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GAETANO SALVEMINI: A LESSON IN THOUGHT AND ACTION

A Thesis Presented

by

MICHAEL C. DICLEMENTE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

June 2012

History Program

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Approved as to style and content by:

Spencer DiScala, Professor
Chairperson of Committee

Vincent J. Cannato, Associate Professor
Member

Paul Bookbinder, Associate Professor
Member

Paul Bookbinder, Program Director
History Program

Roberta L. Wollons, Chairperson
History Program

ABSTRACT

GAETANO SALVEMINI: A LESSON IN THOUGHT AND ACTION

June 2012

Michael C. DiClemente, B.A., University of Massachusetts Amherst
M.A., University of Massachusetts Boston

Directed by Professor Spencer DiScala

Gaetano Salvemini was one of the earliest political exiles during Fascism. Before his exile Salvemini had the reputation of being a well-respected historian and political activist. He taught history at the University of Florence, among other universities. Salvemini was known for his intelligence, detailed research and analysis, and his unflinching ideals. After his exile Salvemini spent some time in England and France. During this time he traveled to the United States for a lecture tour and later settled in Cambridge, Massachusetts to teach at Harvard University. Salvemini's main objective in

his writing and lectures was to debunk the myths of the Fascist propaganda machine. This thesis uses a variety of sources including Salvemini's own writings, newspaper articles, reviews, and archival material. The archival material includes articles, letters and Italian government documents. This thesis shows that Salvemini had an impact on post-World War II Italy. Salvemini spent his life fighting for democracy and provided hope for many Italians who wondered what would happen in Italy after Fascism. Salvemini's ideas had an impact on the Italian Republic set up on 2 June 1946 and the constitution that officially came into force on 1 January 1948.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this time and thank some of those who were instrumental in my pursuing the study of history and finishing this thesis. Filiberto Bracalente is an art history professor and director of the AHA International, Macerata study abroad program. While studying in Macerata I discovered my interest in Italian history, and Filiberto has encouraged me to pursue my studies further. Professor Spencer DiScala served as my thesis advisor. Professor DiScala not only spent time correcting and making suggestions for my thesis, but also allowed me access to his collection of Salvemini material which proved invaluable. To my parents who always encourage me to follow my dreams. Finally, a very special acknowledgment goes to my wife, Jamie, whose support allowed me to finish this thesis in a timely manner.

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INTRODUCTION

AN ANTI-FASCIST IN CAMBRIDGE

Gaetano Salvemini spent his life as a political activist dedicated to his academic career. His roots in southern Italy made him into a pragmatic and pessimistic intellectual, yet he had a contagious zest for life and was always quick to laugh. Salvemini experienced more than his fair share of tragedy and often suffered from illness, yet the work that he produced during his lifetime is the envy of many scholars. This thesis will seek to prove that Salvemini had a major impact in his fight for democracy against the Fascist regime, and his tenacity was instrumental in encouraging post-World War II Italy to adopt policies he had fought for his adult life. These policies included democracy, universal suffrage, elimination of the monarchy, and prevention of future dictatorships.

Salvemini quickly learned of the corruption in Italian elections, especially in the South. His first major enemy was Giovanni Giolitti, long time Italian politician, and in Salvemini's opinion a corrupter of Southern politics. Salvemini fought this corruption head on, even getting involved in the elections nearly at the cost of his life. He was an early advocate of universal suffrage and this advocacy caused a rift in the Socialist party, of which he was a member, and then caused him to leave the party. Salvemini served a two-year term in Parliament but found out quickly a political career was not for him.

When World War I broke out, Salvemini advocated Italian entry on the side of the Entente. Salvemini's intention was the defeat of German tyranny, and the creation of a democratic Europe. Salvemini was among the "pre-Wilson" Wilsonians who applied similar principles to the current border disputes. He favored Slav independence, which kept him on the fringe as Italians were trying to gain lands surrounding the Adriatic. With the increase of nationalistic fervor this pushed him even further out of favor. When Benito Mussolini, still a Socialist, moved from the party's pacifism towards intervention, Salvemini congratulated him, yet Mussolini's purpose was to create revolution.

The end of the war changed Italy for the worse. With the legend of the "Mutilated Victory," and progress toward democracy blocked, Italians became restless. Mussolini took advantage of this crisis and changed the course of Italian society for more than twenty years. Salvemini was among the first and most outspoken opponents of the nascent regime. The advent of Fascism not only altered the course of Italy, but also of the life and work of Salvemini. Fascism, and destroying it, became the focal point of his career.

Salvemini fought as best he could while in Italy, but his arrest and further harassment forced him into exile. He spent time in France and England and eventually ended up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, teaching at Harvard University. While he was in France he collaborated with Carlo and Nello Rosselli in forming the anti-Fascist group, *Giustizia e Libertà* [Justice and Liberty]. Salvemini's main purpose was to fight the incredibly effective Fascist propaganda machine. He wanted to debunk the myths propagated by the regime and expose Mussolini and Fascism for what they really were.

Salvemini wrote three major works and countless essays on Fascism. Despite his anti-Fascist views, his writings serve as excellent scholarship about Fascism. Using primary Fascist sources, Salvemini explains how Fascism came to be; the violent nature of the movement; foreign policy (or lack thereof); the failure of the economic policy; and the false statistics used by the regime to demonstrate its success. Salvemini showed that Italians were not living the grand life the propaganda claimed.

As Salvemini settled in at Harvard, he worked to expose Fascist activities in the United States. He communicated with members of the American government and gave them reports he was collecting on this activity. *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, posthumously published, details the information Salvemini collected. Also, as World War II came to a close, he was concerned with what would happen to Italy. From the time he left his native country, he knew policies would be dictated by Britain and the United States and during World War II he wrote *What to do With Italy?* explaining what he thought should happen to post-war Italy.

Salvemini's time in the United States and the experience of living through Fascism caused him to reconsider some of his earlier theories. In an influential piece, the Introductory Essay in A.W. Salomone's *Italy in the Giolittian Era: Italian Democracy in the Making, 1900-1914*, he rethinks his previous criticisms of Giolitti. Expressing no regret, he admits, because of his American experience, that he could have been more moderate in his criticism. Giolitti was a corrupt politician, but not more so than other politicians. Salvemini agrees with Salomone that democracy was in the making during the Giolitti years and needed more time to evolve. The rise of Fascism put an end to this

growing democracy. Salvemini also notes that previous interpretations of Giolitti as any type of dictator were mistaken, especially given what followed him.

Salvemini was a true warrior for democracy and never let any chance go by to explain to Fascist sympathizers why they were mistaken. He was unrelenting in his fight and was never willing to compromise. Salvemini's inability to compromise explains why he never gained widespread, public acclaim. It was a fault of his, but a trait admired by many of his closest friends and students. It is this characteristic, however, that leads this thesis to conclude that Salvemini was victorious in his fight and had an important impact on post-war Italy. His unflinching ideals for democracy gave generations of Italians hope for a bright future, and it can be argued that he had an important influence on establishment of the Italian Republic on 2 June 1946.

CHAPTER I

A CRUSADER FOR DEMOCRACY

Gaetano Salvemini was born in Molfetta, in the southern region of Puglia, and this played a particularly important part in Salvemini's life. *Il Mezzogiorno*, as the South was known, had a high illiteracy rate and left intelligent young people with few options. This area of Italy was politically and socially separate from the elite North. In the fall of 1890, Salvemini left all that was familiar to him to travel to Florence for a scholarship interview.¹ He was fortunate enough to win the last of twenty scholarships to study at the University of Florence. If this did not happen, Salvemini's destiny might have been radically different and would have included a life in the church for a person of his intelligence.

Florence turned out to be the intellectual environment that Salvemini needed. He quickly earned a reputation as good student and insightful scholar. During his university studies Salvemini became close to his mentor, Professor Pasquale Villari.² Salvemini

¹ Charles Killinger, *Gaetano Salvemini: A Biography* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 10.

² Pasquale Villari (3 October 1827-11 December 1917) was born in Naples and fought against the Bourbons in the 1848 uprisings and subsequently fled to Florence. His most important political and social essays are collected in *Lettere Meridionali ed altri scritti sulla questione sociale in Italia* (Turin, 1885), and *Scritti sulla questione sociale in Italia* (Florence, 1902). *Lettere Meridionali* produced a deep impression,

regarded his professors as *galantuomini*, men of honor. They taught him a very simple yet reliable rule; “think clearly, then speak just as clearly.”³

Villari introduced Salvemini to the works of the great thinkers; Dante, Machiavelli, Hegel, Montesquieu and others. Salvemini developed his writing style at the university, and it always reflected the simple directness that reinforced his southern pragmatism. This style is true for both his English and Italian writing, and made his work easily digestible for all. Professor Villari was also a champion of the south, and while studying with him Salvemini developed a strong affinity for the principles of the Enlightenment, particularly those related to individual rights and universal suffrage.

Before leaving for Florence, his uncle had given Salvemini a contact, Signor Minervini. Minervini was a *paesano* and welcomed Salvemini into his home. After only a few visits Salvemini found himself drawn to the eldest Minervini daughter, Maria. Maria was four years younger than him, and was known mostly for her good will and strong spirit rather than for her culture and natural beauty.⁴

The 1890s was a time of intense political activity and the young Salvemini began to formulate his own ideas of government. The governments at the time continued the tradition of *trasformismo*, a system of building coalitions by trading political influence.⁵ These governments also developed a reputation for scandal, economic failure, repression

as these essays were the first exposure to the real conditions in southern Italy. Many of his works were translated into English by his wife, Linda.

³ Quoted by Killinger, *Salvemini*, 12. Another reference to Villari as a *galantuomo* see Salvemini's *Memorie di un Fuoruscito* page 106.

⁴ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

and foreign adventurism. This was exactly opposite of Salvemini's ideals and he moved more in line with the newly formed Italian Socialist Party (PSI).

Filippo Turati, co-founder of the PSI became de facto editor of the *Critica Sociale* in 1889 and used this review as his outreach to campaign for an Italian Socialist Party.⁶ Turati's fight in favor of a Socialist Party began before his editorship. He was successful in 1892 with the PSI's foundation. Turati collaborated with his partner Anna Kuliscioff on the campaign, the journal and politics until her death in 1925. Kuliscioff, originally from Russia, joined the anarchist movement in France and became involved with Italian anarchist leader, Andrea Costa. She was expelled from France and met Turati in Naples. She moved to Milan and with Turati established a salon.⁷ Kuliscioff, three years older than Turati, influenced him and the two remained lifelong companions.

Salvemini began meeting with like-minded individuals and remembered with enthusiasm these sessions. "At this time in Italy, everyone was becoming a socialist...And in the evening we would solve all the social problems with so much zeal that the landlord threatened to evict."⁸ Villari did not believe that the stubborn Salvemini would fully adopt Marxist ideology. What drew Salvemini to socialism was not ideology but the idea of solving social problems. Salvemini noted that "Marxist doctrine is a marvelous potion to awaken sleeping souls...But if you abuse it, it will dull your mind."⁹ Although Villari was not entirely pleased with Salvemini for his political stance, the professor still provided assistance.

⁶ Spencer DiScala, *Dilemmas of Italian Socialism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1980), 13.

⁷ DiScala, *Dilemmas*, 9.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, 17.

Salvemini performed very well on his examinations and with a promising manuscript his professors urged him to pursue a career in academia, despite the bleak outlook. In the meantime he asked Maria to marry him and would soon need money for the marriage and to provide for his new wife. In 1895 he learned of a job teaching at a junior high school in Palermo. Although Sicily would not have been his first choice, the year he spent there helped build a strong political foundation. He developed his political thought, especially the role of the PSI in the South.

In the fall of 1896 Salvemini transferred to a *liceo* in Faenza, in the province of Emilia Romagna. This move to the North intensified his interest in southern politics. As an active member of the PSI he began writing articles for socialist publications including *Critica Sociale* and *Avanti!*, discussing his disappointment with the direction of the party. He wrote these articles under pseudonyms to protect his professional career. This began his lifelong position as political polemicist.¹⁰ At this time Salvemini was also putting finishing touches on his first book, *La dignità cavalleresca nel Comune di Firenze* [Knighthood in the Florentine Commune], developed from his graduate thesis. The detailed study of medieval law reflected the training of his professors, such as Villari; the social-economic interpretation revealed the new influence of positivism and socialism.¹¹ Salvemini married Maria Minervini on August 1897, in Molfetta; he was twenty-four and she was twenty-one.

Salvemini was urging Turati toward a more revolutionary standpoint.

Salvemini's position at the time is best described by the following statement; "he hardly

¹⁰ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

mentioned class warfare, instead focusing on political objectives: overthrowing the Savoy monarchy, establishing a democratic republic, and then withdrawing from Africa, restoring commercial relations with France, reducing the military, ending parliamentary and bureaucratic corruption, and abolishing the dominance of great landlords.”¹² He realized that advocating ending the monarchy was illegal and he could be punished if his letters had been seized. Salvemini corresponded with Italy’s leading political voices while addressing the most important issues of the time: the Triple Alliance, Italian expansionism and domestic political repression. All the while he scrutinized the political parties and pushed the “southern question.”¹³ His role as political outsider and commentator was a first step but Salvemini wanted more: “I wish to do, to organize, not merely to give words, support, and encouragement.”¹⁴ Salvemini wanted the Party to concentrate its energy on a “few crucial reforms” such as, “lowering the interest on public debt, abolition of the standing army, and a drastic reduction in taxes.”¹⁵ Salvemini felt that these reforms were prerequisites to other reforms, but his proposals failed. He did not give up and continued his campaign for concrete reforms.

