelligence apparatus weight within the military intelligence organization was increasingly dominant, contributing to the disunity of effort. Therefore, as noted by Colonel Cesare Amè, director of the SIM since September 20, 1940, the existence of the three information services (Army, Navy, and Air Force) although essential for the information needs of their armed forces, gave rise, in the general field of organization and offensive and defensive action, at home and abroad, to continuous interference and a harmful dispersion of energies and means.⁴³ Furthermore, General Giovanni Messe, chief of the general staff of the Italian armed forces, identified the obstacles to the unification

⁴² Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 146.

⁴³ Ibid., 128.

of the military intelligence service in the resistance to change a system consolidated over time within the various military branches.⁴⁴

Thus, with the passing of the years, a total reorganization of the SIM became more and more urgent to make it more efficient with war becoming all but certain. In 1937, the Duce asked military leaders to develop projects to re-articulate the intelligence service. Mussolini expressly requested that the project had as essential points the need for coordination between all the information services, the need for the coordinating body to be at the head of the government, and the need for a body proposed for offensive intelligence, sabotage, to counter defeatist propaganda, under the direct control of the head of the government. In summary, the project analyzed the various possibilities by proposing the creation of a coordinating body at the head of government.⁴⁵ On the other hand, as regards the officers who made up the Italian intelligence corps, the studies that preceded the reform project indicated that on the whole, the personnel had mediocre preparation; this is because they were chosen without a defined criteria, and for this reason, they lacked professionalism.⁴⁶

Thus, one of the project proposals was for the SIM to establish courses for former officers in Rome. These courses, lasting one year, were attended by an officer from each region of Italy, to be chosen from those who stood out most for their intelligence, culture,

⁴⁴ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 213.

⁴⁵ Benito Mussolini, "Order to Plan Unification of Military Intelligence Services," TG 226, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, cited in Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 67.

⁴⁶ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 209.

services rendered in judicial policy, and above all for the knowledge of the languages used in the neighboring countries. Only the officers who reached the highest rating could operate within the intelligence apparatus at the end of the course. In addition to dealing with general aspects of military intelligence, the course also dealt with counterintelligence and would have helped form the aforementioned *coscienza informativa* [intelligence awareness]. In this case, the historical and linguistic knowledge of the neighboring countries represented an essential factor for the training of these officers. Hence, the importance of military history within the SIM at this stage was not so much in its structure and organization but more principally in the training of its personnel. These courses aimed to create personnel with a mental elasticity that would allow them to carry out a disciplined initiative even at the lowest levels.⁴⁷ The study of history helped to train the military officers, increasing their critical thinking, improving their learning, analysis, and the possibility of elaborating syntheses of complex events and situations. The observations made during this period on personnel highlighted that the SIM need officers with high adaptability and initiative to keep up with sudden changes.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The course was divided into various modules. The first concerned the general information on the Information Service, the differences in the service in times of peace and war, the aims and objectives of the Central Service and that of the operating troops; the fundamental concepts of information, the organization of research, the means. A constant in all modules was how the study of history influenced the commanders' decisions.

⁴⁸ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 209.

Spanish Civil War and Colonial Campaign

One of the first assignments carried out by the military intelligence service abroad was to support the forces of General Francisco Franco in Spain starting from September 6, 1936. In those days, Mussolini assigned General Roatta, head of the SIM, to set up a military mission with the tasks of supporting the nationalists, advising the superior Spanish command on the possible development of military operations against the so-called Reds (the Republican forces), and guaranteeing the interests of the respective nations in the political, military and economic fields. Thus, General Roatta, together with the German Admiral Wilhelm Canaris (head of the corresponding German intelligence service, the Abwehr), began his mission in Spanish territory. Later the *Aviazione Legionaria*, and the *Corpo Truppe Volontarie* [Voluntary Troop Corps] was established in Spain, in which members of the armed forces and ordinary Italian citizens worked alongside the troops of General Franco. In this situation, military intelligence service officers set up section “I,” which secretly operated intending to monitor foreign activities in the Iberian Peninsula.⁴⁹

For this reason, the personnel selected for this task should have a clear understanding of the Spanish national culture and history. Still, it should also have a detailed understanding of North Africa, France, and Germany. In particular, despite being aligned with fascist politics, Germany represented a regional competitor for the Kingdom of Italy. Hence, the investments and attention directed by the Nazi state to Spain greatly

⁴⁹ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 72.

worried Mussolini. He decided to focus the information needs also on the activities of Nazi Germany, especially the level of its war industry on Spanish territory.⁵⁰

The SIM directly provided for the selection, preparation, and dispatch of personnel to convey the adequate resources possible in the right direction. Finally, the interest in Spain did not end at the conclusion of the Italian intervention in the Spanish civil war but continued with the outbreak of the World War II.⁵¹

Another critical use of military intelligence overseas was in colonial territories. Indeed, in 1927, with a Royal decree No. 69, King Victor Emmanuel III authorized the Chief of the Army Staff to use the intelligence apparatus to update the political and military situation of the colonies.⁵² Thus, a colonial information service had been set up

⁵⁰ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 74.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁵² Italian colonialism began in the late 19th century with the peaceful takeover of the African ports of Assab and Massawa on the Red Sea. Following the partition of Africa by the European powers (1881-1914), the Kingdom of Italy held control of Eritrea and Somalia, as well as of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and the Aegean Islands, subtracted from the Ottoman Empire in the course of the Italo-Turkish war (1911-1912). There was also an Italian concession in Tientsin, China, since 1901. During the First World War, an Italian expeditionary force previously occupied southern Albania to prevent its conquest by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, establishing a protectorate there (1917-1920). During the fascist regime, the Kingdom of Italy expanded its possessions. In 1934 Cyrenaica and Tripolitania were united in Italian Libya. With the 1935-36 war in Africa, Italy conquered Ethiopia, which was united with Eritrea and Somalia to give life to Italian East Africa. On this occasion, Vittorio Emanuele III assumed the imperial title of Ethiopia, and the birth of the Italian Empire was officially proclaimed. In 1939 Albania was again invaded and annexed to the Italian Empire. After Italy entered World War II in 1940, the metropolitan territory of the kingdom, together with that of the colonies and military occupation zones, reached its maximum expansion. In addition to those mentioned so far, the Italian territories then extended from southern France to the protectorates and occupations in the Balkans (Slovenia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Montenegro, Greece) to British Somalia. However, the historical colonies and the more recent acquisitions were lost due to subsequent war events. Although after the fall of fascism (25 July 1943) Italy had sided with the Allies with the armistice of Cassibile (8 September 1943), the peace treaty

within the SIM, which sent news relating to the Italian colonies to the minister of the colonies. In addition, at the command of the colonial troop corps, which was the unit operating abroad, Information Offices were set up to communicate directly with the Colonial Ministry through the respective colonial government. Nonetheless, the minister of the colonies, De Bono, often complained that the military intelligence service was unable to properly orient its resources, especially in Somalia and Eritrea. Thus, at the beginning of 1934, it became necessary to improve the information gathering carried out for the defense of the colonies there. Accordingly, it was thought of a general reorganization that assumed a central role of the Colonial Ministry, not only as a user of information but as a coordinator of activities. Thus, on August 11, 1934, the information service in East Africa was set up consisting of two Information Offices, one from Eritrea and one from Somalia. Unlike previous jobs that preferred officers with a certain degree of experience of the territories in which they were to operate, in this case, the intelligence operators deployed in East Africa had to be chosen from among young officers who had never served in those lands, so that they would not be recognized by indigenous personnel. Candidate officers were not supposed to know of their destination. In doing so, the principle used on other occasions, which saw the selection of officers with a high level of knowledge of the contingent situation and the military history of the country in

of 1947 imposed the loss of all the colonies with the sole exception of Somalia, in 1950 assigned to the newborn Italian Republic under the form of a trustee of the United Nations. In 1960 the trusteeship ended and Somalia gained independence, thus marking the end of the Italian colonial eighty years.

which they were going to operate, disappeared. Fortunately, the study of the Italian military history continued to be important in the training of officers.⁵³

In truth, the officers would not have been employed without any training. Still, they received only general training on African territory, particularly in Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, British Somalia, French Somalia, Aden, and the British protectorates of the Arabian Peninsula like the Saudi Kingdom and the Kingdom of Yemen. This preparation could not be as detailed as other territories like Spain, Albania, and Libya. Nevertheless, the mindset of the Italian former officers established during the courses mentioned above managed to cover this cognitive gap through mental elasticity. An example is Captain Paolo Caccia Dominioni, often referred to as the Italian Lawrence of Arabia. In fact, Captain Dominioni carried out a particular mission in Sudan. From July to October 1935, he was sent to monitor the moves of the English troops in the area of direct Italian interest. The officer integrated himself so well into the Sudanese culture that he achieved all the objectives, such as gathering information on Britain's military activities in that country. Although on October 8, he was arrested and interrogated by the British intelligence service. After being expelled from Sudanese territory, he managed to return there with indigenous personnel, who supported him in carrying out other high-risk missions. After leaving Sudan, he also moved to Egypt, where he continued gathering information while carrying out a civil engineer activity. This was possible thanks to the

⁵³ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 209.

solid network of informants and deep knowledge of the customs and history of the country.⁵⁴

The main activity of the intelligence organization in East Africa consisted in acquiring advanced knowledge of domestic politics, foreign policy, and military information on the missions of countries such as Belgium, Sweden, and the British Empire. Finally, a report made by General Messe on the activity of the SIM in East Africa between 1935 and 1939 noted the solidity and quality of the fundamental structure despite having highlighted the drawbacks deriving from the incomplete training of the staff.⁵⁵

1940-1943 – Second World War

With the Second World War approach, the Kingdom of Italy should have simplified its military structure to have a flexible and straightforward military instrument. Instead, they opted for a parallel command structure, showing military and political dependencies. On September 1, 1939, with the invasion of Poland, the Second World War began. Italy had not yet decided on its intervention in the conflict, or at least it had postponed it, but it was still to be foreseen even if not immediately. Indeed, the armed forces were not yet ready to engage in five theaters. The conflicts in Ethiopia and the intervention in Spain had dissipated many national resources. At the end of 1939, the

⁵⁴ Paolo Caccia Dominioni, *Alamein 1933-1962* (Milan: Longanesi, 1962), 6-9.

⁵⁵ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 110.

Kingdom of Italy was not ready to fight in metropolitan, Albanian, Mediterranean, North African, and Ethiopian territories – and later with an expeditionary force in Russia.⁵⁶

Despite this, it was decided to make numerous changes to the military structure. Thus, on May 30, 1940 (Italy would enter the war on June 10, 1940), the *Comando Supremo* [supreme command of the armed forces] was established, which harmonized the use of the Navy and Air Force in the combat theaters. This military command performed the coordination functions of the various armed forces during the conflict. Despite the creation of this new military organ of direction and control of the various armed forces at the military level, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, as well as being part of the supreme command of the armed forces, also had a direct dependence with the Ministry of War. In fact, the chiefs of staff of the three armed forces also carried out the task of deputy ministers of war, and in this capacity, they responded directly to the political body (Mussolini as Minister of War). Thus, the SIM also wore a double hat, depending on the Army Chief of Staff for the military-technical information part and the Ministry of War for the administrative, disciplinary, and organizational function. Despite this, it managed to be the central and governing body of the sector and therefore maintained the technical direction of all military intelligence services in the area of operation.⁵⁷

Thus, the SIM on the eve of the Second World War was organized into three offices: the offensive office, the situation office, and the defensive office. Through this system, it was possible to obtain a decentralized and flexible activity so that each office

⁵⁶ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 112.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 114.

could have autonomy under the responsibility of the head of offices. In particular, the situation section had to analyze the information received from different geographical areas. Therefore, the analyst officers were expert connoisseurs of the other areas of the world they dealt with. Therefore, these officers, having considerable knowledge of the local culture, were experts in their national and military history. This ability allowed him to select better and analyze the numerous sources coming from different areas. In particular, the situation office, also called the “Zuretti” office, was divided into five sections. The first section dealt mainly with Western Europe, the British Empire, the Mediterranean, and the Near East. The second section dealt mainly with Central and Eastern Europe. The third section was dedicated to analyzing information from the Balkan area. The fourth section was specialized in Asia and the Americas. Finally, the fifth section was responsible for the documents regarding reproduction and branching. These sections, as previously mentioned, receive information from detachments and military Attaché located in the embassies of different points of the globe. Some examples were offices in Albania, Greece, Yugoslavia, North Africa, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Transjordan, Palestine, Egypt, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Germany, Scandinavia, United Kingdom, Japan, China, United States, Russia.⁵⁸

An essential role of the SIM was also played through the propaganda towards the opposing troops. This section was also connected with the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Popular Culture and had to counter the opposite propaganda and carry out its propaganda to reduce the efficiency of the opposing armed forces, depressing their

⁵⁸ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 116-117.

morale, acting in particular on the ethnic minorities present within the enemy military forces. Therefore, it was also essential to know in detail the history of these popular minorities present in the various armies of the world so that a propaganda action in favor of these populations was as successful as possible.⁵⁹

On June 24, 1940, the SIM was also fully mobilized following the declaration of war. With the outbreak of the war, the SIM became an organization of the Ministry of War rather than an operational part of the General Staff. In particular, military intelligence in France was decidedly involved in the delicate task relating to the armistice between the two nations because it managed security during the armistice operations, and it was responsible for removing sensitive documentary material from the French Republic.⁶⁰

In any case, the most important event for the SIM in the first months of the war was the appointment as the new head of the military intelligence service, Colonel Cesare Amè, called to replace General Giacomo Carboni who was sent to command a mobilized unit. Colonel Amè, during the first months of his tenure, worked with great energy to adapt the information instrument to the needs of war. In particular, it acted on three different subjects. The first was referred to the personnel. Indeed, with the continuation of the conflict, the operational military forces required more and more resources in terms of men. Still, above all of the company commanders, all the captains present in the principal organs of the armed force were called to reinforce the line regiments that were about to

⁵⁹ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 135.