Immediately upon graduating from the University of Florence Salvemini had hoped Villari would have been able to get him a job at the Liceo Galileo in Florence. Now, 1900, an official of the Ministry impressed by Salvemini used his influence to secure him a job at the Liceo Galileo, assuming he was doing Salvemini a favor. By this time, however, Salvemini was more involved in politics, and realized Florence was

¹² Killinger, *Salvemini*, 24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁵ DiScala, *Dilemmas*, 53.

removed from the political scene. He accepted the offer but it took him about a month to adjust to the move.

In 1901, after six frustrating years teaching in secondary schools and publishing under pseudonyms, the Ministry of Public Instruction appointed him Professor of Medieval and Modern History at the University of Messina. Salvemini remained in Messina for seven years, longer than he had hoped. During this time he matured intellectually and politically. The militant Marxist of 1898 would soon merge with positivist, reformist, federalist and republican influences to form an original Salveminian view.

Salvemini regularly expressed his frustration with debates over ideological tendencies. He rejected ideology in favor of a case-by-case approach. He was emerging as a highly independent, pragmatic socialist. Salvemini's discovery of Carlo Cattaneo led him away from Marxism toward federalism, which became his primary political axiom in Messina. Cattaneo had written during the Risorgimento that Italy could achieve "either national unity or liberty, but not both." Salvemini believed this had been proven by the Italian government's oppression of its people for forty years. Salvemini implored socialists to heed the words of Pierre Joseph Proudhon: "Liberty is federalism, federalism is liberty."¹⁶ He felt that it was necessary to convene a Constitutional Assembly to transform Italy into a federalist state. "[Local] autonomy presents inconvenience and danger, but liberty is always preferable to tyranny."¹⁷ Another important axiom of Salvemini's program was universal suffrage. In early 1903, Salvemini admonished

¹⁶ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 38.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Turati in *Critica Sociale* to abandon democratic rhetoric in favor of specific proposals. Together his social and political proposals can be called Salvemini's *concretismo*, concrete reform. A month before Salvemini had spelled out his demands to the party in "A Program for the Socialists of the South," directed primarily at Turati. He called for the abolition of some of the taxes and advocated for universal suffrage. In fact, Salvemini's was the most systematic of all the southern reform proposals of the day. He took direct issue with a thesis of the idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce, who, in his view, made a false distinction between art and science by arguing that artists limit themselves in the particular, whereas scientists generalize. The real contrast, Salvemini insisted, was that the scope of scientific research is confined to reality, whereas the scope of art, as Tolstoy wrote, is to "provoke the senses" by using reality and fantasy.¹⁸

In 1905 three job openings came up in Italian universities, making promotion and publication all the more important. After being nominated for promotion in July, Salvemini received a disturbing letter from his former mentor. Professor Villari had planned to retire from the University of Florence but the position had been filled by Carlo Cipolla,¹⁹ a twenty-three-year veteran professor at the University of Turin. Villari shared that the faculty had discussed Salvemini, but a too-recent promotion to full professor, political activity and lack of serious publication had disqualified him. Just before Christmas he learned a similar fate at the universities of Milan and Turin. He felt he was a "victim of bullying."²⁰

¹⁸ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 44.

¹⁹ This is not Carlo M. Cipolla, a famous economic historian who taught in the United States.

²⁰ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 46.

By 1905, Salvemini's protestations on behalf of reform had won the attention of the educational establishment. The Minister of Education, Leonardo Bianchi, appointed him to the three-man Commission for the Reform of the Middle Schools. The appointment took him to Rome, Milan and Florence and required a leave of absence from the University of Messina for most of 1905-1906 academic year. In January 1906 he took a temporary leave from the Commission for the birth of his fourth child, Ughetto. All the while he participated actively in the PSI and the teachers' federation.

In October 1907, Salvemini and Maria had their fifth child, Elena. About a year later he proclaimed, "In my family life I am so happy that I am frightened."²¹ A little more than a year after that statement, about three nights before Christmas 1908, he walked home after a long day. His daughter woke him crying so he got up and retrieved his daughter to be fed by his wife. There was a terrible storm outside with very loud noises. He went to the window to see what was happening. A sudden jolt and shaking made Salvemini instinctively grab onto the window frame. Without time to think the house began to collapse. Surprisingly he survived the fall and the window frame protected him. Along with his brother-in-law he searched frantically for his family. The subsequent aftershocks and tidal wave made searches very difficult. Work crews found the bodies of four of his children; but the bodies of his wife, son Ugo, and sister were never found.²²

²¹ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 49.

²² It is important to note that this earthquake and the subsequent tsunami took over 100,000 lives in Messina and the surrounding area. For years Salvemini kept hope alive that his son was still alive.

Il Corriere della Sera ran the headline “THE DEATH OF PROF. SALVEMINI.”²³ The story included an obituary of our “beloved” professor. 700 miles north in the small Italian Riviera town of Oneglia, a twenty-five year old teacher and socialist editor read and moved by the tragic loss, sent a telegram: “In Gaetano Salvemini passes one of the greatest men of Italian socialism. Benito Mussolini.”²⁴ A few days later the papers announced that he was still alive. *Critica Sociale* printed: “He lived....yes, lives...the strong, combative and generous soul of Gaetano Salvemini; the best educated, the best equipped of the Italian Socialists.”²⁵ The University of Messina closed. Now, with the loss of his family, his possessions and his job he headed for Florence, always a second home.

Perhaps sensing his need to keep busy, given the death of his family, his friends encouraged him to run for office. Salvemini chose Gioia del Colle because it exemplified Giolitti’s *trasformismo*. On 6 March 1909 Salvemini arrived with two respected journalists and He witnessed firsthand how the opposition was treated. From this campaign came the material for one of Salvemini’s best-known works, *Il Ministro della mala vita*. This was a collection of essays in which he established himself as Giolitti’s nemesis. Salvemini “vividly described the stuffing of ballot boxes, the cooperation between police and criminals, and the terrorizing of political opponents,”²⁶ all done during Giolitti’s tenure and witnessed by Salvemini firsthand. Giolitti’s techniques were more difficult to apply in the North due to the greater number of voters, and this is why

²³ Killinger, Biogrpahy, 50.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 55.

²⁶ Spencer DiScala, *Italy: From Revolution to Republic, 1700 to the Present* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 180.

Salvemini favored universal suffrage. Salvemini's criticisms of Giolitti remained strong in public opinion, and Giolitti's accomplishments "receded."²⁷ Salvemini emerged from the election more committed to expanding the vote. This campaign and his opposition to Giolitti were defining events of Salvemini's maturing political life.

"Neither Giolitti nor Salvemini understood that the political battles they fought, for all their imperfections, were to be the last exercises in Italian democracy for more than two decades."²⁸ The revolutionary wing of the PSI was led by Costantino Lazzari, and standing with him on the extreme left was Benito Mussolini. At this time no one, not even Salvemini, anticipated the emergence of the young extremist socialist from the Romagna. As it turned out Mussolini's first party convention would be Salvemini's last. On 25 October 1910 Salvemini walked out of the Casa del Popolo in Milan never to participate in the activities of the political party again. He attended this convention in order to argue for complete universal suffrage, but he lost to Turati and the reformist wing of the PSI. It was Salvemini's contention that the literacy requirement and political corruption would always lead to the government winning elections in the South. Salvemini felt that with this and the support Giolitti had in the North, Socialists could not win a majority in the Chamber, and therefore, could not pass reforms. Salvemini fought hard for universal suffrage and it caused problems with some, including Turati. Salvemini accused his opponents of making deals with industrialists, and this is why they were opposed to extending the vote. Southern workers had no representation and

²⁷ DiScala, *Italy*, 180. Salvemini's harsh criticism of Giolitti was later reexamined and will be discussed in a later chapter.

²⁸ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 60.

therefore “the deputies defended not the ‘proletariat’ but a workers’ elite.”²⁹ He took this loss very personal, and left the Party in 1911.

He took the loss at the PSI convention personally because some of those opposed to him were his friends, and being an idealist, often lost friends through politics. To Salvemini the personal and the political were inexorably entwined. Oftentimes he lost friends not because he stood on principle, but for appearing self-righteous and intolerant. Some could have accepted the rigidity of his political values if he had been more tolerant. The irony of the situation is that Salvemini considered friends as a “second conscience.” Salvemini stated at the time, “You cannot know how old and tired I feel. Above all, it has been the defection of men... that has disheartened me.”³⁰

In a bizarre turn of events Salvemini was offered the editorship of *Avanti!*, but with no surprise he declined. Already beginning a separation with the PSI, the Libyan War was the final rift with the Socialist Party. He warned that North Africa would not be the “promised land” its sponsors were seeking. His warnings over Libya were ignored and he stated at the time; “All my work fell into a black hole. At that point, I do not wish to have anything further to do with the Socialist party.”³¹

Toward the end of 1911 Salvemini started the newspaper *L'Unità*, with the premier issue appearing in December. The journal was published for nine years. Although Salvemini did have politics running in his veins he stated that he would become

²⁹ DiScala, *Dilemmas*, 115.

³⁰ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 68.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

a candidate again “When the peasants could vote,”³² and as it turned out Giolitti had forced his hand by a law passed in 1912. In an effort to gain Socialist support, for his 1911 cabinet Giolitti extended the vote to illiterates and nationalized the life insurance industry.³³

Again Salvemini chose his homeland in the South to campaign, and as before he ran into opposition. For example, the police commissioner in Terlizzi banned speeches by opposition candidates. There was even an attempt on his life which failed because the gun misfired. He eventually lost the race, gaining only forty-one percent of the vote, and coming out even more bitter toward Giolitti. At this point Salvemini learned that his political influence would be limited to words. Nine months after his defeat the voters of Molfetta and Bitonto elected Salvemini Provincial Councilman, which did not provide quite the same forum as the Chamber of Deputies.

Amid the debate on the Triple Alliance, regarding what exactly Italy’s obligation was under the treaty, Salvemini agreed with the irredentists on the city of Trieste, based on the overwhelming Italian majority. The “irredenta” [unredeemed land] is a term referring to the Italian speaking areas that remained part of Austria after the Kingdom of Italy’s establishment. Italians and more specifically, irredentists never gave up hope of reacquiring Trent, Trentino and Trieste. The issue over the Irredenta was emotional and caused many problems between Italy and Austria. The Irredenta is a main reason Italy went to war against Austria in 1915.³⁴ Salvemini “spelled out his basic criteria for

³² Killinger, *Salvemini*, 74.

³³ Discala, *Italy*, 177.

³⁴ Spencer DiScala, *Vittorio Orlando* (London: Haus Publishing Ltd, 2010), 17.

resolving border disputes: Ethnic-linguistic lines should be given highest priority, but defensible borders should not be neglected.”³⁵ Salvemini’s position was contrary to that of the Nationalists, and this caused him problems which get worse as war became inevitable. Salvemini was among the first to support joining the war on the side of the Entente. Within a week of Austria’s declaration of war on Serbia he commented “if war comes with Austria, I will go.”³⁶ Salvemini’s most influential role in the politics of Giolittian Italy was his advocacy of Italian intervention in World War I.

Italy was in a difficult position as World War I drew near, and the country was divided on whether or not to intervene. Of those advocating neutrality or intervention there was further division. Salvemini was a part of the democratic interventionists who favored entering the war on the side of the Entente. Many of the major intellectuals and former Socialists made up this group. The democratic interventionists felt that entering on the side of the Entente would lead to a more peaceful and democratic Europe and justice for the oppressed nationalities such as the Slavs. They were “pre-Wilson” Wilsonians who opposed Italian expansion, and as such became enemies of the Nationalists. Salvemini believed “It is necessary this war kill all war.”³⁷ Many from this group answered the call of duty to serve and save democracy, including Salvemini and former Socialist leader, Leonida Bissolati, at age fifty-seven.

It is interesting to note that Salvemini’s first impression of Mussolini was favorable. Mussolini had a rapid ascent from participant in the revolutionary socialists’ takeover of the PSI at the Reggio Emilia Congress in July 1912, to a position in the party

³⁵ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 85.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

³⁷ DiScala, *Orlando*, 48.

directorate, and by November of that year, to editor of *Avanti!*. In February 1914 when Mussolini spoke to 3,000 Florentines, Salvemini had attended with Fernande Luchaire.³⁸ Salvemini wrote an optimistic article entitled “Socialist Rebirth,” in which he declared that Mussolini was the man to articulate “the need for a sincerely revolutionary movement in our country.”³⁹ The relationship between Salvemini and Mussolini in the early stage could be considered one of mutual respect even if neither committed to the other.