⁶⁰ Vento, *In Silence Rejoice and Suffer*, 250.

go to the front. Thus, even the SIM was deprived of officers who had gained some experience in the intelligence field. This staff was then replaced by young officers, very often coming from civilian life without intelligence training. Thus, Colonel Amè, in addition to manifesting this problem directly to the top of the Ministry of War, instituted courses lasting four or six months to try to train this staff. Obviously, this formation could not be compared to what the previous officers had received in terms of military history. This passage marks the first moment of diminishing importance in military history within the military intelligence services.⁶¹

The second point on which the new director of the SIM focused was how to invest more resources in the secret service. In fact, Colonel Amè prioritized the Mediterranean, as extremely important for the fate of the conflict. He, therefore, decided to organize his offices to be more focused on North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, Greece, and Albania. This concentration of resources was also due to the reduction in personnel.⁶²

The third point on which Colonel Amè concentrated was studying the intelligence organization of other allied and hostile countries. In particular, the French and English were also trying to hone their counterintelligence procedures to identify enemy agents. Specific interest was also directed to the German information service, especially its structure, organization, and location in France. Furthermore, the SIM in this period drew up many reports both on the Balkans and on the whole coast of the South Mediterranean, including French Morocco, with particular attention to the movement of de Gaulle, to

⁶¹ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 137.

⁶² Vento, *In Silence Rejoice and Suffer*, 254.

Syria, Palestine, Turkey, and Egypt. Specific attention was also paid to the activities and intentions of Nazi Germany, despite it being an ally. The growing and worrying German penetration into Bulgaria was monitored, which suggested that Germany wanted to prepare a deployment base for its troops in analogy to what had already been done in Romania, mainly because of this development that could affect Italian interests in Balkan peninsula. The new director of the SIM thought that the collaboration with the Foreign Ministry was absolutely important. Indeed, he proposed to that ministry to insert an element of the SIM within its diplomatic structures abroad. Despite these efforts, Colonel Amè's work was seen by the Foreign Ministry as invading the latter's functions. Indeed, towards the end of October 1940, the Foreign Ministry no longer sent information material from a diplomatic source to the SIM, thus lacking an essential source of information.⁶³ Indeed, the foreign ministry periodically produced a classified report of the events that occurred in the different parts of the world, summarizing the information coming from the Italian embassies abroad. These documents would have been a valuable source for the SIM.

As regards military operations during the world conflict, the activity of the SIM between September and November 1940 was of considerable increase due to the renewed war requirements. Indeed, on October 28, 1940, the Italian troops crossed the Greek-Albanian border, starting the war on the Greek front. Therefore, it was necessary to focus the intelligence activity in the Balkan sector to know the Yugoslav, Turkish, and Russian attitudes and the British reaction to the invasion. On December 31, 1940, in his historical

⁶³ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 116.

diary, Colonel Amè emphasized above all the fact that from an almost non-existent network before the start of the war, the organization had developed with the beginning of the conflict, so that the service in military formation, at the end of 1940, he relied on a vast, efficient and flexible information network, which made it possible to monitor enemy activity on all fronts and all sectors, including even the most distant ones. The note ended with considerable optimism for the future, which turned out quite different than he imagined.⁶⁴

1941

With these premises, Colonel Amè began the work of the SIM in 1941 by focusing on three main factors to overcome the obstacles encountered in the first period of conflict.

The first point concerns counterintelligence. In fact, on January 13, 1941, the director of the SIM declared that for a good organization, a single effort was necessary to combat foreign espionage, and the counterintelligence centers had to be flexible and adaptable to different situations so to be able to neutralize the activity of foreign services. To make it clear how important this aspect was for Colonel Amè, it must be pointed out that he was very meticulous. For example, he controlled in detail the exploitation of collaboration with the police forces.⁶⁵ Particularly, he prioritized contact with those that had shown a particular interest in defense of military secrecy and the hiring of new

⁶⁴ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 159.

⁶⁵ Holding meetings in which the participation of police officers in charge of monitoring foreigners potentially belonging to the intelligence services of other countries was required.

informants. He paid so much attention above all to his opponents' vast knowledge in the social and historical field. Moreover, he concentrated the effort on counterintelligence activities towards the American intelligence service, which became a constant after December 7, 1941.⁶⁶

The second point referred to collaboration with the Germans. Again at the beginning of January 1941, the SIM and its German counterpart tried to make cooperation easier. A German lieutenant colonel arrived in Rome to improve the existing collaboration. This meeting led to the opportunity to put the heads of the Italian and German intelligence centers in direct contact and ensure mutual assistance regarding the release and reproduction of documents. The Germans made a special request to increase their information presence throughout North Africa. Italy did not entirely agree, so they found a compromise where the German information service would only operate in French Morocco.⁶⁷

The third point on which the director of the military intelligence service focused was to increase the confidence that military commanders should have had in this agency. Especially in the early stages of the conflict, the SIM was accused of pessimism and enjoyed little credit. This is because, in drawing a clear picture of the situation, the intelligence agency was often not aligned with the rosy view imposed by the central

⁶⁶ The United States declared war on Italy following Germany's declaration of war on 11 December. Joint Resolution, Declaration of State of War with Italy, S. J. Res. 120, Public Law 332, 77th Cong., 1st sess. (December 11, 1941), <https://govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com/legislink/pdf/stat/55/STATUTE-55-Pg797.pdf>. <https://www.parlamento.it/parlam/bicam/terror/stenografici/steno27a.htm>.

⁶⁷ David Kahn, *Hitler's Spies: German Military Intelligence in World War II* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 273.

command that Italian victory was foreordained. Therefore, a skepticism about the real potential of the service had developed among the large units, which was probably also due to the previously mentioned qualitative deficiency of the personnel assigned to intelligence activities, due to an inconstant and incomplete training of the personnel of the intelligence branch.⁶⁸

Thus, in the wake of these new guidelines, on October 25, 1941, a reorganization of the service was started to make it more efficient, more collaborative with secret partner services, and at the same time as immune as possible to adversarial espionage. Hence, the central coordinating role of the SIM towards the secret services of the three armed forces was reinforced, committing to itself the three functions previously mentioned. Unfortunately, also due to the inability to train the staff in the best possible way, this reorganization focused more on the structural reconfiguration than on the professional improvement of the staff who continued to be lacking due to their poor training. In short, while the bureaucracy changed, improved results did not follow.⁶⁹

1942

The entry into the war of the Soviet Union and the United States in 1941 had undoubtedly changed the equilibrium and inevitably ended the success enjoyed by the Axis forces for most of 1941 and through most of 1942. Nevertheless, this would not become apparent until after the fall of Stalingrad and the Axis defeat in North Africa. Thus, starting in the early months of 1942, the SIM also began to change its work,

⁶⁸ Vento, *In Silence Rejoice and Sufferer*, 256.

⁶⁹ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 198-199.

pushing more and more towards a unification of the management of the intelligence apparatus. Cesare Amè, who was promoted to the rank of general in that year, concentrated his efforts to definitively approve the centralization of powers at the SIM regarding the aspects of offense, defense, and propaganda of all intelligence organizations. Undoubtedly, the entire assumption by the SIM and the consequent unity of guidance of all intelligence activities in the Italian colonial territories, and occupied by Italian troops, would have led to a notable improvement in results in terms of coordination and synchronization of efforts.⁷⁰

Counterintelligence was particularly important in that historic moment, seen as the protection of military secrecy ensured through preventive and aggressive action. Thus, counterintelligence centers abroad were of particular importance. To cope with the shortage mentioned above of qualified personnel, the head of the SIM decided to limit the initiative of these centers. Thus, no orientation towards new objectives could be developed without the full approval of the central command. This also affected the NCOs, who were considered as mere executors and collaborators of the head of the center without defined limits of action. They had clear and determined tasks. They could not influence the service in respect to personnel selection or determine or carry out activities of specific importance. They also had to execute and obey with intelligence and passion. Only in cases of imperative urgency could they use initiative. However,

⁷⁰ Cesare Amè, *Guerra segreta in Italia* [Secret War in Italy] (Rome: Casini, 1954), 56.

extended stays in the exact location contributed to the knowledge of the environment in a helpful way for the service, covering the cognitive deficiencies of limited training.⁷¹

The Mediterranean basin and the Middle East became the center of the intelligence attention. Analyzing the map in which the counterintelligence centers were distributed abroad, it is evident that they gravitated along the coasts of the Mediterranean, in particular towards the states of south-western Balkan Europe. Furthermore, the presence in Arab countries was of considerable interest to other ministries with particular attention, as the Arab world continued to be a central element of fascist politics. In that geographical area, in addition to counterintelligence, propaganda influenced the populations and enemy troops operating in those territories to increase Italian prestige in the sector. Thus, in June 1942, the SIM gave indications on a general program for propaganda in those territories by means of radio, cinema, and print media to the means of communication to establish a stronger commonality with the local nationals, an increasingly difficult task as the war took a turn against the Axis. It would have been essential to know not only the local culture but also the civil and military history of those places, otherwise the propaganda effort would quickly fail.⁷²

Another point on which General Amè worked on was the collaboration with Germany, which in 1942 became increasingly profitable at least at the highest level. Indeed, the utmost politeness always marked any meetings. Those that took place between 11 and 12 March 1942 in Northern Italy between the two directors of the

⁷¹ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 203.

⁷² Ibid., 201.

military intelligence services denoted an unexpected opening for Admiral Canaris. Indeed, he had declared that Germany was grappling with a crisis that arose from the unforeseen developments of the events relating to the entry of the United States and Russia into the war. General Amè understood this as an evidence of grave difficulties ahead. Admiral Canaris had spoken of the conditions of increasing discomfort of the population due to the difficulty of the war, due to the severe human losses. Furthermore, he had mentioned the serious transport crises of all kinds, the lack of fuel, the insufficiency of the railway lines, the labor crisis, and the difficulty providing enough food for the civil population and the armed forces. The logic of Canaris' explanation was evident: a morale crisis and ultimately, loss of the war.⁷³

1943

1943 marks the definitive end of the fascist regime within the Kingdom of Italy. And with the well-known armistice of September 8, 1943, the end of the alliance between the Kingdom of Italy in Nazi Germany. In any case, in the first eight months of 1943, the SIM, like all the Italian military apparatus, continued to operate alongside the Germans despite the lack of harmony of objectives and the synergistic effort between the two allies, and an unspoken decline in mutual trust. General Amè, who from the end of June was no longer the director of the military intelligence service – he was slated to command a division to oppose Allied entry into Italy - expressed that the collaboration with Germany had been scarce in the information sector, with few contacts and generally cold

⁷³ Amè, *Secret War in Italy*, 89.

relationships. Undoubtedly, relations with the German counterpart service had progressively cooled down with the alliance between Italy and Germany.⁷⁴

Despite this, shortly before he left his post, General Amè managed to get Mussolini to sign a provision for which the SIM would control offensive and defensive military information activity of all the services of the other armed forces. This new order put an end to a situation defined by the general as unsustainable and one that the Italian intelligence service had experienced for about two years of conflict. The die was cast when on July 10, 1943, the Americans landed in Sicily, the first act of the end, which would last until the complete liberation from the former German ally in 1945, ending what had already clearly manifested during the three years of war. On July 25, the fascist regime was dismissed, ousted from its own top body, the Grand Council, and not by a popular revolution.⁷⁵

September 1943-1945 Liberation War

On September 8, 1943, Italy signed the unconditional surrender to the allies beginning the Italian liberation war against Nazi fascism. In the period immediately following, many of the components of the military intelligence service remained loyal to the King. They hid during the German occupation, arriving in dribs and drabs in Brindisi. As the Germans moved to quickly occupy Italy, the Italian government left Rome to go to Southern Italy, in liberated territory. The SIM was reconstituted as early as mid-September as the information and liaison office of the operations department of the

⁷⁴ Amè, *Secret War in Italy*, 78.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 97.