Mussolini’s desire to create a revolutionary movement in Italy needed a spark, and in June 1914 that spark occurred. Italy had the makings for revolution: low wages, suffering economy and a looming war. Mussolini “conceived of revolution as the violent overthrow of the ruling class, not as political intransigence.”⁴⁰ Prevented from organizing public gatherings Socialists, Republicans and Anarchists organized a “private” meeting in Ancona. This meeting attracted 600 people.⁴¹ As they exited the meeting they found themselves surrounded by the Carabinieri and retreated to the “Villa Rossa,” the Republican headquarters. The leaders of the meeting negotiated with the lieutenant in charge. “Suddenly shots rang out, leaving three dead and five wounded,”⁴² and with this act Red Week had begun. Mussolini encouraged a violent revolution from the people, and in *Avanti!* called for the “WORKERS OF ITALY, STRIKE!”⁴³ In *Avanti!* Mussolini

³⁸ Salvemini and Fernande Luchaire began their relationship as friends. Salvemini knew Fernande’s husband, Julien Luchaire, who was a French literature professor and director of the French Institute in Florence. As time went on Salvemini and Fernande grew closer through common interests.

³⁹ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 90.

⁴⁰ Spencer DiScala, “‘Red Week’ 1914: Prelude to War and Revolution,” *Studies in Modern Italian History from the Risorgimento to the Republic*, ed. Frank J. Coppa (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 124.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

took credit for Red Week, but Salvemini voiced disapproval of what he called a counterproductive series of incidents of “vandalism without purpose.”⁴⁴ Mussolini tried to seize this opportunity to push his revolutionary agenda, but the beginning of the war dramatically changed the political climate in Italy.

Mussolini and Salvemini both were bold critics of the liberal state but differed on the approaching war in Europe; Mussolini favored neutrality while Salvemini advocated intervention.⁴⁵ On 18 October 1914 Mussolini changed his opinion in a now famous article “From Absolute to Active Neutrality.” Salvemini responded to the article with a note to Mussolini commending and congratulating him on his new direction. Mussolini’s change in direction caused his expulsion from the PSI; however, he was endorsed by others, including Salvemini. When Mussolini left the PSI, he founded the newspaper *Il Popolo d’Italia* in November 1914. At this time he began to organize revolutionary socialists and syndicalists in northern and central Italy into “*fasci* for revolutionary action.”⁴⁶

By 1914 Fernande had become Salvemini’s confidante and advisor. Later that year she legally separated from her husband, and by November 1915 the divorce was final. During the summer of 1915 Salvemini was talking about volunteering for the infantry; he was forty-one years old. Fernande recommended Salvemini get a physical. The first physician he saw would not clear him from military service, but he did finally find a doctor at the University of Bologna to do so. On 31 July he was appointed to cadet

⁴⁴ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 84.

⁴⁵ The official stance of the PSI was neutrality, and Mussolini was forced to fall in-line with this policy. It was not long, however, that he pushed for entrance into the war and as a result was expelled from the PSI.

⁴⁶ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 93.

officer school and awaited orders to report to the front. He had unrealistic thoughts on training, as he hoped to train in Florence where he would have access to his books. He was assigned as a second lieutenant in the 70th Infantry Regiment at Arezzo.

On 4 November 1915 the call finally came; he would command a platoon of the 121st Infantry, First Company, Macerata Brigade, a unit of Venetians and Florentines. On the night of 13 November, Salvemini headed directly into frontline action, and his unit was responsible for carrying munitions to the advanced troops. The physical stress of frontline action caused Salvemini to fall ill; he was suffering from swollen feet and gastrointestinal problems. He was hospitalized first in a field hospital and then moved to the Red Cross Hospital in Padua. Soon after his arrival at the hospital he was granted a medical discharge. Salvemini was released from the hospital just before Christmas 1915. Salvemini and Fernande married on 22 June 1916, and with her two children, he now had a family back.⁴⁷

By 1917 Salvemini had become one of Wilson's strongest European supporters. Shortly before the beginning of 1917 Carlo Cipolla fell ill, and Salvemini was chosen to fill his spot at the University of Florence. When Cipolla passed away Salvemini was appointed Professor of Medieval and Modern History. In the spring of 1917 Mussolini had fully separated himself from Salvemini and the others of the Democratic left and began moving toward accommodating the nationalists; which he knew would cause a rift. The issue that opened the breach was Dalmatia, located on the Adriatic in modern day

⁴⁷ Salvemini found a surrogate family that he so needed. Jean, Fernande's son, with whom Salvemini was close until Jean's political affiliations separated the two. Jean collaborated with the Germans to suppress the French Resistance and was eventually arrested. This event will be explained in more detail later in this thesis.

Croatia. Salvemini did not believe Italy should expand in the Adriatic, and this caused harsh reactions from the Nationalists. Mussolini shifted away from the Salvemini-Bissolati position of self-determination toward a Nationalist approach. By the summer Salvemini had written off Mussolini.

Salvemini switched his attention from protecting allied democracy against German tyranny to his concern for Italy's border. Salvemini felt Italy would be better served by maintaining free trade there and protecting the rights of Italians in Dalmatia by making Fiume and Zara "free cities." At this time he also distanced himself further from Mussolini, who was now engaging in an open polemic over Dalmatia and calling Wilson a dictator. Nationalists were now referring to Salvemini as "*Slavemini*."⁴⁸ In April 1918 Salvemini met Italian and Yugoslav nationalists face-to-face at the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in Rome. The Rome conference seemed to offer a rare opportunity for him to participate in quasi-official diplomacy. In preparation for the conference Sydney Sonnino, Italy's Foreign Minister, made it clear the Treaty of London was not to be touched. Sonnino could not block the conference but it lacked an official character. The result was the "Pact of Rome" with Italy and Yugoslavia agreeing to a peaceful resolution of their territorial disputes, and both sides agreeing to fight together for national independence. Nationalists did not want to give up any of the gains offered by the Treaty of London, and Salvemini urged the Slavs to drop their most extreme demands.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 125.

⁴⁹ DiScala, *Orlando*, 116-117.

Salvemini continued to use *L'Unità* to press the government on the Slav issue, but the censors cut much of his work. Salvemini wished to travel to Paris in July 1918 for a meeting with a European anti-Austrian group, but in an effort to limit his influence to Italy he was denied a passport. The authorities could attempt to suppress Salvemini but not undermine his impact, and under Bissolati's influence the government voted to endorse Yugoslav independence; thus confirming the achievement of Salvemini and the Democratic Left at the Congress in Rome.

By 1918 Salvemini argued not to "abandon" the Treaty of London but to "substitute" an agreement of superior quality. Salvemini wanted to abandon the nationalist idea of acquiring the Dalmatian coast (except the predominantly Italian city of Zara), the Brenner frontier and the Dodecanese islands. With Salvemini taking this view the Nationalists had labeled him unpatriotic. On 3 January 1919, Wilson arrived in Italy to launch his campaign for the Italian public; two weeks later the peace conference opened in Paris. By the time the peace conference began Salvemini had abandoned his earlier support of Fiume as an "open city" for a more pragmatic position of acquiring central Fiume in exchange for Dalmatia, applying Wilsonian criteria to each.

On 11 January 1919, Bissolati addressed a crowd at La Scala in Milan. Some of the crowd got rowdy and caused quite a disturbance; among them was Mussolini. Mussolini's participation is significant as it marked the first appearance of postwar political violence, and the end of politics as usual in Italy; Mussolini's revolutionary rhetoric and action was gaining support across the country. Mussolini had denounced the *rinunciatari* [traitors] of the "Salvemini type." Within a week of the events at La Scala,

irredentists and Nationalists held Pro-Fiume and Pro-Dalmatia rallies, which were attended by the blackshirted Arditi [Storm Troops]. Mussolini stepped up his furious attack against “Yugoslav imperialism” and the *rinunciatari*.

Mussolini announced a meeting at a small conference hall in Milan’s Piazza San Sepolcro, at which he founded the Fasci di Combattimento. According to Salvemini opinion the initial interest in Fascism was a result of the weakness of the extreme Left. Privately, however, he revealed a grave concern, predicting violent political reaction would spread throughout Italy within a year. Salvemini noted he did not foresee a revolution in Italy in the scale that Mussolini predicted.

While Italians who supported Wilson were labeled as *rinunciatari*, they also disagreed with Wilson over not supporting them. The Italians felt they were being treated unfairly at the conference, and Wilson even managed to alienate his Italian supporters. Salvemini remarked: “why does he impose what he considers absolute justice on the Italian people alone?”⁵⁰ Eventually the Italians and the Allies were deadlocked on the Adriatic question. In early September Wilson denied Prime Minister Francesco Nitti’s appeal and signed the Treaty of St. Germain, confirming the breakup of the Habsburg Empire and leaving Fiume outside Italian territory. The poet-warrior, Gabriele D’Annunzio, then took Fiume by military force. On 18 September, Salvemini wrote an article entitled “The Fiume Incident” where he disapproved of Nitti’s lack of sympathy for the poet’s followers. Salvemini was, however, conflicted over Fiume and apprehensive because of D’Annunzio’s militaristic act. He saw the predictions of his

⁵⁰ DiScala, *Orlando*, 156. For a full treatment see René Albrecht-Carrié’s *Italy at the Paris Peace Conference* (Hamden: CT, 1966), originally published through Columbia University Press in 1938.

book on the Adriatic coming true, if Fiume was not annexed to Italy it would be a continuing source of conflict. Although he repeatedly condemned the seizure of Fiume, Salvemini's critics used his admiration of the enthusiasm of the young participants as an early sympathy for proto-Fascism. Salvemini felt he shared a commonality for the participants, particularly their disdain for the old parties. He saw young leaders emerging that he felt could transition from leadership on the battlefield to leadership for peace.

Salvemini launched another bid for Parliament in October 1919. The election ended the rule of the status quo of the old ruling class in Italy, and, although Fascists made a lot of noise they did not win a single seat in the Chamber of Deputies. In a speech on 21 December 1919, Salvemini endorsed the League of Nations and wanted to accept Germany as a member. Politics was not the life for Salvemini and he preferred journalism and teaching. He had no interest in launching another campaign. He ended *L'Unità* at the end of December 1920,⁵¹ and with the end of his brief parliamentary career and the obligation of publishing he joined Fernande in Paris.

On 15 May 1921, Fascists won thirty-five seats in the chamber. Salvemini returned to Florence in October 1921, in time for classes. In the fall of 1921, Salvemini began one of his most enduring and closest friendships with Ernesto Rossi.⁵² In the summer of 1922, Salvemini again joined Fernande in Paris. In late August he traveled to England and was captivated by the country. He made contact with Bernard and Mary

⁵¹ Although publication of the newspaper had ended its collaborators would go on to play a major role in opposing the march on Rome; as it turned out they would be victims of assault, imprisonment and exile.

⁵² Rossi was a politician, journalist and an anti-Fascist. Rossi was immediately taken by Salvemini and looked to him as a mentor. After becoming friends Rossi changed some of his previous political views and became strongly anti-Fascist. Rossi volunteered for World War I. His ideas influenced the post-World War II Partito d'Azione.

Berenson and other English intellectuals. He was learning the language but had some difficulty; he was, nevertheless, asked to do some lectures. In the meantime Mussolini was dividing the opposition in Parliament.

In September, D'Annunzio appeared again and Mussolini felt threatened by him. He began to prepare for his march on Rome. Mussolini was not clear with his intentions, on one hand, declaring, "we intend to govern Italy" and on the other telling Giolitti he would not take over by illegal means. Giolitti had the means to take control of the government but decided instead, to see how things played out from the sidelines. Giolitti was always able to gauge the feeling of the Parliament and adapt to that change, and "For most of his years in power before World War I Giolitti specifically rejected the creation of a two-party system. His governments were open to both sides of the political spectrum."⁵³ Salvemini understood that if Mussolini gained power he would be dismissed as professor, and so he considered lecturing in England as a plan to make a living. At the end of October 1922, Salvemini returned to Paris to be with Fernande. It was from here that he followed the march on Rome. Mussolini was made Prime Minister by the King on 29 October. In a note to Rossi, Salvemini wrote:

Probably I will be dismissed; it is the least that the Fascists can do with me... Let them dismiss me rather than to commit an act against my conscious against my dignity: for example, to accept the new regime, to swear loyalty, etc. But probably they will not wait until I refuse to do something. They will send me away. And goodnight and goodbye within six months.

If Italy were not in the hands of these wild madmen, I would return quietly to Florence to give my exams, resume lecturing, and await... dismissal. But... In Italy life will not be possible, except for the followers of the *duce*. Given my past, as soon as I

⁵³ Alexander De Grand, "Giolitti and the Socialists," *Italian Socialism: Between Politics and History*, ed. Spencer DiScala (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 24.

arrived in Florence, I will be thrown in the clink was sent abroad... In Italy I will be, in the best scenario, reduced to silence. Outside Italy, in a setting difficult but free, I can resume... my propaganda.⁵⁴

Salvemini felt that with Mussolini in power it would serve the function of crushing the old ways of government. Mussolini could be allowed to continue to misgovern in order to prevent a return of the old leadership. In the Introduction of Salvemini's lectures from Harvard, *The Origins of Fascism in Italy*, Roberto Vivarelli wrote; "before Salvemini could possibly become an anti-Fascist, Fascists were, from the very beginning, strongly anti-Salvemini, and, when eventually Mussolini came into power, Salvemini's place in the ranks of the opposition was already well established."⁵⁵ At the time, Salvemini was getting inconsistent stories from friends on the climate in Italy, which made his decision to return difficult.