Comando Supremo, under direct supervision by the department head. Colonel Agrifoglio was appointed to direct this suddenly reformed organization when he returned from captivity in America on September 25; he was already familiar with the service because when he was captured, he was chief of Italian intelligence in Tunis.⁷⁶

At this stage, the SIM had focused its work on two specific sectors to support the efforts for the liberation. The first referred to its reconstitution and the second to collaboration with the new allies. As for the reconstitution, one of the first activities of the embryonic Information Office was to resume contact with Rome under German occupation. When leaving the capital, the *Comando Supremo* directed the placement of two clandestine radios with which, during the armistice phase, had maintained contact with the Anglo-American headquarters. Unfortunately, the highly chaotic situation that had arisen after 8 September did not allow for a common effort in the intelligence sector. In fact, in occupied Italy, a series of information bodies that were difficult to control were operating. The collaboration between the military and civil services was impossible as these were organized within the reconstituted political parties and connected to the National Liberation Committee, which also ran a clandestine intelligence service at the beginning of the war of liberation that was not coordinated with the military organization.⁷⁷

During the organization phase, particular attention was paid to counterintelligence activities, as both Abwehr and the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst* – the SS intelligence service)

⁷⁶ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 240.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 243.

operated against both their former allies and now the Americans and British in Italy. In addition to wanting to counter German intelligence, they also tried to limit anti-monarchist propaganda of communist origin. Thus, three anti-espionage groups were created. The first had to know the German military, the political situation in non-liberated Italy, and the movements of the anti-monarchist parties, follow the status of the military units located in non-liberated Italy, resume contact with the Italian elements displaced abroad, possibly send other agents abroad.⁷⁸ The second group had the task of re-establishing and maintaining links with the military assets in the rest of occupied the territory of Italy, assisting and increasing the assets themselves, organizing them, eventually supplying them. The third group had to carry out sabotages to paralyze and slow down the German movements and supplies, reducing their war efficiency. The group was also to direct the organization and continuation of the intelligence schools. Thus, a school for informants and radio operators, a saboteur school, an interrogation center in Lecce and another in Naples were quickly organized. Other activities concerning the service were started, including recruiting new staff and the supply of material. The information-gathering should have been carried out mainly in the Italian territory occupied by the Germans.⁷⁹ Also, in this case, as in the past, the training, which was carried out in a few months, sacrificed the historical part as it was mainly operating in the Italian territory.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Vento, *In Silence Rejoice and Suffer*, 269.

⁷⁹ The new Minister of War, General Cesare Badoglio took this decision.

⁸⁰ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 249.

The second aspect that dominated Colonel Agrifoglio's attention was the collaboration with the new Anglo-American allies. In fact, after the landing in Sicily in July 1943, numerous American and British intelligence agencies began to operate on Italian territory. The Americans, in addition to deploying detachments of the Office Strategic Center (OSS), had deployed the G2 of the allied force headquarters as an organ of military information in the Mediterranean; furthermore, they had deployed the General Staff Intelligence of the Fifteenth Army Group, and eventually of the Eighth Army, in addition to the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC). On the British side, the Both MI5 and MI6 had the Inter-Service Liaison Department for offensive tasks, the number One special force for sabotage tasks, and the service counterintelligence department for counterintelligence tasks.⁸¹

At first, collaboration with the Anglo-Americans was difficult. Still, gradually the allies became aware of the loyal professional work carried out by the Italian information bodies, and its direct responsibilities were progressively expanded. Italian intelligence made a significant contribution in neutralizing the always dangerous German intelligence services, and this was also recognized on an official level. Obviously, the Italian staff had extensive knowledge of the population, situation, past political history, and the underground movements. Above all, they also knew the German intelligence service well, given its collaboration in the past. Thus, on December 26, 1944, the allied military mission in Italy asked the Ministry of War to replace the SIM with Italian Army intelligence and security police units to integrate fully with the allied troops present on

⁸¹ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 251.

Italian soil. After the first months of 1945, the allied military authorities decided that the functions of most of the departments of the Italian Army intelligence would no longer be necessary as the total liberation of Italy had almost occurred. One of the major contributions made by the Italian intelligence to the allies in this period was gathering information on German troops and the Italian social republic along the main German defensive lines (Gustav line and Gothic line). Thus, between May and December 1945, once the liberation in Northern Italy took place, Italian intelligence began to capture the agents or groups of agents reported in the northern regions to lay the foundations for the new democratic institutions of the country.⁸²

Of particular importance in that historical period was the careful monitoring of the state of mind of the Italian population in relations with the allies. The definitive dissolution of the SIM occurred in 1945 with it accused in the public opinion of having bowed to the political pressures of the regime and to have in some cases become an instrument of the fascist political police. At that moment, the functions of the SIM were subsumed by the Information Office of the General Staff.⁸³ This denotes how war demands have overshadowed the study of military history as an essential tool of Italian intelligence.

⁸² Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 266.

⁸³ Vento, *In Silence Rejoice and Suffer*, 256.

Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI) [Italian Social Republic]
Military Secret Service

The SIM was not the only Italian military secret service to operate in those years; indeed, after the armistice of September 8, 1943, in particular on September 12, Mussolini was freed from the imprisonment of Gran Sasso Mountain and founded the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* [Italian Social Republic] (RSI), also known as the Republic of Salò. This new state extended throughout the territory not yet liberated by the allied powers. Its institutions were chaired by the people most loyal to the fascist regime who had decided not to join the Anglo-American war of liberation among the ranks of the Kingdom of Italy, which had transferred its institutions to Southern Italy precisely in the meantime province of Brindisi (Apulia).⁸⁴

On October 1, 1943, the *Servizio Informazioni Difesa* [Defense Intelligence Service] (SID) was established and was developed with the same organization as the SIM. General Rodolfo Graziani, Minister of National Defense, established that the SID was the only military intelligence service of the RSI, thus eliminating all the organizations that had also arisen autonomously.⁸⁵ An example was the 6X service,

⁸⁴ Giacomo Carboni, *L'armistizio e la difesa di Roma - Verità e menzogne* [The Armistice and the Defense of Rome - Truth and Lies] (Rome: Luigi Donatello, 1945), 24.

⁸⁵ General Rodolfo Graziana, Letter No. 1403/S.M, 30 September 1943, cited in Maria Gabriella Pasqualini, *"Il SID nella RSI: l'organizzazione ufficiale dell'intelligence militare nella Repubblica Sociale Italiana"* ["SID in RSI: The Official Organization of Military Intelligence in the Italian Social Republic"], 3, https://www.academia.edu/37788236/Il_Sid_della_RSI.doc.

created independently by the will of the former journalist Vittorio Foschini, who would later become the first director of the SID.⁸⁶

Fortunately for the Allies and the legitimate Italian Government, the highly skilled staff who made up the SID were not fully exploited for two reasons. The first was that the SID could not act autonomously but had to submit to the decisions of the German military authorities, which after the armistice of September 8 had increased their sentiment of distrust towards the Italian military secret service.⁸⁷

The second was the incompetence of the first director of the SID, whom he chose for his devotion to Mussolini rather than for his professional skills in the field of intelligence.⁸⁸ Thus, he was removed from office in January 1944. His actions negatively affected the RSI military intelligence service until July 1945 because Foschini developed the SID structure, which remained active until the end of the war. Therefore, his successor, Colonel Calderolo De Leo, could not make changes but could only give it a greater propensity for counter-intelligence.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Vittorio Foschini was a journalist with no particular intelligence skills. He impressed Mussolini when he had sent him some flattering letters and after having managed to be received by the Duce for an interview. Mussolini was particularly impressed by her extreme devotion. Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* [The Regime's Spies] (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 485.

⁸⁷ Italian Military Intelligence Organization, PRO WO/204/12443 SID, March 1944-April 1946, British National Archives, Richmond, UK, cited in Maria Gabriella Pasqualini, *Il SID (Servizio Informazioni Difesa) della Repubblica Sociale Italiana nei documenti inglesi* ["The SID (Defense Information Service) of the Italian Social Republic in English Documents"], 3, https://www.academia.edu/37788254/SID_nella_RSI_secondo_i_documenti_inglesi_doc.

⁸⁸ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 202.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 210.

Consequently, in the twenty months in which the SID operated, the role of military history in the secret service was non-existent. Therefore, the primary need was only to recover professionally trained personnel from enlisting them and making them available to the German departments to arrest persons suspected of having relations with the enemy, the Anglo-Americans, and the government of the Kingdom of Italy.⁹⁰

At the moment of liberation, some members of the SID spontaneously presented themselves to the allied counter-intelligence structures and reported what they knew about the organization because they believed that through this action, they would get special treatment in the post-war period. Some of them were considered not dangerous. Therefore, they received the order to remain in their homes and report periodically to the counterintelligence organ of the Italian Royal Army. They were then left free to restart a life in a democratic republican system, but they were no longer part of the Italian intelligence apparatus.⁹¹ Once again, the urgencies imposed by the state of war have not given the right place to use military history as a necessary tool for the analysis and conduct of intelligence activities.

1946-1949 Joint Intelligence Service Reorganization

On June 2, 1946, the Italian Republic was proclaimed upon the abdication of Umberto II. The general staff continued to have an Information Office more or less organized. In the past, the SIM had been organized with a defensive action, an offensive

⁹⁰ Armed Forces Special Staff, Circolare 1326/SM/Segreto del 25 Febbraio 1944, Subject: SID Organization, cited in Pasqualini, "SID in RSI," 14.

⁹¹ Vento, *In Silence Rejoice and Suffer*, 282.

section, and a counterintelligence section. Even the three armed forces each had their own Information Office, still three different ministries: the Ministry of War, the Ministry of Air Force, and the Ministry of the Navy. As can be seen, the situation was still very confused. In this period, the Italian armed forces experienced a period of transition that ended only after signing the peace treaty on 10 February 1947, and the conclusion of the allied military occupation of the Italian territory on 15 December. During this period, a series of reorganizations of the entire intelligence apparatus began based on the experience of the Second World War, the now consolidated lessons learned from the First World War, and the future new international approach of the entire intelligence sector. Thus, on February 4, 1947, with a decree of the President of the Republic, the Ministry of War, the Navy, and the Air Force were brought together in a single body called the Ministry of Defense. In addition, the Chief of Defense was established with dependence on the head of government and the Minister of Defense with the role of consultant for the main issues relating to the organization and preparation of each armed force. Hence, the “I” office of the Defense General Staff began a reorganization that would have led it to become the Information Service of the Armed Forces (SIFAR) on September 1, 1949.⁹²

Thus, SIFAR absorbed the three armed forces’ offensive and defensive intelligence functions, becoming the processing center for all military news and those related to the military situation (political, economic, social information, etc.). The new intelligence service was divided into offensive and defensive offices. In each of the three armed forces chiefs, a section of operational information and situation (SIOS) was set up

⁹² Italian Joint Special Staff, *The Italian Military Intelligence Service from Its Establishment to the End of the Second World War*, 96.

directly dependent on those General Staffs. Finally, after many years in many attempts, it was possible to concentrate the development of all the defensive and offensive activity in the field of military intelligence in a single structure, which also exercised the direction and coordination of the intelligence activities of the other armed forces. Almost 100 years had passed since the unification of Italy to arrive at a harmonious composition of an ad hoc structure.⁹³

Conclusion

Between 1925 and 1949, the years in which the SIM operated, the role of military history within this institution changed in parallel with the change in Italian military intelligence. In particular, the role of military history had a high impact in the first period of establishing the SIM also because the first director was a professor of military history at the military academy of Modena.⁹⁴ He focused the training of the officers of the intelligence corps in the historical and cultural knowledge of the countries subject to information research to have a complete picture of the situation. The entry into World War II marks the first decline in the role of military history within the SIM. Indeed, due to the war requirements, the more experienced officers of the SIM were called to command the mobilized units, and the training of new personnel, for a matter of time, could not be very accurate from the historical point of view.⁹⁵ Between 1943 and 1949, years characterized by chaos and economic, social, and political uncertainty, the role of

⁹³ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 278.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 132.

military history within the SIM was not a priority.⁹⁶ On the contrary, it almost disappeared because military intelligence, like any other state apparatus, was committed to facing the challenges that the newly democratic country was about to face.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 270-278.

CHAPTER 3

THE ITALIAN FIRST REPUBLIC (1946-1994)

Introduction

From 1949 to 1994, Italian intelligence had to face different challenges which led to the undermining of the efficiency and public opinion perception of the national intelligence apparatus. The three intelligence services that followed one another in this era - the information *Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate* [Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces] (SIFAR) 1949-1966, the *Servizio Informazioni Difesa* [Intelligence Service of defense] (SID) 1966-1977, and the *Servizio per le Informazioni Militari* [Intelligence Military Service] (SISMI) 1977-2007.⁹⁷ What made national military intelligence more difficult was the influence of internal threats. All this contributed to the mass media campaigns against the secret services, defining them as a danger to the state. Unfortunately, the actions by some members of the Italian military secret services cast a shadow on the entire apparatus. Although many Italian citizens served with honor and discipline during these years, the collective national imagination gave rise to conspiracy theories that have damaged the image of the secret services, an image that continues in some quarters today.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Although SISMI existence lasted until 2007, the end of this Chapter is set for 1994 because it marked the end of the so called first Republic and a new cycle in this intelligence service agency. Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism in Italy and the Causes of the Failure to Identify those Responsible for the Massacres, *Investigation into Massacres and Misdirection Hearing of Senator Francesco Cossiga*. 27th session, November 6, 1997, <https://www.parlamento.it/parlam/bicam/terror/stenografici/steno27a.htm>.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

These 40 difficult years for the secret services negatively influenced all aspects of the recruitment, training, and operation of the SIFAR, SID, and SISMI personnel and unfortunately also found confirmation in the role of history within the military secret services.⁹⁹ Indeed, military history in this period was placed on the fringes of the intelligence apparatus.

In 1984 Admiral Fulvio Martini was appointed director of the SISMI. In this period, through his foresight and his experience within the military intelligence services, SISMI found a period of stability and recovery in which the culture of traditional intelligence came together with new technologies coming mainly from the United States of America. A fundamental point of Admiral Martini's work was the collaboration between the intelligence apparatus and national universities.¹⁰⁰

This quiet period lasted only a decade. Between 1991 and 1992, three events shocked the international geopolitical panorama and internal politics; the dissolution of the USSR, *Tangentopoli*, and the escalation of the mafia's war against the state, threw the entire national political landscape into the most significant uncertainty of the period of Italian republican history.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ The "*dietrologia*" [Cospiracy] is the research, sometimes obsessive and bizarre, in the interpretation or analysis of facts, events or behaviors, of what 'lies behind'. In Italy, the conspiracy theory sees the secret services as one of the actors who should have implemented a secret plan put in place by a minority in order to govern the world under the sign of lies.

¹⁰⁰ Fulvio Martini, *Nome in codice: Ulisse: trent'anni di storia italiana nelle memorie di un protagonista dei servizi segreti* [Code Name: Ulysses: Thirty Years of Italian History in the Memories of a Protagonist of the Secret Services] (Milan: Rizzoli, 1999), 94.

¹⁰¹ *Tangentopoli* is a scandal that swept Italy in the 1990s. It was a system of corruption and illicit financing that involved the leaders of the political and economic

Consequently, the role of military history in the military intelligence services of the First Republic is almost non-existent. Therefore, in this chapter, instead of analyzing the evolution of the secret services from 1949 to 1994, the analysis focuses on the causes that led to the disappearance of military history within the national intelligence apparatus. There are two reasons why military history has gradually lost importance within military intelligence. The first is of a cultural nature and has the change in Italian culture as its cornerstone after World War II. With the creation of the Italian Republic as a democratic country aligned with the Western bloc, it was necessary to embrace fully the Western culture and lifestyle, and to cancel or put firmly in the past the monarchical and fascist history that had characterized the previous years. Two elements played an important role: the Marshall Plan and the so-called historiographical crisis.¹⁰²

The second is of a military nature and refers specifically to national security. Indeed, between 1949 and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, the Italian national security apparatus was centered on defending the national territory. This led to focus attention on two aspects. The first was the defense of territorial integrity against a probable invasion from a voracious Soviet Union. The second was the need to preserve free institutions

world. It also marked the disappearance of two major parties: the DC and the PSI. In 1989 the Berlin Wall fell. The Soviet bloc completely lost its power in international politics. In Europe, the communist parties were collapsing everywhere while in Italy the entire system on which the political dialectic rested collapsed. In this scenario, the Italian Communist Party is the only large party that managed to survive by transforming itself. When the political vacuum of the center-right was occupied by the party created by Silvio Berlusconi, it ended the so-called first Italian Republic. Francesco Bonini, Lorenzo Ornaghi, and Andrea Spiri, *La Seconda Repubblica. Origini e Aporie dell'Italia Bipolare* [The Second Republic: Origins and Aporias of Bipolar Italy] (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2021), 33.

¹⁰² Fubini, *Postwar Period and Crisis of Italian Historiography*, 744.

undermined by entities such as the mafia, Freemasonry, corruption, Middle Eastern terrorism, and internal political terrorism of a communist and neo-fascist nature.¹⁰³ Military history was not an instrument believed capable of helping the intelligence services face these challenges.

Westernization of Italian Culture

The end of the Second World War brought about an upheaval in Italian institutions. The most significant change was the transition from a monarchical state to a republic, through the referendum on June 2, 1946. The end of the Kingdom of Italy and the constitution of the Italian Republic, however, did more than sanction the final passage of the Italian state into the family of democratic nations. In fact, the years between 1946 and 1949 were difficult years for Italian institutions. This is because in Italy, the emergence of left-wing parties such as the socialist party and the communist party made many in government fear a Soviet expansion also in the newly established Italian nation.¹⁰⁴ The Italian geostrategic position in the center of the Mediterranean Sea was a significant attraction for both the Soviet bloc and Western democracies. Therefore, the

¹⁰³ De Lutiis, *The Secret Services in Italy*, 19.

¹⁰⁴ The role played by the left partisan in the Italian liberation war between 1943 and 1945 contributed enormously to the effort that the allies supported during the Italian campaign. The partisans, after WWII, reconfigured themselves into communist and socialist political parties. They claimed and deserved an essential role in the constitution and direction of the new Italian Republic. Laura Bruno, "*L'Americanizzazione dell'Italia: Una Storia Paradossale di Entusiasmi e Reticenze*" ["The Americanization of Italy: A Paradoxical History of Enthusiasm and Reticence"] (Paper, Wellesley College, 2014), 28.

United States insisted upon Italy's affiliation with Western nations.¹⁰⁵ It was necessary to act on the economic, cultural, and military levels. The Marshall Plan played a crucial role in the process of westernization and democratization of national institutions. In fact, the Marshall Plan was not a mere economic stimulus plan for the recovery of the European national economies but had a military, cultural impact.¹⁰⁶

From a cultural point of view, it was necessary for Italian families to embrace a consumerist and capitalist lifestyle. Not only the Italian industrial system had to be reset, but it was necessary to shape a lifestyle that would support the industrial and economic effort of the country. As part of the same effort, it was essential to create a narrative also at a historiographical level centered on the understandable demonization of the previous monarchical and fascist Italian ideology.¹⁰⁷

In conjunction with propaganda, the fascist regime had used history in a distorted way to justify its malicious actions. The two primary examples explain how the fascist regime used distorted historical demonstration to validate its actions. First, the explanation of Italian expansionism was framed in the context of the reacquisition of Roman history. Second, the justification of the struggle against plutocratic democracies, which were historically represented as hostile to Italian imperialism. Therefore, in the postwar period, it was essential for the good and prosperity of Italian democracy to

¹⁰⁵ Bruno, "The Americanization of Italy," 30.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 35. The Dawes Plan for Germany after WWI is a prime example of a failed economic plan that had both limited resources and limited objectives, and in some unanticipated ways helped prepare the ground for national socialism.

¹⁰⁷ Fubini, *Postwar Period and Crisis of Italian Historiography*, 756.

ensure that history was not used maliciously and to justify aberrant actions such as what happened between 1922 and 1945. It was necessary to make vague, if not erase, the saddest period of Italian history. This mindset permeated throughout society and, therefore, in the military organization and intelligence, sanctioning a crisis in the approach and study of history.

This led to the so-called Italian historiographical crisis because important Italian historians during the post-war period totally changed the historiographical approach that had characterized the monarchical era.¹⁰⁸ This has led to a devaluation of the study of history in all contexts of the Italian state. An example is the number of hours dedicated to teaching history in schools before and after the war. Some documents show that the number of hours dedicated to this subject after World War II were more than halved. Furthermore, the texts used were written using the approved revisionist political rubric, which led to an almost dogmatic study of history as only one point of view was analyzed.¹⁰⁹

This dynamic also greatly influenced the study of the military history for the army officers of the newly constituted Italian Republic. In fact, the military education system was deeply linked to the Italian ministry of education. Thus, the officers who graduated from the military academy in Modena took a degree in political science at the University of Turin.¹¹⁰ Hence, the army training command had little decision-making autonomy in

¹⁰⁸ Fubini, *Postwar Period and Crisis of Italian Historiography*, 758.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 765.

¹¹⁰ Military Academy of Modena, “Training Programs of Military Academy Courses from 1950 to 1990,” (Archives, Military Academy of Modena, Italy).

the officers' school curricula. Consequently, the study of military history was only at a fringe level. In fact, military history only covered 2% of the entire curriculum of an Italian cadet.¹¹¹

This downward spiral dynamic affected negatively the perception of military history as an indispensable tool for the success of intelligence activities; it became ancillary to the renewed Italian government and military.

Defense of National Territory

Italy's entry into the ranks of Western democratic nations was formalized on April 4, 1949, when the NATO Treaty was signed in Washington by 12 founding member states, namely Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, , Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.¹¹² Italy, in addition to being the nation in the center of the Mediterranean, found itself one of the countries bordering the Iron Curtain. This entailed a new vision of how the military instrument was to be used to safeguard national interests. During this period the national military instrument was mainly used to defend national integrity against a possible Soviet invasion.¹¹³ The task of the armed forces in this period was to slow down as much as possible a potential penetration of the Soviet armed forces in the northeast of the peninsula. Therefore, the Italian armed forces no

¹¹¹ Military Academy of Modena, "Training Programs of Military Academy Courses from 1950 to 1990."

¹¹² Giorgio Federico, Simboni, *Il Confine Orientale* [The Eastern Border] (Sestri Levante: Oltre Edizioni, 2012), 151.

¹¹³ Ibid., 155.

longer needed an overseas, expeditionary capability meaning that there was no longer the need for an in-depth study of the other armed forces and their military history, even as a function of intelligence.

The non-existent projection abroad of the military instrument between 1949 and 1990 was characterized by more than the need to direct all efforts in defense of the north-east border (closest to communist territory) but was also due to significant limitations sanctioned with the Treaty of Paris in 1947 by the victorious nations of the Second World War against Italian armed forces.¹¹⁴

The forty years of the First Republic saw the institutions, and therefore also the world of military intelligence, face various internal threats which had the potential destabilize the Italian Republic. In fact, many resources from the point of view of military intelligence were absorbed by the fight against internal threats such as the mafia,

¹¹⁴ The military restrictions (Article 51) required Italy not to possess, purchase, build or test self-propelled nuclear weapons, missiles or projectiles and their related launch devices (with the exception of torpedoes and associated launch tubes present on the shipping granted by the Treaty); it was also forbidden to possess guns with ranges exceeding 30 km, mines and torpedoes equipped with influence activation devices. Italy also undertook to dismantle the military fortifications on the borders with France and Yugoslavia, and to demilitarize the islands of Pantelleria, Lampedusa and Pianosa (article 49). The dismantling of fortifications and military installations was imposed in Sardinia (limited to those located less than 30 km from French territorial waters) and Sicily, with the exception of the works intended to house the security forces (article 50). The Italian Army was to be limited to a maximum of 250,000 men (including 65,000 Carabinieri), with no more than 200 tanks. The Air Force was to be reduced to a maximum of 200 fighters and reconnaissance aircraft and 150 transport aircraft, with a maximum staff of 25,000 men; the construction or purchase of bombing aircraft was prohibited. The restrictions concerning the Navy (article 59) prohibited the construction, purchase and replacement of battleships, as well as the use and testing of aircraft carriers, underwater vessels, torpedo boats and assault vehicles of any kind. The total displacement of the military ships in service and under construction, excluding battleships, was not to exceed 67,500 tons, while the actual personnel could not exceed 25,000 units.

corruption, Middle Eastern terrorism, Freemasonry, and internal communist and neo-fascist terrorism.¹¹⁵ To fully understand how these threats influenced the disappearance of the role of military history within the Italian military intelligence services, it is necessary to analyze how the three military intelligence services of the First Italian Republic fought against these interior enemies.

Mafia

The term mafia indicates all those criminal organizations that have developed mainly in Italy, starting from the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies with the Kingdom of Italy. In this context, the so-called brigands that arose in Italy in the last three decades of the 1800s evolved until 1930, becoming a state within the state. Indeed, especially in Sicily, the criminal organizations that took the name of the Mafia in the early years of the Kingdom of Italy had developed an organization parallel to that of the State which, through the proceeds acquired from illegal activities, bought the support and support of some of the civilian population.¹¹⁶ Hence, during a visit to Sicily by Benito Mussolini in 1932, one of the *Podestà* (comparable to the current figure of the mayor) pointed out the presence of mafia leaders rooted in the Sicilian institutional system. After this awareness, Mussolini decided to wage a struggle without quarter against this criminal organization. General Cesare Mori was identified as the head of operations against the mafia, and

¹¹⁵ Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism in Italy and the Causes of the Failure to Identify those Responsible for the Massacres, *Investigation into Massacres and Misdirection Hearing of Senator Francesco Cossiga*.