He was informed that the faculty had approved one year leave of absence. Within two weeks of the march on Rome, with encouragement from friends, he decided to return to Florence to administer exams and retrieve some personal items. Some interpreted his leaving as an act of fear rather than of political protest. Some also saw him posing as an exile to mimic Mazzini. He saw his return as proof he was not afraid. He immediately felt he should have remained abroad, as Florence was becoming the most Fascist of Italian cities. Salvemini noted at the time the possibility that he may have ended up in the United States.

⁵⁴ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 168.

⁵⁵ Gaetano Salvemini, *The Origins of Fascism in Italy*. ed. Roberto Vivarelli (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), viii.

Salvemini thought that Mussolini's dictatorship was not new, because Giolitti had been dictator from 1902 to 1913.⁵⁶ Salvemini remained in Florence for much of 1923 with some academic duties and social contacts. Salvemini regularly met with some followers and intellectuals in what became known as the "Scuola Salvemini" and it served as a family for him, with Ernesto Rossi as the eldest son. Salvemini and the group were hailed by Giacomo Matteotti, outspoken antifascist and author of *The Fascisti Exposed: A Year of Fascist Domination* published in 1924. Matteotti was also the secretary of the Partito Socialista Unitario, which was set up by Turati in October 1922 after a major schism within the Socialist Party during that same month the march on Rome took place.⁵⁷

To those paying close attention, Fascism was seen as a fragmented group, with factions oftentimes in competition with each other. A movement that had begun as a champion of the lower and middle class bourgeoisie was now being dominated by big business with banks and large industrial and agricultural business getting involved. Salvemini saw the government at this point as a military despotism. Salvemini noted that Mussolini was taking on the least desirable traits of the movement.⁵⁸

The government began to focus on Salvemini. In July, Pietro Gasparri, the Vatican Secretary of State, and in July forced the resignation of Don Luigi Sturzo, the Secretary of the Partito Popolare Italiano (PPI) and by the summer of 1923 Salvemini was trying desperately to leave Italy. Police headquarters in Florence denied his passport

⁵⁶ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 175. The idea of Giolitti as dictator is another criticism that Salvemini will rethink after his time in America.

⁵⁷ DiScala, *Dilemmas*, 150.

⁵⁸ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 180.

application. He tried again in Milan with the same result. He received news from friends in Rome that the decision to deny his passport application had come from Mussolini himself. He was disturbed that Mussolini had taken a personal interest in him. Salvemini was eventually able to obtain an illegal passport and leave Italy for France, after which the Fascists charged him with illegal departure. In October 1923, a Florentine newspaper denounced him. The same week the Fascist government called for the expulsion of those defaming the Italian government abroad. Salvemini finished a series of lectures in England during the first week of December 1923 and returned to Florence on 6 December. In January 1924 Mussolini dissolved Parliament and called for April elections. On 6 April the Fascists won a majority of seats 374 out of 535 because of government interference in the voting. The 1924 elections were held under the Acerbo Law, passed in 1923, which stated that the party gaining the largest share of the votes, provided they had gained at least twenty-five percent of the votes, gained two-thirds of the seats in parliament. The remaining third was shared amongst the other parties proportionally. “Turati denounced this bill as the ‘most atrocious and strangest jest which had ever been conceived against a parliament and a people,...who are asked to sanction their own abdication and degradation.’”⁵⁹ Fascism was taking the conservative route that Salvemini predicted.

Matteotti denounced the government interference in the elections in Parliament, and as a result disappeared in June 1924. His body was later found and it was alleged that the order to murder him had come from Mussolini. The murder of Matteotti by Fascists had a significant effect on Salvemini, and the country. This event led him to join

⁵⁹ DiScala, *Dilemmas*, 150.

the public protests against Fascism. At these protests a pamphlet was handed out which included an article by Salvemini. He eventually emerged as a leader in the Florentine opposition, and his anti-Fascist rhetoric had now put him under the watchful eyes of the Fascists. On 2 November 1924, Salvemini was arrested at a protest but was released shortly thereafter. Some Fascist militia leaders wanted a stronger showing by the Duce against the anti-Fascists and even considered ousting Mussolini because he had not taken a harder line. In a speech given during the beginning of 1925 Mussolini made it clear that he would not stand for any opposition, which also served to appease those who thought he wasn't acting strongly enough.⁶⁰

In 1925, Salvemini wrote for a clandestine journal entitled *Non Mollare*, with twenty-two issues appearing in the first ten months. The journal was dominated by Salvemini's writing. In March, the journal blamed the King for allowing Mussolini to violate Italy's free press law and Salvemini's opposition to the monarch increased. In the spring, the Fascists "unleashed a more malicious offensive against Salvemini."⁶¹

As time went on, the university became a more hostile environment for Salvemini. In 25 March he was scheduled to give the keynote address commemorating his former mentor, Pasquale Villari, but Fascists used their "influence" and convinced the faculty to rescind the invitation. In April the Fascists decided to crack down on *Non Mollare*. They arrested Salvemini in June and held him for little over a month while awaiting trial, which opened on 13 July.⁶² The court listened to the pleas, postponed the

⁶⁰ DiScala, *Italy*, 243.

⁶¹ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 191.

⁶² *Boston Daily Globe*; 14 July 1925.

trial to an indeterminate date, and ordered his immediate release.⁶³ After his release, his lawyers were beaten, and one died as a result. An amnesty issued for 31 July set Salvemini free. Late at night on 1 August, he left Genoa by train, the guards beside him. As the train pulled into Milan at three in the morning and the guards were sleeping, Salvemini grabbed a bag and 350 page government document. He ran and hailed a taxi, gave false directions, hailed a second taxi to his destination and left Italy to begin two decades of exile.

⁶³ *The New York Times*; 14 July 1925.

CHAPTER II

UN FUORUSCITO AGAINST THE FASCIST REGIME

Salvemini spent the years from 1925 to 1932 primarily in England and finally settled down in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1933.⁶⁴ He traveled frequently to France during those years and participated actively in the antifascist struggle in both countries. He was close to Carlo Rosselli, also from Florence, and cofounded *Giustizia e Libertà*, the best-known of the interwar antifascist organizations.⁶⁵ In 1927 and 1929, Salvemini conducted two lecture tours of the United States. During these tours the Italian government interfered through officials of the Consulate. These officials also sent reports on Salvemini's activities to Italy.⁶⁶ These actions by the Fascist government are proof of the importance of Salvemini's actions because of the impact he had on American public opinion.

⁶⁴ *Fuoruscito* which literally means "those who have left" which was different from "exiles."

⁶⁵ Salvemini and Rosselli had disagreements over the direction Rosselli was taking with the group. Salvemini wanted the group to act as a "third alternative" between Fascism and Communism, but Rosselli was aligning it as a Socialist renewal group. By the time Salvemini was working at Harvard he had left the group, and a few years later both Carlo and his brother Nello had been assassinated by Fascists. Despite their differences Salvemini and Rosselli remained friends and Salvemini always respected his protégé. Salvemini took the loss of the Rosselli brothers very hard. Eventually they would all be buried together in Florence. This information on Rosselli and Salvemini taken from Charles Killinger, "Gaetano Salvemini: Antifascism in Thought and Action," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, vol. 15, no.5, 2010, 657-677.

⁶⁶ The information from the Italian government on Salvemini can be found at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato (Rome); Busta 4551, Fascicolo 1 1903-1932 and Fascicolo 2 1933-1943.

Salvemini's primary objective during his lecture tours in the United States was to attack the Fascist regime. The Fascists worked hard with local Italian consulates to have opponents sit in on these lectures and disturb and counter Salvemini's reports. Professor Bruno Rosselli of Vassar College was present at a luncheon of the Foreign Policy Association at Copley Plaza in Boston to defend Mussolini against Salvemini's attacks.⁶⁷ Rosselli was eventually chosen "as the ideal person to answer Salvemini's attacks on the Fascist regime...becoming the consulate's adviser on this issue ...and Salvemini's chief gadfly during his lectures."⁶⁸ The embassy set it up so there was someone to rebut Salvemini almost everywhere he spoke. The *New York Times* reported a disturbance at one of Salvemini's talks in New York. The report indicated fifty persons were escorted from the hall and in the resulting chaos a young reporter was stabbed.⁶⁹

These trips allowed Salvemini to earn an income and continue his struggle against Fascism. During his second voyage, Salvemini taught at Yale and the New School for Social Research. He went to Cambridge, Massachusetts to meet George La Piana, an Italian specialist on church history teaching at Harvard. Besides becoming very good friends with Salvemini,⁷⁰ LaPiana introduced him to some of the most well-known American historians of the period, including Arthur Schlesinger, Sr.⁷¹ In fact, it was

⁶⁷ *Boston Daily Globe*, 16 January 1927.

⁶⁸ Spencer DiScala, "Salvemini in the United States," in *Italian Socialism: Between Politics and History*, ed. Spencer DiScala (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 170. In a *New York Times* report describes an exchange between Salvemini and Rosselli on 5 February 1927. This exchange took place at a meeting of the Economic Club at the Hotel Astor in front of about 1,000 people.

⁶⁹ *New York Times*, 25 January 1927.

⁷⁰ Gaetano Salvemini, *Memorie di un Fuoruscito* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1973), 112.

⁷¹ DiScala, "Salvemini," 169.

Schlesinger, chairman of the Harvard History department, who initially asked Salvemini in 1929 to come to Cambridge to teach a semester as a visiting professor.⁷²

Before leaving for Europe, a young man named Lauro De Bosis passed by to meet him. A young monarchist and liberal, De Bosis headed the America-Italy society,⁷³ considered by Salvemini to be a Fascist front. De Bosis overcame Salvemini's reluctance to see him by explaining that he had dropped his early philo-Fascist ideas. During that conversation, De Bosis told Salvemini that he planned to fly over Rome to drop leaflets urging the Italians to oppose the Fascist regime. Salvemini cited the dangers involved, but did not discourage him. In October 1931, De Bosis carried out his dangerous mission. Leaving from Marseilles, he reached Rome but disappeared on his return flight to Corsica, probably having run out of fuel. Following his death, his fiancée, Ruth Draper, endowed a chair at Harvard University in De Bosis' name. Draper made sure the chair would go to Salvemini. Draper was an American actress and granddaughter of newspaper magnate Charles Anderson Dana. She was actively working until her death on 30 December 1956. Salvemini was very thankful to Draper for the position and commented "It was the permanent solution to my economic problems," Salvemini would remain at Harvard from 1934 to 1948.⁷⁴

⁷² Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "The Kennedy Administration and the Center Left," in *Italian Socialism: Between Politics and History*, ed. Spencer DiScala (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 183. Schlesinger further explains that the governing body wanted the invitation retracted but the elder Schlesinger refused, stating the department had acted with proper authority. "Salvemini, a man of passion, wit, and unconquerable zest for life, quickly captivated Cambridge, and, after James B. Conant became president in 1933, the history department secured him on a regular basis."

⁷³ Salvemini, *Memorie*, 113.

⁷⁴ DiScala, "Salvemini," 169.

Thought and Action

Salvemini carried out his anti-Fascist message with unrelenting force.

Salvemini's weapon of choice was always his words, and by the time he began working at Harvard he was proficient in doing this and his sights were set only on Fascism. The advent of Fascism set Salvemini's life course on a single path, that of destroying the regime and spreading this message. This section will show that Salvemini was always true to his ideals; he may not always have been right, but with this unrelenting course he came out of the battle a victor. Salvemini was recognized in the United States as an authority on modern Italy, and as such was constantly asked to write articles and give lectures.⁷⁵ The examples in this section provide a small glimpse into the activities Salvemini was involved in while in the United States.

On 4 March 1934, the *New York Times* reported that Salvemini, along with six others, were implicated in a bombing at St. Peter's Cathedral in the previous June. Salvemini, although not present in Italy, was charged as being an organizer as well as conspiring against the life of Mussolini.⁷⁶ Salvemini told the *Times* on the sixth that his name was added to the list of conspirators at the last minute. He also cabled Mussolini "that he would welcome the opportunity extradition proceedings would give him to prove

⁷⁵ There are countless examples of this. Letter dated 19 November 1940 from Herbert Stewart, editor-in-chief of the *Dalhousie Review* in Canada, commending Salvemini on an article he wrote. Letter dated 1 April 1941 to Professor Shippe, from University of Minnesota, discussing a lecture series. Letter dated 3 February 1943 from the Assistant to the Managing Editor of the *Christian Science Monitor* stating that they would be delighted to see any article of his. Letter dated 18 July 1944 from Luois R. de Filippis from the Federal Communications Commission, Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service, asking for information on the *Giustizia e Libertà* in Italy and *Non Mollare*.

⁷⁶ *New York Times*, 4 March 1934.

his innocence.”⁷⁷ The Fascist attempts to silence Salvemini were all in vain; he excelled in an environment where he was opposed.

Salvemini was quickly recognized as a leader of the anti-Fascist movement in the United States. He had many contacts within the community and many of them included exiled European intellectuals. A group of these Italian intellectuals formed the Mazzini Society (the name was chosen by Salvemini) in September 1939 at a meeting in the house of Michele Cantarella of Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts.⁷⁸ Those present at the meeting included Salvemini, Cantarella, Roberto Bolaffio, Renato Poggioli and Lionello Venturi.⁷⁹ The Mazzini Society was an attempt to coordinate the efforts of the anti-Fascist movement in the United States into one group. Originally, Salvemini was chosen as the group’s leader, but he was quickly forced out by Max Ascoli. Ascoli was an Italian Jew and intellectual exile with many political connections. Ascoli felt the group should act as an integrated American group rather than as Europeans. Ascoli was more Americanized than the *fuorusciti*, who planned on returning to Italy, and he and Salvemini disagreed on issues such as Italy’s future relations with the Allies. Salvemini “understood that Roosevelt would allow the conservative *prominenti* [prominent persons]

⁷⁷ New York Times, 6 March 1934.

⁷⁸ An undated Mazzini Society flyer, with Salvemini listed as being on the Executive Board, states: THE MAZZINI SOCIETY, TRUE TO THE DEMOCRATIC IDEALS OF THE UNITED STATES, PROCLAIMS ITS OPPOSITION TO FASCISM OF EVERY DESCRIPTION. FACED WITH THE DANGER THAT THE FASCIST GOVERNMENT MAY OVERRIDE THE WILL OF THE ITALIAN PEOPLE AND DRAG ITALY INTO THE WAR ON THE SIDE OF HITLER, THE MAZZINI SOCIETY FEELS IT IMPERATIVE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN LOVE OF ITALY AND SUPPORT OF FASCISM. THE MAZZINI SOCIETY THEREFORE CONDEMNS ITALY’S POSSIBLE ENTRANCE INTO THE WAR AS DESTRUCTIVE OF WHAT REMAINS OF ITALIAN INDEPENDENCE, OF DEMOCRACY EVERYWHERE AND OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN CIVILIZATION.

⁷⁹ Renato Camurri, “Max Ascoli and Italian Intellectuals in Exile in the United States before the Second World War,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15, no.5 (2010), 652.

to influence Italian policy.”⁸⁰ Salvemini, in a letter to Ascoli, advocated a “violent attack” against those sympathetic to Fascism, but with the Society’s connections they “can not do anything but keep silent.” Salvemini says of Ascoli; “as long as you are there, the Mazzini Society will be unable to do anything by way of protest...”⁸¹ By the end of 1943 “Salvemini and his friends had left the Mazzini and Ascoli had resigned as its president.”⁸² The Mazzini Society according to Ascoli and many of its adherents, “despite certain merits...was weak and poorly organized.”⁸³

In a case that serves as an example of Salvemini’s thorough investigation into Fascist activities, in 1941, Rabbi Dr. K. Friedman sought membership in the Mazzini Society. In a letter dated 18 April 1941, Salvemini wrote to a Rabbi Beryl D. Cohon inquiring about Rabbi Friedman. Salvemini states that the Rabbi made his way to the United States after “Mussolini was overcome with anti-Semitic madness.” He goes on to explain that he received information that the Rabbi was a Fascist. Salvemini further explains that this fact would be “of no great importance” as intellectuals were forced to join the Fascist Party. Salvemini goes on to say that he learned from another reliable source that when the Rabbi settled down in Quincy, Massachusetts, he declared he was an anti-Fascist, but was still filled with admiration for Mussolini. Salvemini calls attention to the fact that this is the best way of spreading Fascist propaganda, stating you are an anti-Fascist and then admiring Mussolini. Salvemini would reject applications for

⁸⁰ Philip V. Cannistraro, “Understanding America,” in *Italian Socialism: Between Politics and History*, ed. Spencer DiScala (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 180.

⁸¹ Gaetano Salvemini to Max Ascoli, 12 February 1942, Istituto Storico della Resistenza in Toscana (cited hereafter as ISRT)

⁸² Cannistraro, “America,” 181.

⁸³ Camurri, “Ascoli,” 653.

membership in cases such as these. With regard to the Rabbi, “a Jew who carries on Fascist propaganda is...twice guilty.”⁸⁴ His reply on 30 April 1941, Rabbi Cohon stated that he did a thorough investigation and found from a source “that Dr. Friedman, in an attempt to be fair, credited our friend Benito with certain accomplishments; but by no means endorsed his rule. Perhaps someone carried his remarks farther than he had intended them to go” as his English was still not that good. Rabbi Cohon recommended that Friedman be let into the Mazzini Society “and given a chance to educate himself in the more liberal point of view.”⁸⁵ Salvemini showed understanding in the political climate of the time, and the fact that intellectuals were forced to join the party. Salvemini did not tolerate Fascist sympathy especially after people were fully aware of the true conditions in Italy.

Salvemini would not let Fascist sympathizers by with a pass, and was compelled to bring Fascist activities to public attention. In a letter of 22 April 1941, Salvemini wrote to Professor Sanford H. Freund of Harvard Law School about a new book by Pier Angelo Sereni. Salvemini explains the information about the forthcoming book was received from Professor Lionello Venturi.⁸⁶ Salvemini expressed an opinion against the publication of Sereni’s book, the first volume of a history of international law in Italy. Salvemini states, “Perhaps you know this gentleman organized an assault on Giorgio Amendola; published fascist and anti-English propaganda up until a few days before the racial laws; and now says that we must kill all the Fascists, including all the Academics

⁸⁴ Gaetano Salvemini to Rabbi Beryl D. Cohon, 18 April 1941, ISRT.

⁸⁵ Rabbi Beryl D. Cohon to Gaetano Salvemini, 30 April 1941, ISRT.

⁸⁶ Venturi was an art history professor at the University of Turin. He was exiled after refusing to swear allegiance to Mussolini. In the United States he taught at Johns Hopkins University and worked with the anti-Fascist movement.

of Italy. At Williams College he gave an anti-Fascist lecture, but became infuriated when he found out that it was to be published, and had the publication suppressed.”⁸⁷ It is safe to say that Salvemini was Fascism’s most persistent nemesis in the United States.

In a similar example from a letter dated 4 December 1941, Salvemini wrote to Bruno Foà, of the Bureau of Latin American Research, about Bruno Rosselli. In this letter he describes Rosselli as “a good-for-nothing...sent to the United States so as not to disgrace his family in Florence any longer.” He discusses how Rosselli was a Professor of Italian at Vassar College and was let go. Salvemini also explains how Rosselli was a Fascist that lied about receiving a silver medal. Rosselli also worked with the Italian Consulate in Boston to thwart Salvemini’s activities.⁸⁸ In another letter from Salvemini to Professor Guido Ferrando of Vassar College dated 19 March 1942: “I see that still in 1939 he [Rosselli] boasted that he was a war veteran, but this was printed in a daily paper.”⁸⁹ In another attempt to bring Fascist sympathies to light Salvemini writes a Mr. Pearle discussing Andre Luotto; “it appears that Luotto gave a lecture on Fascism at the Circolo Italiano of New Haven in 1923, under the chairmanship of the consular agent, Pasquale de Cicco, a wild Fascist. It is obvious that Luotto did not attack Fascism under such chairmanship.”⁹⁰ To Salvemini, any association with Fascism, or not speaking out against Fascism when given the chance, was as grave a sin as being “a wild Fascist.” Luotto wrote to Salvemini on 9 August 1943, delayed because he hoped to write “in respectful terms.” Luotto accuses Salvemini of distorting things in his own way. He also

⁸⁷ Gaetano Salvemini to Professor Sanford H. Freund, 22 April 1941, IRST.

⁸⁸ Gaetano Salvemini to Bruno Foà, 4 December 1941, ISRT

⁸⁹ Gaetano Salvemini to Professor Guido Ferrando, 19 March 1942, ISRT.

⁹⁰ Gaetano Salvemini to a Mr. Pearle, 2 July 1943, ISRT.

places Salvemini “among those of the vultures of a blind, bilious anti-fascism which refuses to reason as long as it can strike at a new victim, with base slander and false accusations.”⁹¹ Even in criticism however, Salvemini was never caught in a lie; he called it how he saw it.

Salvemini was always true to his ideals, and did not make compromises. He often made this point known when asked to write or give a talk. In a letter to Natalia Danesi Murray of the National Broadcasting Company, International Division, dated 1 December 1942, Salvemini states; “If I were to broadcast to Italy I should feel duty bound to tell them that they must overthrow not only Mussolini but also the King, the whole House of Savoy, the generals and the admirals.”⁹² In a similar case, Salvemini wrote to Paolo Contini of the Bureau of Latin-American Research, dated 1 May 1943. Salvemini states “But if I have to speak, I have to tell those people that anti-Fascism in Italy means an Italian Republic and separation of the State from the Church. Would I be allowed to state freely these two points?”⁹³ Salvemini was not malicious in his attack, in the sense that he would mislead in his agreement to speak or write, and then spread his anti-Fascist message. An Anonymous author wrote to the city editor of the New York Times on 13 October 1943, that “Prof. Salvemini encouraged all sincere democrats to refuse Mr. Churchill’s invitation to rally behind the King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia and his Marshal [Pietro Badoglio], and to give instead all their support for the establishment of truly democratic Italian Government.” The author states at the end of the letter that “We regret to see that while the statements of a public official are fully mentioned in today’s

⁹¹ Andre Luotto to Gaetano Salvemini, 9 August 1943, ISRT.

⁹² Gaetano Salvemini to Natalia Danesi Murray, 1 December 1942, ISRT.

⁹³ Gaetano Salvemini to Paolo Contini, 1 May 1943, ISRT.

editions of your paper, the dissenting opinion of an outstanding authority on Italian affairs was not considered fit to print.”⁹⁴

Salvemini’s actions were not confined to anti-Fascism, but he was also willing to help out his fellow countrymen by using his connections. However, even those he was ready to help were not free from his interrogation. Salvemini wrote to Judge Julian William Mack on 16 January 1942 asking for him to provide some assistance to Enrico Funaro, a young Italian Jew accepted to Tufts Medical School, in need of permission to travel.⁹⁵ He wrote another letter to the United States Attorney General at the State House in Boston, dated 7 February 1942, in which he explained that Funaro had given Salvemini’s name as a reference in order that he may travel as an enemy alien; “I know Enrico Funaro as a confirmed anti-Fascist...I can vouch for his political beliefs without any qualifications.”⁹⁶ Funaro needed money and had to travel to New York because it provided more opportunity. Salvemini was awaiting a call from Mr. McCarthy, the Assistant Attorney General in the Federal Building in Boston, but it did not come so he wrote him on 2 March 1942; “Therefore I take the liberty of writing you, asking you to take into benevolent consideration the case of Enrico Funaro...He is a young man who was forced to leave Italy two years ago because of the racial madness which overtook Mussolini 1938...He is a young man of absolute political integrity...He has been from the very beginning a member of the anti-Fascist Mazzini Society.”⁹⁷ Salvemini wrote another letter to Judge Calvert Magruder dated 4 March 1942. Salvemini explained to

⁹⁴ Anonymous to the *New York Times* editor, 13 October 1943.

⁹⁵ Gaetano Salvemini to Judge Julian William Mack, 16 January 1942, ISRT.

⁹⁶ Gaetano Salvemini to the Attorney General of Massachusetts, 7 February 1942, ISRT.

⁹⁷ Gaetano Salvemini to the Assistant Attorney General of Massachusetts, 2 March 1942, ISRT.

the Judge that Funaro was regarded as an enemy alien, and that he felt four weeks had passed with his application with no response because Funaro was considered a dangerous person. Salvemini asked the judge; “Would it be possible for you to tell the Assistant Attorney General that my evidence may be taken as that of a man who is not a spy in the service of Mussolini, and who would not sponsor a person if he were not sure of him?”⁹⁸ In his typical thorough style Salvemini wrote to Funaro on 19 May 1942, to ask a “very delicate question;” and that was whether or not he was among a list of people who left Italy for racial reasons and on coming to New York received \$100 a month from the Banco Commerciale. Salvemini tells him bluntly at the end of the letter, “I should have to take this fact into account in writing your testimonial, and it would not be to your credit.”⁹⁹ This is typical Salvemini, he did not mislead in any way, but he did state outright what he was thinking and what he would do.

Salvemini also had exchanges with the former Ambassador to Italy, William Phillips, for whom he had a severe distaste. On 5 June 1942, Salvemini received a letter from Dr. Lewis Perry, the principal at The Phillips Exeter Academy, asking Salvemini to introduce Phillips at a dinner held in his honor.¹⁰⁰ In a reply dated 8 June 1942 Salvemini wrote, “I foresee that if Hitler is defeated, the Fascist regime in Italy will break down and the Italian people will do away with the King, the Pope, and Badoglio, unless Ambassador Phillips succeeds in persuading the State Department that Italy must be occupied for many years by American troops working hand in hand with Fascist black shirts, who will have changed only the color of their shirts.” He continues in the

⁹⁸ Gaetano Salvemini to Judge Calvert Magruder, 4 March 1942, ISRT.

⁹⁹ Gaetano Salvemini to Enrico Funaro, 19 May 1942, ISRT.