¹¹⁶ Marco Santoro, *Riconoscere le mafie. Cosa sono, come funzionano, come si muovono*, [Recognize the Mafias: What Are They, How They Work, How They Move] (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2015), 46.

instituted a military war against all the mafia leaders of the time. This fight was so effective that the mafia was nearly eradicated from the Sicilian territory, but unfortunately, the problem was moved to other countries, especially in the United States, where most of the mafia bosses emigrated and formed new – but connected – criminal structures in the major cities with Italian populations.¹¹⁷

In connection with invasion of Sicily in July 1943, mafia bosses in the US offered their services in arranging the cooperation of remaining Sicilian mob families with the Allies. What seemed at the time as a useful insurgency against the fascist government inadvertently led to a rebirth of the mafia in the Sicilian and southern Italian territory.¹¹⁸

The post-war mafia strategy was to penetrate both local institutions and Sicilian families. In doing so, in addition to having some degree of support from the population, they could also enjoy institutional support at the local level. With the passing of the years, this situation metastasized as the mafia infected national institutions. Hence, the Italian intelligence services attempted to destroy the silence and the extreme loyalty within the mafia organizations. This was done through information acquired from the so-called *pentiti* [repentant] and through the application of the harsh prison sentences for the bosses brought to justice, although infiltration and bribery remained a concern.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Arrigo Petacco, *Il prefetto di ferro. L'uomo di Mussolini che mise in ginocchio la mafia*. [The Iron Prefect: Mussolini's Man Who Brought the Mafia to Its Knees] (Milan: Mondadori, 1975), 15.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 175-179.

¹¹⁹ Giovanni Falcone, *Cose di Cosa Nostra* [Things of Cosa Nostra] (Milano: BUR, 1991), 41.

Because of the specific nature of this threat, the role of history was not central in the fight against the mafia.

Corruption

Studying the history of Italy from 1861 to today, it is possible to highlight some recurring features: corruption is not a transitory phenomenon, linked only to specific periods of our political events; it is not a crime with an exclusive association with southern Italy; it is not a phenomenon in which any of those involved can rightly define themselves as a victim; the corruption often has ties to the mafias.¹²⁰

In addition to individual citizens who resort to corrupt methods to obtain advantages, systems of power have been consolidated, whose protagonists are unsuspected white-collar workers, for whom circumventing the law to pursue personal economic purposes has become the rule.¹²¹ And this phenomenon is not new: grand corruption is also present in those historical periods generally considered immune, such as fascism, which for example, in the Matteotti crime, exerts the full force of a consolidated corruption system.¹²²

¹²⁰ Isaia Sales and Simona Melorio, *Storia dell'Italia Corrotta* [History of the Corrupted Italy] (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2019), 56.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²² Giacomo Matteotti was an Italian politician, journalist, anti-fascist, and secretary of the Socialist Party between 1922 and 1924. He was kidnapped and murdered by fascists led by Amerigo Dumini by the will of Benito Mussolini due to his reports of electoral fraud and the climate of violence implemented by the nascent dictatorship in the elections of April 6, 1924, and his investigations into government corruption. On the very day he was killed, Matteotti should have presented a new speech to the Chamber of Deputies after the one on fraud on May 30. He would have revealed his discoveries

Corrupt systems recur over time, albeit with differences, each with its own rules and taxes, and in space, indifferently from north to south of the country.¹²³ In particular, the military-intelligence apparatus, especially the counterintelligence part, fought mafia-related corruption in the armed forces through encouraging whistleblowers and informants. This was specifically encouraged by the Italian intelligence services to ensure accessible communication within the organization in which the whistleblower worked. As can also be seen in this case, the role of military history within this aspect of intelligence is minimal.

Middle Eastern Terrorism

In popular understanding, Middle Eastern terrorism is perceived as a novelty of the post-cold war. In reality, this phenomenon markedly characterized the years of the First Italian Republic. Although it was not the primary threat within our territory, terrorist organizations from the countries of the Middle East created serious consequences in Italy between the 70s and the 90s. Therefore, the Italian intelligence apparatus, the *Servizio per le Informazioni e Sicurezza Militare* [Service for Information and Military Security] (SISMI), has made immense efforts to try to understand and avert the terrorist attacks within the national territory. The way the SISMI dealt with this threat was very effective. Concerning the operational initiatives undertaken, the SISMI had identified the following intervention measures at the national level:

concerning the financial scandal involving Arnaldo Mussolini, the Duce's younger brother. Matteotti's body was found about two months later.

¹²³ Sales and Melorio, *History of the Corrupted Italy*, 79.

1. The prevention activities carried out through the control of the places frequented by radical elements such as call centers, money transfers or directly conducted against fundamentalist environments;
2. Monitoring of detainees restricted for national and international terrorist offenses or of subjects deemed of interest;
3. Identification and expulsion of dangerous elements by decree of the Minister of the Interior;
4. Insights into the financing channels entrusted to the *Guardia di Finanza*.¹²⁴

It should be specified that the fight against the financing of Islamic terrorism, many efforts still need to be made to make it effective, both because the investigations conducted in this sector, despite the creation of the Financial Intelligence Units, are often decidedly poorly coordinated between the authorities of the various countries concerned, and because the regulatory framework in force at that time was composed of a set of rules and structures designed to fight the financing of terrorism through hypothetical and sophisticated financial and banking channels. The reality, as well as that emerging from most European investigations, on the other hand, seems to prove that funding comes mainly from below, i.e., from low-level everyday criminal activities (drug trafficking, fake documents, and banknotes) or from offers from faithful unaware, which poses different problems for investigators.¹²⁵ The role of history, in this circumstance, is

¹²⁴ The *Guardia di Finanza* is one of the Italian police forces with a military order, with general competence in economic and financial matters. It is directly dependent on the Minister of Economy and Finance.

¹²⁵ *Istituto Superiore di Studi Penitenziari* [Higher Institute of Penitentiary Studies], *La radicalizzazione del terrorismo islamico Elementi per uno studio del fenomeno di proselitismo in carcere* [The Radicalization of Islamic Terrorism Elements

present but with some limitations; indeed, despite being correctly used to understand the background that led to the terroristic dynamics, it encounters some cultural barriers. As will be explained later, the study does not occur during the training and professional preparation of the operators but during the investigative activities. Therefore, the ability of the investigator to fill knowledge gaps due to lack of preparation during training courses is entrusted to the investigator's skill.

In the investigations, transfers of small sums (never exceeding ten million of the old lire or about five thousand dollars) through alternative channels to banking ones, such as Western Union, or through direct delivery, were ascertained. *Zakat* is one of the most used methods. In fact, it is one of the *arkan Islam*, that is the pillars of faith, together with the profession of faith, prayer, Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca and consists in the duty on the part of the good Muslim to bestow the charity that will be left for the poorest. In reality, these donations, while in Islamic countries, are institutionalized and compulsory based on income, and it is easy to follow their paths. In other countries, they are managed by charitable companies, which, in some cases, redirect the accumulated funds to terrorist organizations.¹²⁶ Finally, there is *Hawala*, that is, a clandestine banking system that sends money in an unregulated way and is based on relationships between distinct agents (*Halawadar*) who operate in different areas of the world and which does not allow to discover the identity of the lender. For example, a person resident in Italy

for a Study of the Phenomenon of Proselytism in Prison] (Rome: Ministry of Justice, 2012), 24, http://www.antonioacasella.eu/nume/ISSP_terr_islamico_2012.pdf.

¹²⁶ Higher Institute of Penitentiary Studies, *The Radicalization of Islamic Terrorism Elements for a Study of the Phenomenon of Proselytism in Prison*, 31.

turns to a *Halawadar* to send a certain amount of money to the family in Kenya, the latter contacts another *Halawadar* in the country where the customer's relatives are located, providing him with a code for the collection of the sum and delivery to recipients of Kenyan shillings.¹²⁷ The transaction is efficient and straightforward; it does not require a bank account, no identification document, or no artificial exchange rate decided by the bank, as the Halawadar operates on the market and obtains an established exchange rate from the market. Therefore, the action to combat the threat of terrorism is also complex in the legal configuration of the operational responses that national and international counter-terrorism operators can have at their disposal.¹²⁸ Also, in this case, the role of history was marginal and encounters some cultural barriers.

Freemasonry

As for the question of Freemasonry in Italy, the relationship with the secret services plays an important role. The P2 lodge (an acronym for Propaganda Two, founded in 1877 with the name of Masonic Propaganda) was a criminal association and Italian Freemasonry adhering to the Grand Orient of Italy (GOI).¹²⁹

P2 was founded in the second half of the 19th century, and it was dissolved during the Fascist period and then reconstituted at the end of the Second World War; in the

¹²⁷ Higher Institute of Penitentiary Studies, *The Radicalization of Islamic Terrorism Elements for a Study of the Phenomenon of Proselytism in Prison*, 34.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Dino Arrigo, *Fratelli d'Italia. Cronache, storie, riti e personaggi (per capire la Massoneria)* [Brothers of Italy: Chronicles, Stories, Rites and Characters (Understanding Freemasonry)] (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1994), 45.

period of its management by Licio Gelli, it took forms deviating from the statutes of Freemasonry and became subversive towards the Italian legal system. Therefore, P2 was suspended by the GOI on July 26, 1976; and declared as a real “criminal organization” and “subversive,” by the parliamentary commission of inquiry directed by the honorable Tina Anselmi.¹³⁰ It engages communist and neo-fascist terrorism with the so-called strategy of tension.¹³¹

In the second half of the 1970s, the two different factions of the extreme right and left were also encouraged to radicalize the armed struggle and respond blow by blow, action by action to the violence of others. The expression “strategy of tension” is of English origin (strategy of tension): it was coined by the British weekly *The Observer*. It first appeared in an article by journalist Leslie Finer dated 7 December 1969, only five days before the Piazza Fontana massacre.¹³²

¹³⁰ Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism in Italy and the Causes of the Failure to Identify those Responsible for the Massacres. *Investigation into Massacres and Misdirection Hearing of Senator Francesco Cossiga*. Tina Anselmi was an Italian politician, partisan and teacher. She was the first woman to have held the office of Minister of the Italian Republic. In 1981, during the eighth legislature, she was appointed president of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Masonic Lodge P2 of Licio Gelli, which finished its work in 1985. The task was assigned to her by Nilde Iotti, then President of the Chamber; Anselmi asked for just fifteen minutes to think about it, then accepted the job. The only woman on the Commission (made up of twenty other senators and twenty deputies), Anselmi was the first to use the metaphor of the double pyramid to illustrate the hierarchies of what she called the “P2 system”. This post cost her insults and delegitimization and growing political isolation in the following years, even by her party. Philip Willian, *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (Bloomington: Iunivers, 2002), 50.

¹³¹ IX Italian Legislature, *Relazione della commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulla loggia massonica* [Report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the Masonic Lodge P2] (Rome, 11 July 1984), 19.

¹³² The Piazza Fontana massacre was the result of a serious terrorist attack carried out on 12 December 1969 in the center of Milan at the National Bank of Agriculture and

As it concerned Italy, according to the English journalist, a plan would have been in place with the then President of the Republic Giuseppe Saragat at the center, who hoped for a presidential republic,¹³³ aimed at creating a clash between social forces, already underway at that time, to impose a precise reactionary political turn.¹³⁴

The main motive of the strategy of tension would have been to destabilize the Italian political landscape. One of the reasons of this strategy, especially in Italy and in the context of the Cold War, would have been that of weakening the democratic political system, making democracy unstable and blocking the progressive shift of the political and governmental axis towards the forces of the extreme left. Many theories led to speculate a role of the SID in this strategy due to some ties that emerged with neo-fascist groups: in fact, according to some historians, these terrorist attacks were intended to sow fear among the population, to legitimize the establishment of an authoritarian government or even coups by political forces, or in any case organized, generally gravitating in the area of the far right.¹³⁵ Again according to some historians and judicial findings, this coup strategy has its ideological origins since the mid-sixties, in particular from the so-

which caused 17 deaths and 88 injuries. Considered the mother of all massacres. Anna Cento Bull, *Italian Neofascism: The Strategy of Tension and the Politics of Non-reconciliation* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 65.