¹⁰⁰ Dr. Lewis Perry to Gaetano Salvemini, 5 June 1942, ISRT.

following paragraph that a letter from Phillips to Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law and Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, stating "how much Mr. Phillips had enjoyed the 'happy years' he had spent in Rome. Those 'happy years' were those in which Mussolini was dishonoring the Italian nation in Ethiopia, in Spain, in Greece, and in Libya."

Salvemini concluded the letter by saying "you can use your own common sense to judge whether I could introduce Mr. Phillips to any audience without warning the audience that Mr. Phillips does not understand anything of Italian affairs and that his advice on the Italian problem is harmful not only to the Italian people but also to the American people."¹⁰¹ In a letter from the office of the managing editor of *The Christian Science Monitor*, undated, first complements Salvemini on one of his recent articles. He goes on to talk about Phillips and the fact that he did, indeed, know that dangers of Fascism. The editor explained that Salvemini may have been able to better understand Phillips had he been able to talk to him.¹⁰² This may have been optimistic of the editor because once someone committed the grave sin of sympathizing with Fascism he was no longer considered a "man of honor" by Salvemini.

Salvemini brought his fight to the top and was in contact with government officials. Most of his correspondence with these officials dealt with a work he was putting together later published posthumously as *Italian Fascist Activities in the United*

¹⁰¹ Gaetano Salvemini to Dr. Lewis Perry, 8 June 1942, ISRT.

¹⁰² Managing editor of *The Christian Science Monitor* to Gaetano Salvemini, undated. In a letter from Salvemini to John C. Crane dated 18 December 1946, he states; "First of all, one does not understand what kind of contribution Frank Sinatra might give to an American Society for cultural relations with Italy." He mentions that he spoke with La Piana who was also in agreement about not joining. Salvemini explains that there are people on the list of names with whom he does not want to have a connection, including Phillips. Italy." He mentions that he spoke with La Piana who was also in agreement about not joining. Salvemini explains that there are people on the list of names with whom he does not want to have a connection, including Phillips.

States.¹⁰³ Salvemini wrote to Alfredo Coen on 20 May 1941 explaining that “‘Italian Fascist activities in the United States’ be sent to the B.F.I [FBI?], the Dies Committee,¹⁰⁴ and to the public under the name of the Mazzini Society. I would do the literary work, but I do not work for the pleasure of circulating my name.”¹⁰⁵ This last point is very important because Salvemini was never a wealthy man, and he devoted himself to his work to spread his message. His money went to his basic necessities and to Fernande in France. In a letter from Salvemini to Miss Duane W. Koeing on 31 May 1941, he discusses her research in Fascist activities in America. Salvemini asked her to limit her studies to the middle and far west of the United States, she is from Madison, Wisconsin; Salvemini was concentrating his research to the northeast.¹⁰⁶ Salvemini’s intention was to exploit Fascist activities in the entire United States, and realized he could not do it alone so he solicited help. Writing to R. Keith Kane, Department of Justice Special Defense Unit, dated 28 October 1941, Salvemini explained the findings of his research on Fascist activities in the United States to be given to the Dies Committee. He noted that his work was becoming much longer than he thought it was going to be and included major Italian and Italian-American groups such as “the Sons of Italy, the Italian World War Veterans, the Dante Alighieri Society, N.U.I.A. [National United Italian

¹⁰³ Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, ed. Philip V. Cannistraro (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977).

¹⁰⁴ On 26 May 1938, The House Committee on Un-American Activities was established as a special investigating committee, reorganized from its previous incarnations as the Fish Committee and the McCormack-Dickstein Committee, to investigate alleged disloyalty and subversive activities on the part of private citizens, public employees and those organizations suspected of having Communist or Fascist ties. The committee was chaired by Martin Dies Jr., and therefore known as the Dies Committee.

¹⁰⁵ Gaetano Salvemini to Alfredo Coen, 20 May 1941, ISRT. In a letter to Ruth Draper dated 3 June 1946 discussing his book on Lauro De Bosis; “I wrote Mondadori, telling him that I do not wish to get any royalties from the book so that the paper of the book might be better and the price lower.”

¹⁰⁶ Gaetano Salvemini to Duane W. Koeing, 31 May 1941, ISRT.

Associations], the so-called Educational Center, the Italian Chamber of Commerce, the Casa Italiana, the Apulian Federation, the Catholic Clergy, the Press, Radio, etc., etc.”¹⁰⁷

In a letter from Harold B. Hoskins of the Department of State dated 24 December 1941, discussing “Free Italy Movements,” he asked; “Do you feel that there are any Italian citizens in this country and in Italy to be able to head an effective opposition movement to the present Fascist Government?”¹⁰⁸ In a letter dated 3 May 1942, to Hoskins, Salvemini discusses his study of Italian Fascist activities in the United States, and states that many “big shots” would be on his list including “high catholic clergy and too many officials in the Federal, state and city governments.”¹⁰⁹ Allen L. Edwards from the War Department Military Intelligence Division writes to Salvemini on 26 March 1942 and acknowledges Salvemini’s willingness to help, “you may be assured that the War Department fully appreciates your cooperation.” He even goes on to write “We should also like to receive the names of specialists on other foreign countries who, in your judgment, might be qualified to undertake similar tasks.”¹¹⁰ Edwards writes on 20 April 1942, “We are looking forward to receiving your study on Italy with considerable interest.”¹¹¹ These examples demonstrate the extent of the government’s trust in Salvemini’s judgment.

Another example that illustrates Salvemini’s reputation is a letter from Nicola Chiaromonte- Italian author and political activist who fled Italy for France in 1934 and arrived in New York in 1941- to a Mr. English on 17 May 1943. In the letter,

¹⁰⁷ Gaetano Salvemini to R. Keith Kane, 28 October 1941, ISRT.

¹⁰⁸ Harold B. Hoskins to Gaetano Salvemini, 24 December 1941, ISRT.

¹⁰⁹ Gaetano Salvemini to Harold B. Hoskins, 3 May 1942, ISRT.

¹¹⁰ Allen L. Edwards to Gaetano Salvemini, 26 March 1942, ISRT.

¹¹¹ Ibid., April 20, 1942.

Chiaromonte writes: “to have here in America such outstanding personalities as Gaetano Salvemini and G.A. Borgese¹¹² (both American citizens) whose ideas, if allowed a minimum of freedom from official shackles, could have a great influence on Italian opinion at this particular moment- precisely because of their names, being those of great liberals, are not, however, connected with a particular party or a particular ideology.”¹¹³ Also by Chiaromonte, in an undated piece titled *Memorandum to “The New Republic”* he states, “But a general statement on Allied policy could be signed by a certain number of Italian and American democrats. In my opinion, the only person who has the moral authority to draft such a statement is Gaetano Salvemini.”¹¹⁴ It is true that Salvemini had “moral authority” and this led him to make many of his decisions. He did not join any group without first knowing their intentions, plans and membership. In a letter from Sam Burt to Salvemini, dated 28 July 1943, Burt states he was asked to inform Salvemini of the statement adopted by the Italian Liberation Conference of the Joint Board [sic] Fur Dressers and Dyers Union, and that his name was selected “by the conference as an outstanding representative of the Italian-American population.”¹¹⁵ On 29 July 1943, Salvemini replied to Burt stating he was unable to accept the invitation; “I always feel uneasy when I have to deal with organizations whose directors and membership I do not know thoroughly.” He goes on to state that he does not waste time with people “who do

¹¹² Borgese was an Italian writer who taught at several universities in Italy. He wrote the book *Goliath: The March of Facism*. Due to his opposition to Fascism he fled the country and came to the United States. He taught at the Universities of Chicago and California. He returned to Italy in 1945 with his family.

¹¹³ Nicola Chiaromonte to Mr. English, 17 May 1943, ISRT

¹¹⁴ Nicola Chiaromonte, *Memorandum to “The New Republic,”* undated, ISRT.

¹¹⁵ Sam Burt to Gaetano Salvemini, 28 July 1943, ISRT.

not share my ideas.” He also makes a note that some of the other names on the list are not people he wishes to associate with.¹¹⁶

The best example of Salvemini’s strict idealism and unwillingness to compromise his better judgment is the case of Jean Luchaire, Fernande’s son known to Salvemini as Giovannino. As a younger man, Jean filled the role of surrogate son for Salvemini. The two grew apart when Jean moved to France with his family and got involved with extremist political associates, which included the German Otto Abetz.¹¹⁷ Jean’s activities included working to suppress the French Resistance, and as a journalist for several Fascist publications. Jean was arrested in 1945 by the Allies. On 14 July 1945, Salvemini replied to Jean’s sister, Ghita, after she had written a plea to help her brother. Salvemini wrote affectionately, yet adamantly, that after spending his life in opposing such forces he could not defend the actions of Jean. He writes of the affection he had for Jean, but knew that his actions would eventually lead him into trouble.¹¹⁸ Jean was executed on 22 February 1946. On 19 March 1946, Salvemini replied to a letter he received from Fernande. In a painful explanation of Jean’s decisions, Salvemini ends the letter stating that he would prefer to be executed than to suffer in prison and to end one’s life with dignity.¹¹⁹ Clearly, Salvemini was truly saddened by this event, but he maintained his ideals without hesitation.

¹¹⁶ Gaetano Salvemini to Sam Burt, 29 July 1943, ISRT.

¹¹⁷ Killinger, *Salvemini*, 315.

¹¹⁸ Gaetano Salvemini to Ghita Luchaire, 14 July 1945, ISRT.

¹¹⁹ Gaetano Salvemini to Fernande Luchaire, 19 March 1946, ISRT. Translated from Italian by author.

These examples give great insight into Salvemini's character. He was endlessly spreading his message and completely unwilling to compromise his positions. It is also clear that he was very involved in the fight against Fascism while simultaneously working on many different projects. Salvemini was the "go-to-guy" when seeking information on contemporary Italy, and he was always prepared to "educate" the public in the intricacies of not only Italian, but also European politics and diplomacy.

CHAPTER III

SCHOLAR AGAINST FASCISM AND *GALANTUOMO*

Salvemini was such a prolific writer that his friends often wondered when he slept. It is even more difficult to understand how he did all his writing when one considers that he was often battling illness and required ten hours of sleep every night. Salvemini wrote three major books on Fascism that will be looked at closely to give a greater sense of his overall theories on Fascism. Salvemini aimed to debunk Fascist myths set forth by the regime's propaganda machine. Fascism had a head start on Salvemini on the international stage, and, therefore, he was very much fighting an uphill battle; but as one author has said, Salvemini would "emerge as perhaps the most penetrating student of Mussolini's Italy as well as one of the most acute observers of the world scene."¹²⁰

Salvemini's Trilogy on Fascism

Salvemini wrote three full-length books on Fascism in addition to numerous articles. The three books are: *The Fascist dictatorship in Italy* (1927), *Prelude to World*

¹²⁰ Dante Puzzo, "Gaetano Salvemini: An Historiographical Essay," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20, no. 2 (April 1959): 224.

War II,¹²¹ and *Under the Axe of Fascism* (1936). These books encompass Salvemini's general theories on Fascism, and his articles reiterate these theories. Salvemini and LaPiana's book, *What To Do With Italy*, will be discussed to explain his plans for Italy after the war. Salvemini's seminal Introductory Essay in William Salomone's *Italy in the Giolittian Era: Italian Democracy in the Making, 1900-1914*, will show how he rethought his earlier views on Italian history. Both these latter examples will demonstrate how Salvemini's American experience changed him.

The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy was Salvemini's first book length account of Fascism. In it Salvemini explains how Fascism began and how the regime took control in Italy. Salvemini draws much of his information from Fascist sources. His concise prose and direct quotes from Fascist sources made this an easily accessible work for English-speaking readers. Salvemini aimed to demonstrate that Mussolini and Fascism were not the glowing saviors of Italy; rather, the Duce set up a ruthless and violent regime that manipulated the Italian people in order to create a dictatorship.

Salvemini's first objective was to disprove that the Fascists had saved Italy from a Bolshevik revolution. Salvemini argues that there was no threat of revolution, and in fact a Bolshevik style revolution would be impossible in Italy.¹²² Salvemini contended that nearly all postwar Italian "Bolshevists" were merely protesting against the aftermath of the war and the high cost of living. He explains: "...if danger of a revolution had never been great, the fear of it has been great... In politics what people say is of more

¹²¹ All quotes will be from *Prelude to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 1954). This book was first published in French as *Mussolini Diplomate*, 1932; also published in Italy as *Mussolini Diplomatico*.

¹²² Gaetano Salvemini, *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1967), 19. Salvemini got this from a Turati speech of 1919.

importance than what actually happens. And fear is a bad counselor.”¹²³ Salvemini knew that the nascent movement was going to be a problem, and one of the main reasons was the proficiency of its propaganda agents. Having travelled widely abroad, Salvemini saw firsthand the nefarious effects of Fascist propaganda.

Salvemini emphasizes the violent nature of Fascism throughout his book. He cites many examples of Fascist violence and argues that a true analysis of all the crimes would require a much longer work.¹²⁴ He attributes many of the differences between Fascists and other parties to Fascism’s military-like hierarchical structure.¹²⁵ He even states that the Fascist organization of October 1922, during the march on Rome, was not the creation of Mussolini, but of “retired officers, officers on leave, members of the police, and agents of the industrialists and landowners and intellectual middle classes.”¹²⁶

Salvemini analyzes the revolutionary phraseology of the early Fascists in fighting against the Bolsheviks and concludes that “the true function of the Fascists was in reality conservative.”¹²⁷ The use of rhetoric is important for the regime and for this Salvemini gives Mussolini credit. “He [Mussolini] knew his public, as only a man can know it who has been a journalist, first of the Left, and then of the Right; and he played on it with the skill of demagogue of the first rank...He often says: ‘the greater the confusion, the

¹²³ Salvemini, *Dictatorship*, 55.

¹²⁴ On page 161 Salvemini writes “it would take a book of 400 pages to discuss the outrages that took place between November 1922 and December 1926.”

¹²⁵ Salvemini, *Dictatorship*, 87.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

better.”¹²⁸ As a journalist, Mussolini was able to manipulate facts both domestically and abroad.

Salvemini spends much of the latter part of the book discussing the murder of Giacomo Matteotti secretary of the Reformist Socialist Party. In his book, *A Year of Fascist Domination*, Matteotti, fills forty-two octavo pages with assaults perpetrated by the Fascists from November 1922 to October 1923.¹²⁹ On 30 May 1924, in the Chamber of Deputies, Matteotti accused the Fascists of committing fraud in the recently held elections and denounced the violence they used to win the elections. Eleven days later he was kidnapped and killed by Fascists. The men who committed the murder were known, and the order was supposedly given by Mussolini but justice was not served until after World War II. Salvemini remarks; “One of the most appalling results of the Fascist dictatorship is that the Italian people have now lost all faith in justice. They are plunged into an abyss of moral anarchy, from which it is impossible to see how and when they are to escape.”¹³⁰ Fascist propaganda created the belief outside Italy that the wrongdoings were due to “the impulsiveness of irresponsible elements in the Party” who disobey the Duce.¹³¹

In contrast to his first book, *Prelude to World War II* considers Fascist foreign policy. Salvemini wrote that Mussolini’s policies confused and contradictory policies were were part of his personality: “What was his purpose? Must we interpret his policy

¹²⁸ Salvemini, *Dictatorship*, 100-101.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 155.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 202.

¹³¹ Ibid., 231.

as a diabolic plan to hurl Europe into chaos? Let us not paint the devil any blacker than he was...He wanted to keep Europe in a state of flux which would provide him with a chance to grab something somewhere. He had no definite plans, and was only trying out different devices day by day according to changing moods.”¹³² Salvemini felt that Mussolini’s bravado led Italy into World War II and that “He reached the last and most deadly phase of Realpolitik: lack of scruples no longer curbed by common sense.”¹³³ Not only had the Duce lacked scruples and common sense, but he also avoided dealing with men who could confront him on equal footing as a result of his “inferiority complex.”¹³⁴ Salvemini uses Mussolini’s reluctance to attend international meetings as evidence.

Salvemini dedicates a great deal of space in the book to the Italian-Ethiopian war of 1935-1936. To Salvemini this was the real prelude to World War II. Due to the fact the Britain and France did not interfere when Italy attacked Ethiopia, Salvemini put some of the blame on these two powers for not enforcing League of Nations’ policies. In doing so they had failed Europe, and this failure of European diplomacy put more power into the hands of Mussolini (and Hitler).

Salvemini’s work on Mussolini proved influential. A number of historians accepted at least a modified form of the thesis that Mussolini’s foreign policy was “propagandistic, demagogic, opportunistic, improvisational and incoherent, without plan or program.”¹³⁵ Salvemini’s criticism of Mussolini led some observers to read his work

¹³² Gaetano Salvemini, *Prelude to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 1954), 45.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹³⁵ Charles Killinger, “Gaetano Salvemini in the United States: A Study in Italian Anti-Fascism” (PhD diss., Florida State University, 1985), 318.

as propaganda rather than history, but Salvemini was writing contemporary history with full knowledge of his biases. In the Preface to *Prelude to World War II*, he writes:

There are certain historians and critics sincerely convinced that they are unbiased, impartial, “scientific,” who reject as “biased” any opinion that clashes with their own bias: they are fools endowed with a God Almighty complex. A second group consider themselves “unbiased” because they understand all principles and have none themselves; opportunism is no more admirable in historiography than in daily life. Then there are the wolves in sheep’s clothing—the propaganda agents who boast of their lack of bias. Finally, there are those who frankly admit their bias, but do their utmost to avoid being blinded or side-tracked by it. Impartiality is either a delusion of the simple-minded, a banner of the opportunist, or the boast of the dishonest. Nobody is entitled to be unbiased towards truth or falsehood. Evidence permitting definite conclusions may be lacking, but when a conclusion has been reached, there cannot be two different truths. If one statement is true, the opposite is false.¹³⁶

This book is an excellent example of Salvemini’s work, although, as with most of his work, it was heavily influenced by his opinions. It gives the reader great insight into the diplomacy of the 1930s. In fact, Dante Puzzo considers Salvemini’s treatment of the diplomacy as “brilliantly perceptive” and considers *Prelude to World War II* as a “masterpiece of historical writing.”¹³⁷ The book is another example of Salvemini’s handling not only of contemporary Italian history, but of world events.

Salvemini wrote *Under the Axe of Fascism* to deconstruct Mussolini’s economic “success” and the corporate state, which both gained notoriety on the international stage. Salvemini knew he was up against a formidable opponent, Fascist propaganda, that had

¹³⁶ Salvemini, *Prelude*, 9.

¹³⁷ Puzzo, 232.

created a “sacred myth”¹³⁸ of the current climate in Italy. This work, as with many of his others, was written expressly for an English-speaking public; and he writes: “we have confined ourselves to calling the reader’s attention to mis-statements published in the English language.”¹³⁹ What was important for Salvemini in calling attention to the myths of Fascism was explaining that the regime had seriously restricted people’s rights. A Fascist law of 11 November 1926, for example, stated that “All political parties, all anti-Fascist political organisations, and others of a suspected character have been dissolved. Government commissioners have been placed in charge of economic organisations whose leaders gave cause for doubts.”¹⁴⁰

In Italy it was well known that workers were forced to join the state-run unions, but Fascist propaganda explained to the outside world that Italians preferred these unions. The Fascists used membership in the unions as proof of their success.¹⁴¹ However, not only were workers under state control but so were professionals such as lawyers¹⁴² and journalists.¹⁴³ The international public could not be blamed for believing what they read about Fascist Italy, but Salvemini writes: “It would seem easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for two Anglo-Saxon professors to pass safely through the fog of Fascist propaganda.”¹⁴⁴

Because of Mussolini’s need to gain complete control in Italy he encouraged the creation of the Corporate State. In doing this “the president of all the corporations is

¹³⁸ Gaetano Salvemini, *Under the Axe of Fascism* (London: Victor Gallancz Ltd, 1936), 9.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

Mussolini, and the vice-presidents are designated by Mussolini from among the delegates of the Fascist Party.”¹⁴⁵ In a speech of 14 November 1933, Mussolini told the audience that because of the policies of the Fascist regime that the standard of living in Italy had risen, and that all this was due to the Corporate State.¹⁴⁶ Even a French journalist who admired Mussolini said of the corporations that they were “a façade behind which there was not much of anything.”¹⁴⁷

Salvemini discusses Mussolini’s many “battles” which included all policies from fighting malaria to fighting unemployment. He attributed many of Mussolini’s “victories” in these battles to manipulated statistics or upward trends that began before Mussolini ever came to power. He spends a great deal of time talking about workers and unemployment. Salvemini cites the case of workers in the Sicilian capital of Palermo as an interesting example of what the workers were up against. In 1934, twenty-seven workers agreed to work for wages lower than those mandated by the state. The employer was eventually prosecuted for this action, but so were the employees. The judge found that they had acted as his accomplices for having agreed to work knowing the wage was illegal. For those who could not pay the fine had to serve prison time.¹⁴⁸ Workers literally had nowhere to turn for justice.

Salvemini concludes that “Italy is the only country whose Government has organized a spectacular world-wide propaganda campaign to prove that its people were so backward as to be incapable of self-government and that to educate them there was

¹⁴⁵ Salvemini, *Axe*, 136.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 221.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 244.

necessary the Fascist bludgeon and castor oil. Italy is the only country in the world whose Government has striven intensively to erect the false glory of a single man on the unmerited discredit of an entire people.”¹⁴⁹

Salvemini's intention in deconstructing Fascism is evident in these three works. He set the bar high for Fascist scholarship, and in a time when the Duce could do no wrong Salvemini was a lonely voice in a crowd. Salvemini had a more important forum to criticize the Fascist regime while serving as professor at Harvard University where he emerged as the intellectual leader of the antifascist community, but his idealistic nature limited his influence among the mass of Italian-Americans. However, this idealism allowed him to emerge from the battle against Fascism victorious. He won in the sense that he never wavered and continually fought against Fascism and for democracy; and in doing so he helped create the necessary circumstances for the Italian people to freely choose their own government.

Italy: A view from America

Salvemini's American experience influenced his thinking in several crucial ways. He always felt that England and the United States would play a major role in post-Fascist

¹⁴⁹ Salvemini, *Axe*, 176.

Italy. As a result, Salvemini, together with George La Piana,¹⁵⁰ wrote *What to do With Italy* in 1943. The book details what the two authors feel is the best course for post-war Italy. Another major impact of Salvemini's American experience is his revaluation of his previous criticisms of Giolitti, and his agreement with A.W. Salomone that Italy was a "democracy in the making" during the Giolittian years. He used the essay as an opportunity to explain his previous criticisms and the evolution that led him to change his earlier analysis.

What to do With Italy

What to do With Italy would be Salvemini's last book, and like most of his work in the United States was designed to influence American public opinion. The book reinforces the same tenets he had always preached that would determine the shape Italy should take following the war. Salvemini had always been anti-clerical and anti-monarchy, and never held back his criticism of the Vatican and the monarchy. He felt that both the Vatican and the House of Savoy were complicit in the rise of Fascism and its decades of rule. Salvemini and La Piana now insisted that the Italian people be free to choose their own government. As they write in their introduction, "the new constitution must express the will of the Italian people, not the imposed will of others, and must be made as times goes on by representatives elected by the people."¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ La Piana was a professor of church history at Harvard University. He was involved in the anti-Fascist movement, and a very good friend of Salvemini.

¹⁵¹ Gaetano Salvemini and George La Piana, *What to do with Italy* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), xxii.

Although not new in its concepts, the book provides readers unfamiliar with contemporary Italian history an explanation of the Italian situation. Salvemini begins the book by discrediting Winston Churchill's argument that "One man and one man alone [Mussolini], against the crown of the Royal Family of Italy, against the Pope and all the authority of the Vatican, against the wishes of the Italian people."¹⁵² Salvemini discredits this statement by giving the reader a brief history lesson. He discusses King Victor Emmanuel's refusal to sign a decree proclaiming martial law that would have allowed the army to suppress Mussolini's march on Rome. Then the king called Mussolini to form a new cabinet. Again, in 1924, the king had the power to remove Mussolini after the Matteotti murder but refused to do so. Finally, Salvemini condemns the king because, "Last but not least, when he [the king] accepted and ratified with his signature all the laws and decrees which abolished the constitution for all purposes and established the dictatorship."¹⁵³ Salvemini discusses at length the relationship between the Vatican and Mussolini, dubbed by Pope Pius XI as "the man sent by Providence."¹⁵⁴ Salvemini also refers to the Lateran Treaty as "not merely a treaty of peace between two formerly hostile powers...was also a treaty of alliance..."¹⁵⁵ Salvemini exposes Churchill's statement as mere diplomatic rhetoric.

Salvemini and La Piana felt that the Italians could re-educate themselves and would choose a democracy for Italy; "In our opinion, there is not much need to worry

¹⁵² Salvemini and La Piana, 5.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 32-33.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 81.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 82. The Lateran Treaty was a series of agreements made between Mussolini and the Church. The Treaty recognized the full sovereignty of the Holy See, included a concordat regulating the position of the Church in the Italian State, and a settlement to the Church for previous lost territories. All succeeding governments have upheld the Treaty.

over the course the new generation will take in post-war Italy, so long as we keep our promises and fulfill expectations of the new order of political liberty, economic opportunity, and social justice which we have proclaimed to be our goal in the post-war world.”¹⁵⁶ The authors believed strongly that the Italians were capable of choosing the best course of action that really boiled down to: “The fundamental issue in our inquiry on what to do with Italy is whether we intend to destroy Fascism, root and branch; to help Italy start life once more on the solid foundations of liberty and democracy; and to let the Italians choose their own political system-or whether we intend to thrust upon them, willy nilly, a reactionary regime in order to protect the special interests of groups which are not working for the good of either Italy or America.”¹⁵⁷

The book ends with the disheartening thought of bombings leaving Italian cities in ruins and destroying the lives and history of the Italian people. The destruction in their home country saddens them, but sadder still is the loss of young American lives; many have passed through the halls of the same universities that Salvemini and La Piana taught at. “We wish them good luck with all our hearts. We wished to train them for life and for constructive work, not for death and destruction...these boys are now fighting and dying for an ideal: to maintain in America and to revive in Europe the democratic way of life...We cannot bear to think that these boys shall have died in vain.”¹⁵⁸ War is often the most effective course for a relatively quick and decisive victory. The fight for democracy, by both military and intellectual soldiers, created a climate ripe in Italy for

¹⁵⁶ Salvemini and La Piana, 188.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 188-189.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 295.

the people to choose their own government. After two decades of being suppressed Italians were now regaining their freedom.