¹³³ Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism in Italy and the Causes of the Failure to Identify those Responsible for the Massacres. *Investigation into Massacres and Misdirection Hearing of Senator Francesco Cossiga*.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ XIII Italian Legislature, *Report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the Phenomenon of Terrorism in Italy and on the Causes of the Failure to Identify those Responsible for the Massacres* (Rome: Senato della Repubblica, 2001), 12, <https://www.parlamento.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/DF/17271.pdf>.

called Solo Plan (the failed coup of 1964) and the Conference of the Parco dei Principi Hotel organized by the Alberto Pollio Military Studies Institute in May 1965 on the anti-communist revolutionary war, in which personalities from the business world, senior army officers, journalists, politicians and neo-fascist exponents (including Pino Rauti, Stefano Delle Chiaie, and Mario Merlino).¹³⁶

As reported by the judge: “from 1969 to 1975 there were 4,584 attacks, 83 percent of which clearly marked by the subversive right (which accounted for 113 dead, including 50 victims of the massacres and 351 wounded), the protection of the secret services against subversive movements appears more and more blatant.”¹³⁷

The massacres and bomb attacks were not the only instruments of the strategy of tension, which also includes the operation of secret paramilitary structures with subversive purposes (*Rosa dei Venti*, *Nuclei di Difesa dello Stato* and *Gladio*), the involvement of the lodge Masonic P2 led by Licio Gelli (infiltrated in the main institutions of the state with anti-communist political aims) and the organization of coups d’etat (in addition to the “Piano Solo,” the failed Golpe Borghese of 1970 and Golpe Bianco of 1974). The military played a dual role. The first was carried out by the so-

¹³⁶ XIII Italian Legislature, *Report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the Phenomenon of Terrorism in Italy and on the Causes of the Failure to Identify those Responsible for the Massacres*, 14. Rauti, Delle Chiaie and Merlino were Italian politicians of the neo-fascist right party (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*).

¹³⁷ *Tribunale di Savona, ufficio del giudice per le indagini preliminari* [Court of Savona, Office of the Judge for Preliminary Investigations], *Decreto di archiviazione procedimento penale 2276/90 R.G.* [Decree for Filing Criminal Proceedings], Savona, Italy, 15 February 1990, 23-25, https://digilander.libero.it/appuntiskettini/Strategia_Tensione.pdf.

called *servizi segreti italiani deviati* [corrupted Italian secret service].¹³⁸ On the other hand, there was an effort made by the military secret services to counter these terrorist organizations.¹³⁹ Even in the fight against domestic terrorism the role of military history in the intelligence was marginal.

Conclusion

The role of military history in Italian military intelligence was almost non-existent during the First Republic. Although SIFAR, SID, and SISMI personnel have fought with competence and tenacity, the challenges posed by the mafia, freemasonry, corruption, Middle Eastern terrorism, and internal political terrorism of a communist and neo-fascist nature, they have often been accused of being colluding with the enemies of the Republic.¹⁴⁰ In addition, initiatives such as those of Admiral Fulvio Martini to revive the role of history within the secret services were never fully matured or realized.¹⁴¹ Indeed, by analyzing the methods of combating national security threats, the military history was not of the primary tool used by Italian intelligence to defeat the enemies of that time.

¹³⁸ Part of the Italian secret services, which in the course of their activity and their history, have had relations with mafia, communist or fascist terrorist organizations.

¹³⁹ XIII Italian Legislature, *Report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the Phenomenon of Terrorism in Italy and on the Causes of the Failure to Identify those Responsible for the Massacres*, 13.

¹⁴⁰ Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism in Italy and the Causes of the Failure to Identify those Responsible for the Massacres. *Investigation into Massacres and Misdirection Hearing of Senator Francesco Cossiga*.

¹⁴¹ Martini, *Code Name: Ulysses*, 94.

The reasons why history has almost completely lost its role in intelligence are twofold. The first is cultural. Indeed, due to the creation of the new Italian democratic state and the need to distance itself from the monarchical and fascist past that had characterized the previous twenty years, history was considered radioactive – something to be avoided or sanitized. Hence, the Marshall Plan and the historiographical crisis played an important role.¹⁴²

The second reason is of a military nature. The new conception of the military instrument focused solely on the defense of national integrity and the safeguarding of free institutions. Both the defensive approach against a possible Soviet/Warsaw Pact attack (external threat) and in the fight against the enemies of the Republic such as the mafia, freemasonry, corruption, Middle Eastern terrorism, and internal political terrorism of communists and neo-fascists (internal threat), history did not find a primary role within the Italian military intelligence.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Fubini, *Postwar Period and Crisis of Italian Historiography*, 744.

¹⁴³ De Lutiis, *The Secret Services in Italy*, 19.

CHAPTER 4

THE ITALIAN SECOND REPUBLIC (1994-2022)

Introduction

The end of the first Republic not only sanctioned a political disruption but led, like a revolution, to a cultural upheaval. Thus, even the Italian military world has had to face the changes brought about by the end of an era that lasted about fifty years. This, together with the rise of new threats to national security and the use of the military instrument beyond the borders of the Italian peninsula, forced a clear change in the Italian military secret services.¹⁴⁴

From 1994 to the present day, the role of military history has had its ups and downs. On the one hand, the secret services have tried, through greater openness towards society, to increase the role of military history through initiatives in favor of greater transparency of the national intelligence system; on the other hand, a historiographical culture more focused on a nomothetic rather than an idiographic vision of history has led to a decrease in the importance of recent history in Italian society generally.¹⁴⁵

This chapter will analyze two critical factors to appreciate this dynamic better. The first factor is the end of the so-called “imperialism of history,” which for centuries had been the dominant principle in the social sciences and was now facing a crisis. This

¹⁴⁴ Montagnese and Neri, *The Evolution of Italian National Security*, 2.

¹⁴⁵ Galasso, *History of Italian Historiography*, 167.

crisis was not just a crisis of concepts and ideas, but one that entered deeply into Italian social life.¹⁴⁶ It also had a major impact on military training.

The second factor is linked to the reform of the Italian secret services. The end of the First Republic had inflicted a heavy blow on the prestige of the intelligence and national security system. Furthermore, with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the growing international instability, new threats appeared on the Italian horizon. In addition, the Italian military instrument was no longer used as a mere defense of national sovereignty and integrity in this period. However, it was projected into the so-called enlarged Mediterranean to protect the external interests of the Italian state, which in the meantime had become the eighth world economic power.¹⁴⁷

All this gave way to the intelligence and national security system reform, finalized with *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)]. The main objective of this legislation was to increase the powers of the national intelligence apparatus but at the same time increase parliamentary control, and in particular of the non-governmental

¹⁴⁶ Galasso, *History of Italian Historiography*, 167.

¹⁴⁷ The enlarged Mediterranean is the region between the Gibraltar-Gulf of Aden line, the Middle East and the northern shore of the Mediterranean. This, with the Suez Canal, has become an artery connecting the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans through which one third of world maritime trade passes. The increased interdependence between the countries of this macro-region means that a crisis in one of them inevitably affects the security and prosperity of the others. The Italian peninsula, in the center of the Mediterranean, is the most exposed of the European countries. Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796* (London: Penguin, 2008), 714.

political part, on the entities that formed national intelligence.¹⁴⁸ Fundamental elements of the *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)] were: a new structure on three levels, an expansion of external communication to give a more transparent image of Italian intelligence, and demilitarization of the secret services.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, despite the greater transparency of the secret services which gave a small place to the role of history in the Italian intelligence apparatus, the role of history in a broader sense remained almost marginal.

End of Imperialism History: History Is No Longer the Queen of Human Sciences

With the end of the Second Republic, the community of Italian historians hoped that the study of history would come out of an ideological framework and become a welcome addition that had as its objective the analysis of historical facts from a multidirectional point of view to evaluate events from multiple perspectives. In reality, starting from the 90s, a vision of nomothetic history emerged.¹⁵⁰ This led to a sharp reduction in the presence of history in schools of all levels, from elementary to university because history was no longer considered the most important subject of the human sciences. In addition to a decrease in teachers in some universities, the weight attributed to history in school curricula significantly reduced. In that period, among university

¹⁴⁸ Montagnese and Neri, *The Evolution of Italian National Security*, 2.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁵⁰ Galasso, *History of Italian Historiography*, 171.

professors, the denunciation of a remarkable lack of historical background of the young people who came to university is common. History was no longer deemed essential at all or essential to the same extent as in previous educational curricula.¹⁵¹

Moreover, the so-called phenomenon of the spectacle of history, that is, the decrease in the space dedicated to history in the classrooms in favor of wider dissemination of it in television and radio programs or a use of selected novels to teach history, contributed to giving history a secondary role frequently linked to economic and advertising dynamics.¹⁵²

Thus, to keep up with the times, historiography had to opt for an excess of specialization that was too often fruitless and not very useful on a general level. Thus, it was preferred to provide further attention to contemporary historical studies, almost removing the previous periods as a fundamental element of memory. An example was the revisionism of national events from the *Risorgimento* onwards. With the collapse of ideologies, there was no attention to pure history, immune from any heterogeneous contamination. Instead, we witnessed a transformation of historiography from human sciences, full of ethical, political, and cultural conditioning.¹⁵³

The crisis of so-called imperialism of history affects not only civil education but also military training. Indeed, in the early 2000s, the history subjects within the curriculum of the Italian military academy were seven out of a total of 61; of these seven

¹⁵¹ Galasso, *History of Italian Historiography*, 171.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 172.

only two were focused on military history, the other five were focused on contemporary history and the history of international relations in Europe from the Middle Ages to today.¹⁵⁴

Over the years, the lack of the study of history among the officers of the Italian army has raised several questions among the leaders of the armed forces. In fact, in 2018, the army chief of staff approved a publication called *Military History: Use and Methodology*.¹⁵⁵ He stated that this publication arose from the need to fill the gap on the study of military history in the training studies of the Italian army, to favor the development of a systematic vision of warfare, tactics, operational art, and connected planning activities. All this had to be supported and integrated with lessons learned and case studies. In addition, there was a need for a study of history to help train the military officer and professionals, increasing their critical ability, improving their learning, analysis, and the ability to process summaries of complex events and situations. Moreover, an essential point for the Italian army was the ability to make the experiences of others their own.¹⁵⁶

Hence, it was necessary to configure a different and more functional approach to the teaching of military history to face the shortcomings resulting from the crisis of imperialism of history.¹⁵⁷ Obviously, the aim was not to train history experts but to guide

¹⁵⁴ Military Academy of Modena, “Training Programs of Military Academy Courses from 2003 to 2021,” (Archives, Military Academy of Modena, Italy).

¹⁵⁵ Cerino Badone, Doctrinal Note, *Military History: Use and Methodology*, 2.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ The end of the First Republic as a domino effect led to the so-called imperialism of history in Italy. Substantially history was no longer the main subject

students to a systemic vision of warfare, tactics, operational art, and planning; based on examples chosen from the events of 2000 years of history.¹⁵⁸

A fundamental role of this new approach to history should have been the educational visits and the staff rides. The aim was to make the officers appreciate both how the terrain affected commander's decisions and understand the difficulties encountered by the commanders and soldiers during war.¹⁵⁹

Unfortunately, although this topic became of greater importance in the high Italian military spheres, according to Captain Giovanni Cerino Badone, instructor of military history at the military army application school, the facts do not correspond to the words. The activities related to the study of history are often perceived as expensive, useless, and of mere military tourism.¹⁶⁰

among the human sciences starting from the 90s. It was preferred to give it a nomothetic approach to history. This was the main reason that brought to the decreasing of number of history lessons at all levels of education since the second half of the nineties. Cerino Badone, Doctrinal Note, *Military History: Use and Methodology*, 8.

¹⁵⁸ The year 106 AD is used as a starting point to give scope and scale to the study of history in Italian military schools. In the same year, the Dacian wars ended (101 -106 AD), and the legions of Trajan (98-117 AD) also completed the conquest of Arabia Petrea, present-day Saudi Arabia. In this way, the empire ensured traffic control to the Persian Gulf and the East. During this period, the Roman army performed what we now call Counter insurgency operations.

¹⁵⁹ Cerino Badone, Doctrinal Note, *Military History: Use and Methodology*, 5.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 6.

Law No. 124 del 2007, the Birth of *Sistema di Informazione per la Sicurezza della Repubblica* [Intelligence SYSTEM for the Security of the Republic] (SISR)

A small impulse to change the role of military history within intelligence took place following the reform of the Italian intelligence and security system with *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)]. This law aimed to organize the new services of the Italian Republic to cope with the latest threats especially coming from Middle Eastern terrorism, and cope with the geopolitical changes that occurred with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it was essential to reform a sector that had been negatively affected in the image after the dissolution of the First Italian Republic.¹⁶¹

Fundamental elements of the reform *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)] were: a new structure on three levels, an expansion of external communication to give a more transparent image of the Italian services, and demilitarization of the secret services.¹⁶²

Concerning the new three-level structure, the first level consists of the governance and strategic direction structure. The organs that make up the government structure of strategic direction of the intelligence and SISR are the President of the Council of Ministers (PdC), the inter-ministerial committee for the security of the Republic (CISR),

¹⁶¹ Montagnese and Neri, *The Evolution of Italian National Security*, 2.

¹⁶² Ibid., 2-3.

and the delegated authority (AD). The PdC, as the most important body in the Italian intelligence, possess political and administrative powers, political responsibility, and coordination of the information security policy. Thus, the ministers of defense of the interior lost any kind of control over the intelligence organizations placed under them until 2007. Apparently, this increase in powers goes hand in hand with the rise in the control that within the SISR is entrusted to a parliamentary body that is the *Comitato Parlamentare per il Controllo sul Sistema di Intelligence della Repubblica* [parliamentary committee for control over the Republic's intelligence system] (COPASIR).¹⁶³

The second level is the level of coordination and strategic support. The structure of coordination and strategic support of the Italian intelligence is constituted by the Department of Information for Security (DIS). The DIS has a control and coordination function of the two intelligence services (external security agency AISE and information agency and internal security AISI). Therefore, the DIS represents the institutional link between the operational bodies and the political direction.¹⁶⁴

The third level of the SISR structure is the operational level composed of *Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Esterna* [External Information and Security Agency] (AISE), and the *Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Interna* [Internal Security and Information Agency] (AIS), which had replaced the military security information service and the information and security service democratic security, SISMI and SISDE. The AISI

¹⁶³ Montagnese and Neri, *The Evolution of Italian National Security*, 6.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 7.

conducts intelligence activities within the national territory, while the AISE deals with intelligence outside of national borders.¹⁶⁵

A slight boost to the role of history in the Italian secret services comes from the desire to provide further transparency to national intelligence services. This denotes the most significant difference between the older Italian intelligence system and the one currently in force. In fact, the *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)] allows Italian intelligence to improve their public persona via the internet.¹⁶⁶ Thus, it becomes essential for the Italian secret services to inform an audience made up of citizens, private companies, universities, and public opinion through multiple communication tools. One of the most effective communication tools is the website of the information system that the security of the Republic. The online periodical GNOIS allows access to previously hidden areas and facilitates both openness and public research – even this thesis benefits from it.¹⁶⁷ In fact, in all the editions of this magazine, considerable historical insights suggest that there is an intention to increase the role of history in intelligence, albeit primarily in a way that is aimed at the general public. Furthermore, the website contains

¹⁶⁵ Montagnese and Neri, *The Evolution of Italian National Security*, 6.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁶⁷ GNOIS is the magazine of the Information and Internal Security Agency, was born in 2004 as an evolution of “*Per aspera ad veritatem*” - established in 1995 by the then SISDE - to promote and disseminate the culture of intelligence. Information and Internal Security Agency, Italy, *Gnosis*. This is also a deliberate play on the Greek word, *gnosis* – “knowledge”.

numerous historical publications and books which are described as works of extreme value, fundamental for the success of the intelligence activity.¹⁶⁸

A further element of openness to the outside world of Italian intelligence, which contributed to a minimal increase in the role of history within intelligence, is the relationship that SISR established with the major Italian universities. In particular, the program called Academic Outreach takes the form of diversified forms of collaboration with universities, think tanks, and research centers. These carry out educational activities and research projects on issues related to national security.¹⁶⁹

Demilitarization of the Italian National Intelligence

The dynamics of the distancing of intelligence from the military world is accentuated by a further regulatory point. *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)] places the II *Reparto Informazioni e Sicurezza* [2nd Information and Security Department] (II RIS) of Joint Special Staff outside the intelligence and security system,

¹⁶⁸ “Our history defines who we are today. For this it is necessary to know it and make it known also through more modern tools, such as the web. Through a narrative that combines the scientific approach to the fascination of popular narrative, an ideal journey takes place that will introduce you to the small and large events and the voices of those men who, far from the limelight of the news or from the honors of historical re-enactments, have contributed to building our country and guaranteeing the security and freedom of its institutions.” Information and Internal Security Agency, Italy, “History of Intelligence,” accessed 18 March 2022, <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/category/storia-dintelligence.html>.

¹⁶⁹ Information and Internal Security Agency, Italy, “Collaboration with Universities.”

limiting its powers to the technical military and military police tasks and, more generally, to active intelligence units aimed at protecting military forces operating overseas. The competencies entrusted to II RIS under the previous regulatory framework were directed to the departments and offices in charge of Intelligence, and security existing in each armed force or armed body of the State. These bodies, called armed force operational information and security services (SIOS), operated in close connection with the SISMI and were considered an integral part of the operational structure of Italian intelligence between 1949 and 2007. The choice to exclude II RIS in the SISR is a clear sign of legislative intent to demilitarize the Italian secret services.¹⁷⁰

For the analysis of the role of history within the Italian military intelligence, it is essential to analyze two important bodies of the II RIS point, in particular, the *Centro Intelligence Interforze* [Joint Intelligence Center] (CII) and the *Centro Interforze di Formazione Intelligence e Guerra Elettronica* [Joint Force Center for Intelligence Training and Electronic Warfare] (CIFIGE). The first performs the military-technical intelligence functions of the Italian armed forces. It mainly deals with matters of intelligence, information gathering, and processing. Through the II RIS, it works in connection with the AISE, the information and counterintelligence service for operations abroad.¹⁷¹

Within the CII, the Territorial Office deals with military intelligence in the various countries where Italian military contingents are present. The personnel belonging

¹⁷⁰ Montagnese and Neri, *The Evolution of Italian National Security*, 9.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 39.

to this office are responsible for carrying out the intelligence cycle to provide, at the strategic level, a clear picture of the situation of the operational environments in which the Italian soldiers are employed. According to the statements of intelligence officers working in this office, military history is not considered decisive for the development of intelligence activities. Its importance is undervalued because, in Italian military intelligence, current intelligence is given more priority than basic intelligence; describing what is happening is considered more important than describing the predicate of the current situation.¹⁷² This false perception makes the forecasting activity that should be typical of all intelligence products all the more difficult. It is a widespread effect in many fields, partly due to the information society in which we live. The overabundance of data makes the activities more similar to a press review, characterized by great simplification and synthesis (“all contained in a slide”); rather than a bibliographic analysis characterized by a thorough explanation of the sources and data collected, which maintains its validity over time thanks to the cyclical principles it has managed to highlight (such as a thesis or an essay).¹⁷³

For example, every month, the *Comando Operativo di Vertice Interforze* [Central Joint Command] (COVI) provides an intelligence update on the situation of all theaters where Italian troops operate. This update only catalogues the events that happened during the month, mostly examining the influence that the events have on the current situation and their effect on the security of Italian troops. An example of events monitored is the

¹⁷² A promotable Major of the Italian Army who worked at the CII was interviewed. For security reasons prefers to remain anonymous.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

number of demonstrations against Italian contingents. Thus, COVI does not analyze the reasons that led to these demonstrations, but it only describes the consequences of these events in the present. Thus, the protests continue to occur, and instead of trying to stop them from happening, studying their historical causes, they only plan how to deal with them in the present and reduce their effects on the troops.¹⁷⁴

Another organization essential to understanding the role of military history within Italian military intelligence is CIFI GE. Analyzing the mission, the training plan, and the cooperation with other institutes both nationally and internationally, one sees that the role of history in this critical training center for Italian military intelligence is surprisingly minimal. Indeed, the Center is a military training institute devoted to training the personnel of the various armed forces in the specific field of intelligence. In particular, the Center qualifies and updates military personnel for employment in the intelligence sector by carrying out training courses for intelligence, counterintelligence, and security experts. Further, it constitutes a point of reference for developing the national doctrine for the aspects relating to military intelligence. To do this, it seeks and maintains contacts with national and foreign training institutes, in particular the NATO School Oberammergau.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ XVIII Italian Legislature, “*Comunicazioni del Governo sull’andamento delle missioni internazionali autorizzate per il 2018 e sulla loro proroga per l’anno in corso, nonché sulle missioni da avviare nel 2019, svolte il 31 maggio 2019*” [“Communications from the Government on the progress of the international missions authorized for 2018 and their extension for the current year, as well as on the missions to be launched in 2019, carried out on 31 May 2019] (Rome, 2018), https://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=Resaula&leg=18&id=1118000&part=doc_dc-ressten_rs.

¹⁷⁵ Ministry of Defense, Italy, “Joint Intelligence Training Center/GE,” accessed 15 April 2022, https://www.difesa.it/SMD_/Staff/Reparti/II/CIFI GE/Pagine/default.aspx.

The training of personnel working in intelligence branch is created through the following processes:

1. - initial training, aimed at giving all Defense personnel a common vocabulary, carried out at the CIFI GE or delegated body and coinciding with the Joint Intelligence Course;
2. - basic training, by each armed forces with the aim of training its personnel for specific operational needs;
3. - advanced training, carried out by the CIFI GE and aimed at training personnel for use in the national, NATO, and multinational joint forces.¹⁷⁶

CIFI GE's educational activities plan is realized by elaborating the CIFI GE's Three-Year Training Offer Plan, a planning and promotion document of the academic and educational objectives that the Center aims to achieve. Again, military history is not one of the topics covered in the training courses for personnel working in the intelligence sector. It is not considered helpful for understanding the dynamics and techniques for collecting information and dissemination. An example is the complete absence of this subject within the curricula of the various courses.¹⁷⁷

This also proves compliance with the educational outcomes of the NATO School of Oberammergau. In fact, none of the sixteen courses offered by the school's intelligence department has historical application featured among its learning objectives. However, some NATO intelligence courses use case studies, which could suggest a

¹⁷⁶ Ministry of Defense, Italy, "Joint Intelligence Training Center/GE."

¹⁷⁷ Joint Intelligence and Electronic Warfare Training Center, *Three-Year Training Offer Plan 2020-2024*, 2-10.

presence of history in the lessons. Nevertheless, these courses only use the case studies for illustrative purposes (if something like this happens, act in this way) and not to analyze the events' roots.¹⁷⁸

Conclusion

The void created by the end of the First Republic, both at a cultural and institutional level, had a profound impact on the role of the study of history in both civil and military environments. At first, it was thought that the end of the First Republic and the end of some political ideologies that arose after the war eliminated the ideological vision of history to embrace a more multidirectional approach to the study of history capable of reading historical events from multiple points of view. Instead, with the Second Republic, a nomothetic approach to history was born, which led to the crisis of the imperialism of history among human sciences.¹⁷⁹ Thus, in Italian schools of all types and levels, starting from the 1990s, there has been a reduction in teaching hours dedicated to historical subjects. In addition to making history less important in Italian society, this also impacted the new civil and military management generations. Indeed, as noted by various civil and military professors, the background of historical knowledge with which the students arrived at the university level was considerably lower than in previous decades.¹⁸⁰ Despite formal efforts to restore importance to the study of past events to better understand the dynamics of the present and better face future challenges, the idea

¹⁷⁸ NATO, "Course Catalogs."

¹⁷⁹ Galasso, *History of Italian Historiography*, 167.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

that the study of history is superfluous is still persistent today, as if it were a superfluity left to few people. The example is how events such as historical staff laughs are considered mere military tourism. Today, despite the indications of the Army Chief of Staff, the efforts to revive the study of the military history of the training institutes of the Italian army seem not to be successful.¹⁸¹

More specifically, from an intelligence point of view, the analysis of the 2007 reform that took place with *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)] also highlights in this case that the efforts put on paper to give greater importance to the study of past events have not found practical confirmation in the facts. Important initiatives in this area were the greater external communication of the Italian intelligence services. Precious initiatives are the Internet site of the information service for the security of the Republic, which, through the online publication of the magazine GNOIS, has tried to give ample space to historical issues within the national intelligence system. Another valuable initiative is the collaboration with the major Italian universities. The project is called academic outreach to make the discipline of intelligence and security a discipline with a multidisciplinary approach. In this sense, history, unfortunately, plays a marginal role.¹⁸²

From the point of view of military intelligence, *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto*

¹⁸¹ Montagnese and Neri, *The Evolution of Italian National Security*, 9-35.

¹⁸² Ibid.

[Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)] aims at the demilitarization of military secret services. In fact, II RIS, the technical intelligence body of the Ministry of Defense, no longer has a role in intelligence apparatus. Indeed, the II RIS has the merely technical and functional task of addressing intelligence only at the military-strategic level. Two important organs of the II RIS are the CII and the CIFIKE.¹⁸³

Within the CII, the territorial intelligence office is of particular importance for the treatment of this research. This office has the task of updating the Italian defense summit on the operational environment in which the Italian troops are deployed. Analyzing the work of this office, we note the prevalence of the conduct of current intelligence over basic intelligence; this leads to a vision of military intelligence more inclined to update daily events rather than a study of the root of the problems. Therefore, since the study of history focuses on analyzing the origins of certain phenomena, as a rule, military history does not find space in this new concept.¹⁸⁴ For example, every month, the CII provides an update on the situation in Libya. This update only lists the various events that occurred during the month, mainly analyzing the impact that the events have on the current situation in the North African country and their influence on the security of Italian troops. An example of events monitored is the number of violent demonstrations during the

¹⁸³ Montagnese and Neri, *The Evolution of Italian National Security*, 9-35.

¹⁸⁴ In the CII's structure is not present the organic position for military historians. Ministry of Defense, Italy, "Joint Intelligence Center," accessed 15 April 2022, https://www.difesa.it/Protocollo/AOO_Difesa/SMD/Pagine/SCII.aspx.

election period. Thus, CII does not try to analyze the roots that led to this situation, but it only explains the consequences of these events in the present.¹⁸⁵

Regarding the training of personnel operating in the Italian military intelligence, the CIFIKE has the task of training the personnel of all the armed forces who will have to operate in the defense intelligence assets. Even in training, the importance of military history is practically nil. In fact, analyzing the training programs of this training institute, it is noted that in all the intelligence training disputes, from basic to advanced, there is no time in the curriculum concerning military history.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, in none of the 16 courses offered by the intelligence department of the NATO School of Oberammergau there is space for the study of military history.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ XVIII Italian Legislature, *Audizione del Ministro degli affari esteri e della cooperazione internazionale, Enzo Moavero Milanesi, e della Ministra della difesa, Elisabetta Trenta, sui recenti sviluppi della situazione in Libia* [Hearing of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Enzo Moavero Milanesi, and of the Minister of Defense, Elisabetta Trenta, on the recent developments in the situation in Libya] (Rome, 2018), https://www.camera.it/leg18/1058?idLegislatura=18&tipologia=audiz2&sottotipologia=audizione&anno=2018&mese=09&giorno=06&idCommissione=0304c0304&numero=0002&file=indice_stenografico.

¹⁸⁶ Joint Intelligence and Electronic Warfare Training Center, *Three-Year Training Offer Plan 2020-2024*, 2-10.

¹⁸⁷ NATO, “Course Catalogs.”

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of the evolution of Italian military intelligence, the evidence suggests that the role of military history in the Italian national intelligence apparatus has gradually faded away. From 1925 until today, the interpretation of two fundamental moments in time are responsible for first the decrease and then the total disappearance of military history in the Italian intelligence services. The first is the entry into World War II of the Kingdom of Italy. In this case, the fundamental point that considerably reduced the importance of military history was when numerous trained intelligence officers were called to the front to fill the ranks of the mobilized regiments.¹⁸⁸

The second was in 1949 when Italy definitively became part of the western block. The Marshall Plan has played an essential role in the westernization of the Italian Republic. In fact, in addition to the measures of an economic nature, this plan has also brought about significant changes from a cultural and social point of view. It was necessary to delete everything that referred to Italy's monarchical and fascist history to embrace a vision of the capitalist and consumerist nation fully.¹⁸⁹ Thus, the Benito Mussolini used history to validate its malicious decisions. The two main facts clarify how Mussolini used distorted historical evidence to certify its actions. First, the explanation of Italian expansionism was for the fascist an heritage of Roman society. Second, the struggle against plutocratic democracies, historically characterized as hostile to Italian

¹⁸⁸ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 209.

¹⁸⁹ Bruno, "The Americanization of Italy," 28.

imperialism. Therefore, after World War II, it was indispensable to guarantee that history was not used malevolently to explain aberrant choices. It was necessary to make vague, if not erase, the saddest period of Italian history. This attitude pervaded the society and the military intelligence organization, marking a crisis in the approach and study of history.

Furthermore, the historiographical crisis has heavily influenced the importance of history within the whole of Italian society and consequently on military intelligence. Indeed, military history is not considered critical to the development of intelligence assets. Currently, in the Italian military intelligence, current intelligence is more important than basic intelligence; therefore, the role of history is marginal in intelligence because we tend to analyze and emphasize what happens day after day rather than studying the root causes of events. This wrong approach creates the forecasting activity more problematic. It is an extensive consequence in many areas, partially because of the information culture in which we are absorbed. The digital era boosts the surplus of data, which push the intelligence organizations to appear more similar to a press organization; rather than a to act to analyze the roots of the events.¹⁹⁰

Between 1925 and 1949, the years in which the SIM operated, the role of military history within this institution changed in similar with the change in Italian military intelligence. In particular, the role of military history had a high impact in the first period of establishing the SIM also because the first director was a professor of military history at the military academy of Modena. He focused the training of the officers of the intelligence corps in the historical and cultural knowledge of the countries subject to

¹⁹⁰ A promotable Major of the Italian Army who worked at the CII was interviewed. For security reasons prefers to remain anonymous.

information research to have a complete picture of the situation. The entry into World War II marks the first decline in the role of military history within the SIM. In fact, due to the war requirements, the more experienced staff of the SIM was called to command the mobilized units, and the training of new personnel could not be very accurate from the historical point of view. Between 1943 and 1949, years characterized by chaos and economic, social, and political uncertainty, the role of military history within the SIM was not a priority. On the contrary, it almost disappeared because military intelligence, like any other state apparatus, was committed to addressing the challenges that the newly democratic country was about to face.¹⁹¹

From 1949 to 1994, the Italian secret services were not just influenced by the Cold War. Indeed, the three secret services that have followed one another in this era, the information *Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate* [Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces] (SIFAR) 1949-1966, the *Servizio Informazioni Difesa* [Intelligence Service of defense] (SID) 1966-1977, and the *Servizio per le Informazioni Militari* [Intelligence Military Service] (SISMI) 1977-2007, have had to face different challenges which led to the undermining of the efficiency and public opinion perception of the national intelligence apparatus.¹⁹²

The influence of Freemasonry, the mafia, foreign secret services, subversive groups, and Middle Eastern terrorism made national military intelligence more

¹⁹¹ Pasqualini, *Secret Cards of Italian Intelligence*, 270-278.

¹⁹² Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism in Italy and the Causes of the Failure to Identify those Responsible for the Massacres, *Investigation into Massacres and Misdirection Hearing of Senator Francesco Cossiga*.

problematic. All this funded to the conjecture of the mass media against the secret services that were defined as *sevizi segreti deviati* [corrupted secret service].

Unfortunately, the illicit and malevolent work of some members of the Italian military secret services thrown dishonor on the entire military intelligence. Although many Italian citizens in arms have served with honor and discipline during these years, the collective national imagination is full of conspiracy theories that have damaged the image of the secret services.¹⁹³

The years between 1946 and 1994 negatively influenced recruitment, training, and operation of the SIFAR, SID, and SISMI personnel and unfortunately also found validation in the role of history within the military secret services. Thus, military history in this period was placed on the margins of the intelligence apparatus.

The dissolution of the USSR and *Tangentopoli* combined with the escalation of the mafia's war against the state has thrown the entire national political landscape into the most significant uncertainty of the period of Italian republican history.¹⁹⁴

Thus, it can be said without doubt that the role of military history in the military intelligence services of the First Republic is almost non-existent. Therefore, in this period, instead of analyzing the evolution of the secret services from 1949 to 1994, an analysis was be made to discover the causes that led to the disappearance of military history within the national intelligence apparatus. During the examination of the available

¹⁹³ Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism in Italy and the Causes of the Failure to Identify those Responsible for the Massacres, *Investigation into Massacres and Misdirection Hearing of Senator Francesco Cossiga*.

¹⁹⁴ Bonini, Ornaghi, and Spiri, *The Second Republic*, 33.

resources, it was found that the reasons for which military history has lost its importance are twofold. The first is of a cultural nature and has the change in Italian culture as its cornerstone after World War II. With the creation of the Italian Republic as a democratic country aligned with the Western bloc, it was necessary to embrace Western culture and lifestyle fully. Thus, it was necessary to cancel or make ephemeral the monarchical and fascist history that had characterized the previous years. Two elements played an important role in this context: the Marshall Plan and the so-called historiographical crisis.¹⁹⁵

The second refers particularly to national security. Indeed, during the Cold War, the Italian national security apparatus was focused on defending the national integrity. This has guided to pay attention on two aspects. The first was blocking a probable invasion through the Iron Curtain. The second was the protection of republican establishments damaged by organization such as the mafia, freemasonry, corruption, Middle Eastern terrorism, and internal political terrorism of a communist and neo-fascist nature.¹⁹⁶

The end of the First Republic produced a vacuum both at a cultural and institutional level. This had an enormous influence on the role of the study of history in civil and military environments. Indeed, some historians supposed that the end of the First Republic and the end of some political philosophies born after the war removed the ideological vision of history to propend for a more multidirectional approach to the study

¹⁹⁵ Fubini, *Postwar Period and Crisis of Italian Historiography*, 744.

¹⁹⁶ De Lutiis, *The Secret Services in Italy*, 19.

of history able to analyze historical events from different perspective. Instead, with the Second Republic, a nomothetic approach to history started, which guided to the end of the imperialism of history in the human sciences. Thus, in Italian education system there has been a decrease in teaching periods of history. This influenced negatively the new military generations. Indeed, as various civil and military professors reported, the background of historical education with which the students approach at the university was significantly inferior than in previous generations.¹⁹⁷

The armed forces leaders are striving to restore centrality to the study of past events; nevertheless, the idea that the study of history is unnecessary is still present today. The example is how events such as historical staff rides are considered mere military tourism. Today, despite the indications of the army chief of staff, the efforts to revive the study of the military history of the training institutes of the Italian army seem not to be successful.¹⁹⁸

In particular, from an intelligence perspective, the examination of the 2007 reform that took place with *Legge 3 agosto 2007. n.124, Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto* [Intelligence system for the security of the Republic and new discipline of secrecy, Law § 124 (2007)] also emphasizes that the energies placed on papers to give prominence to history have not found usage in the facts. Important initiatives in this area were the more effective external communication of the Italian intelligence services. Valuable initiatives are the Internet

¹⁹⁷ Galasso, *History of Italian Historiography*, 167.

¹⁹⁸ Cerino Badone, Doctrinal Note, *Military History: Use and Methodology*, 2.

site of the information service for the security of the Republic, which, through the online publication of the magazine GNOIS, has tried to give ample space to historical issues within the national intelligence system. Another valid initiative is the collaboration with the most prestigious Italian colleges. The Academic Outreach is a project to give to the discipline of intelligence a discipline with a multidisciplinary approach.¹⁹⁹

Moreover, two important organs of the II RIS are the *Centro Intelligence Interforze* [Joint Intelligence Center] (CII) and the *Centro Interforze di Formazione Intelligence e Guerra Elettronica* [Joint Force Center for Intelligence Training and Electronic Warfare] (CIFIGE).²⁰⁰

The activities carried out by the CII territorial intelligence office are highly relevant to this research. Indeed, this office updates the Italian Chief of Defense on threats against Italian troops operating in overseas missions. The products of this office are more likely to develop current intelligence than basic intelligence. The result is that modern intelligence is more inclined to follow through with analyzing daily events rather than studying the root of the problem. Hence, since the study of history focuses on analyzing the origins of certain phenomena, as a rule, military history does not find space in this new concept.²⁰¹

Regarding the training of personnel operating in Italian military intelligence, the CIFIGE has this key task. Yet the role of military history is practically nil. Indeed,

¹⁹⁹ Montagnese and Neri, *The Evolution of Italian National Security*, 9-35.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 34.

²⁰¹ In the CII's structure is not present the organic position for military historians. Ministry of Defense, Italy, "Joint Intelligence Center."

analyzing the programs of this training institute, it is evident that in all the intelligence training course, from basic to advanced, military history is entirely absent.²⁰² Moreover, the intelligence department of the NATO School Oberammergau does not dedicate place for the study of military history in its courses.²⁰³

The Italian military secret services' effectiveness and the ability to adapt to changes and daily challenges have had ups and downs since unification in 1871. In terms of its effectiveness vis-à-vis threats, the most challenging moment for Italian intelligence occurred during the First Republic. In this period, some elements of the military secret services have worked against the republican institutions themselves, and some failures have led to the loss of confidence in Italian intelligence by the Italian people.²⁰⁴ This period also sanctions the lowest contribution in military history to the work of intelligence, unlike the other periods analyzed, in which Italian intelligence was in absolute values more efficient in terms of the unity of effort. Therefore, history must be considered fundamental to contribute to the perfect success of the military intelligence services. Military history contributes to understanding the roots of the events. .

Paraphrasing philosopher George Santayana, Winston Churchill said that “Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” Intelligence services that do not place a

²⁰² Joint Intelligence and Electronic Warfare Training Center, *Three-Year Training Offer Plan 2020-2024*, 2-10.

²⁰³ NATO, “Course Catalogs.”

²⁰⁴ Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism in Italy and the Causes of the Failure to Identify those Responsible for the Massacres, *Investigation into Massacres and Misdirection Hearing of Senator Francesco Cossiga*.

premium on learning from the past in either enemy or allied organizations or societies – or their own – are more likely to regret it.

Studying history and contextualizing past events in the present is essential to face future challenges. Therefore, to fully understand the operating environment, it would be appropriate to restore the importance of military history within the intelligence branch and in all military contexts at all levels. It would be appropriate to give more:

1. space in the training program of the intelligence operators,
2. importance during the planning process,
3. relevance during the intelligence cycle.

Finally, military history is essential to foster the development of a systemic vision of warfare, tactics, operational art, and, consequently, planning activities. The study of history helps train the military officers and professional soldiers, increasing their critical capacity, improving their learning, analysis, and the possibility of elaborating syntheses of complex events and situations. The study of history compensates for the lack of experience of individual soldiers.

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