Salvemini Rethinks Pre-World War I Italian “Democracy”

Salvemini was often a harsh critic and as such had many opponents because of this aspect of his personality and even lost many friends because of it. Those closest to him understood his inability to compromise his basic principles. Salvemini never made the transition from political polemicist to politician. His ideals made it impossible for him to become a politician, and as a result often limited his effectiveness. Nevertheless, he could learn, as his American experience demonstrates. His time in the United States caused him to reanalyze his earlier criticisms of Giolitti and pre-World War I Italian democracy. In his Introductory Essay to A.W. Salomone’s *Italy in the Giolittian Era: Italian Democracy in the Making, 1900-1914*, which is one of Salvemini’s most important works from his time in America, he explains his new thinking on the Giolittian era.

Salomone’s book filled a gap in the study of modern Italy between the Risorgimento and the rise of Fascism. The book was first published in 1945, with the second edition appearing in 1960, and at this time little scholarship had been done on this time period in Italy. Salomone’s work serves as one of the first studies on the Italian political situation between 1900 and 1914, and won the American Historical Association’s prestigious Charles Baxter Adams Prize in 1946. In the preface to the

second edition Salomone states that “This book seeks to suggest an approach to the problem of Giolitti and of his era by utilizing historical reconstruction and historiographical critique.”¹⁵⁹ Salomone intended his work to “stimulate debates among historians and students of modern Italy...”¹⁶⁰ Salvemini wrote the introduction as “an independent reappraisal of Giolittian politics written under the immediate stimulus of his reading my monograph” and with Salvemini’s essay Salomone could be assured that his book would have its desired effect.

After Unification, Italy compared itself to its great past and looked upon it with nostalgia. Instead of realizing its very important strides, the country “was crushed by her past,” and Italians “had words only to lament the mediocrity, incapacity, dishonesty, failures of their politicians.”¹⁶¹ When Salvemini was writing at the time of Giolitti, he did not have the advantage of hindsight and the experience of the politicians that came after him. Salvemini remarks; “one has to admit that before the First World War Italy possessed a very low form of democracy. But does perfect democracy exist anywhere? Is not democracy in the making everywhere?”¹⁶² According to Salvemini Italy was no worse off, or had more corrupt politicians, than any other country.

Salvemini devotes a portion of his essay discussing how emigration to North America influenced Italians and when the emigrant “returned home he was a new

¹⁵⁹ A.W. Salomone, *Italy in the Giolittian Era: Italian Democracy in the Making, 1900-1914* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), vii.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., ix.

¹⁶¹ Gaetano Salvemini, “Introductory Essay” in A.W. Salomone’s *Italy in the Giolittian Era: Italian Democracy in the Making, 1900-1914* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), xiii.

¹⁶² Ibid., xiv.

man.”¹⁶³ He argues that “experience of life is more important than mere literacy.”¹⁶⁴ This experience led the emigrant to possess “a greater knowledge of practical affairs.”¹⁶⁵ Salvemini further discusses America as having “the attractive fairy-tale of sharply outlined opposed political parties,” but uses as an example that a Republican from California would be different from a Republican from Massachusetts. In comparing the allegedly unstable Italian parliamentary system before World War I to the American system, he notes the strong differences among American parties and writes: “Once elected, the President must deal, both in the House of Representatives and the Senate, with a hodgepodge of heterogeneous and fluctuating groups in comparison to which the groups in the pre-Fascist Italian Chamber of Deputies were a heavenly chorus.”¹⁶⁶ Salvemini, having lived in several questions, makes a strong case that those who experience the workings of another country can gain a better perspective.

Salvemini discusses Giolitti’s participation in “managing” the elections of the South. In the North, Giolitti could not “manage” the elections and northerners were free to vote as they pleased. The North had many more voters and the increased number made it more difficult for Giolitti to control the voting. In the South, the situation became more difficult for Giolitti with the new suffrage laws of 1882 and 1912 because more people were allowed to vote. As a result Giolitti was forced to use more violent measures in cooperation with local criminal organizations in order to win elections. The members of Parliament from the North were allowed to protest, although it usually did

¹⁶³ Salvemini, “Introductory Essay,” xv.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., xvi.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., xvi.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., xvii.

not do them any good because Giolitti legitimately won many votes, and they eventually fell in line with the “boss.” Salvemini is careful about labeling Giolitti a dictator, as he did in the past, because a dictator “is a man who suppresses freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association, and sends his opponents to jail or to the next world. Giolitti never did this. He circumvented opposition by reducing the Chamber of Deputies to the position of his maid-servant.”¹⁶⁷ If Giolitti is to be considered a dictator, Salvemini states, then “Roosevelt was also a dictator in America from 1933 to 1940 and Churchill was a dictator in England from 1940 to 1945.”¹⁶⁸

Salvemini gives Giolitti credit for being “an extraordinary and skillful parliamentarian” with the ability to very quickly react to the general climate in Parliament. Giolitti was careful about keeping control and “As soon as his parliamentary majority wavered Giolitti used to resign in order to allow his opponents to try their luck, keeping alert to return to the foreground as soon as his followers reorganized themselves.”¹⁶⁹ This is the exact action Giolitti took on the eve of World War I, but that conflict unexpectedly disturbed Italy’s fragile democracy in the making.

Salvemini devotes space to his own actions during the Giolittian years. He tells the reader that he practiced “as well I could, my profession of historian (which has always been my true profession), I devoted my spare time to political crusade. The reader will find in this book the crusader and not the historian.”¹⁷⁰ Salvemini, looking back after thirty years, states “I have nothing to regret. I must acknowledge, however,

¹⁶⁷ Salvemini, “Introductory Essay,” xix.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., xix-xx.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., xx.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., xxi.

that I would have been wiser had I been more moderate in my criticism of the Giolittian system...and he was certainly less reprehensible than the Italian politicians who followed him.”¹⁷¹ Salvemini also states “I would not omit any of my censures of the Giolittian system, but I would be more indulgent and I would regard with greater suspicion those who found pleasure in my criticism because they wanted to lead Italy in the opposite direction from that which I envisaged for her.”¹⁷²

This Introductory Essay is an important work because Salvemini’s reanalyzes Italy’s pre-war political climate in light of his experience in the United States. World War I significantly changed Italy’s course. Italy was experiencing “democracy in the making,” but it was still fragile and post-war Italy was too unstable because of the war to continue on its previous democratic path. For a historian like Salvemini, working with contemporary issues, a true analysis can be difficult because he lacks the knowledge of how things turn out. Hindsight allows a different perspective, and in this case Salvemini had the opportunity to compare pre-war to post-war Italian politics.

As a contemporary of the regime, Salvemini was in the unique position of having first-hand knowledge of Italy, even if it was often tainted with his biases. Salvemini believed that historians should be aware of their biases and embrace them in their work. This contradicts what many historians feel, but it strongly influences them when writing about contemporary issues. Clearly, Salvemini had an agenda, and wrote with an agenda, and boiled down it is to deliver the truth about the Fascist regime. However, Salvemini’s time in America had a major impact on his thinking. He learned a lot about American

¹⁷¹ Salvemini, “Introductory Essay,” xxi.

¹⁷² Ibid.

and international politics, and as a result looked carefully at his previous ideas and rethought some of his positions. When Salvemini entered the University of Florence as a young, intelligent man, yet a little ignorant of the world, he revered his professors as *galantuomini*. His dedication to education made him into a *galantuomo* in his own right, and a man to be admired for generations as a warrior for democracy.

CHAPTER IV

A TIMELESS LEGACY

The end of World War II brought major changes to Italy. The constitutional referendum of 2 June 1946, resulted in the election of a constituent assembly and creation of a Republic. Salvemini's friends, including Piero Calamandrei, pleaded with Salvemini to return to Italy. Salvemini was unsure of what to do, but he thought that he would now be able to address some projects he had been putting off. In the summer of 1947, he agreed to return to Italy. After more than twenty years of having no freedom in Italy, Salvemini now enjoyed the fresh air of his homeland. He was pleasantly surprised by what he saw and proud of the resilience of his people. He was, however, concerned with the political situation. Salvemini spent time catching up with friends and getting their opinion on the future of Italy. On his return he stopped in England and France. He visited Fernande who was very ill and mostly blind; this was the last time he saw her and she died shortly after his visit.

Soon after his return to Massachusetts, 15 December 1947, Salvemini received a letter from David Owen, of the Harvard University History Department, stating that Harvard would not be renewing Salvemini's contract. Salvemini was seventy-four years old, and Harvard stated that in no case had a professor taught after seventy-five (most of the time a professor remained until sixty-six). The letter offers "deep regret" for losing

someone like Salvemini. The university offered its “appreciation” for his “splendid service” and stated that it was “deeply grateful.” The university remarked that Salvemini “contributed enormously” to the “intellectual life of the university.” Harvard even offered an income to Salvemini of up to \$2,000 per year. In his reply Salvemini offered his “deep and abiding appreciation” for all that Harvard had given him.

The ideas Salvemini had long fought for were coming to fruition. The new Italian Republic adopted a constitution that went in effect on 1 January 1948. It included many of the principles Salvemini held so near to his heart. The new government was to be voted on with universal suffrage, which included women for the first time. The monarchy was abolished and provisions made it difficult to amend in order to prevent a dictatorship from forming. “The new republican constitution represents the first deliberate effort by the Italian people as a whole to guarantee their freedom and common welfare within a constitutional framework.”¹⁷³ A preamble and a bill of rights, which together make up about one-third of the constitution, “protect the individual against the encroachments of the state and promise him those benefits which are today recognized as one of the main functions of government.”¹⁷⁴ This is not completely Salvemini’s doing, but his fight against Fascism and his influence were important.

The spring of 1948 was Salvemini’s last semester at Harvard and he delivered his last lecture on 5 June. The American public read on 8 November 1948, in the *New York Times* that Professor Gaetano Salvemini was restored to his former position, Chair of

¹⁷³ Mario Einaudi, “The Constitution of the Italian Republic,” *The American Political Science Review* 42, no. 4 (August 1948), 661.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 672.

Modern History, at the University of Florence. He remained in Massachusetts until late summer of the following year and then headed back to his native country with his old friends Roberto and Maritza Bolaffio. After more than twenty years of instability, Italy would now be Salvemini's home again. He entered his classroom, and in typical style said to his students "as we were saying last time..."¹⁷⁵ Salvemini could look forward to educating a new generation of Italians that had grown up knowing only Fascism. He would show them the path Italy had gone down in the not too distant past, in hopes that these young students would not make the same mistakes as their elders.

During the fall of 1951 he made a final trip to Massachusetts but spent most of it in the Harvard infirmary. During the last years of his life, Oxford University gave him an honorary degree and the Accademia dei Lincei rewarded Salvemini with its history prize.¹⁷⁶ Salvemini left the fight with Fascism on top and received official recognition for his role from some of the world's top institutions. Salvemini was truly dedicated to education and with his characteristic generosity he used a portion of his pension to make a gift to the universities of Harvard and Florence for the purchase of books on Italian history and literature.¹⁷⁷

After a few years teaching in Florence, and enduring the cold winters, Salvemini settled in Sorrento with friends to spend the rest of his days. He was constantly visited by friends, from all over Europe and the United States. As was the case always with Salvemini he loved his friends very much and always cherished each relationship. On 6

¹⁷⁵ The saying from the latin "Heri Dicebamus" was first used by Filippo Turati in his first article in *Critica Sociale* following his release from jail.

¹⁷⁶ From the commemorative *Controcorrente* issue, Tributi in inglese "Harvard Commemoration,"76.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

September 1957, at the age of eighty-three, Gaetano Salvemini passed away in Sorrento surrounded by friends. The next day Americans read about his life and death in an article entitled "PROF. SALVEMINI FOUGHT FASCISM." The last words of Salvemini as recorded by Bolaffio: "'To die smilingly,...this is what I should like...I could not have foreseen a more serene death than this.' He drifted off to sleep; then awakening a moment before he died, he said, characteristically, 'I am not dead yet.'"¹⁷⁸

An account of Salvemini's funeral is given in a piece by Elizabeth Mann Borgese entitled "Salvemini's Last Message."¹⁷⁹ Borgese mentions that Salvemini left instructions to be buried in the cemetery of the poor in Sorrento. However his friends put together a national committee and obtained permission to transfer Salvemini's body to Florence. Around 2,000 people came to pay their respects to the great professor. There was an honor guard formed by students wearing the medieval hats that students wear there on special occasions. Salvemini was buried next to Carlo and Nello Rosselli, who had been murdered by the Fascists. Borgese describes the day; "It was filled with that kind of serenity always left in the wake of truly great men. Salvemini was a truly great man."¹⁸⁰ Her article emotionally reminisces about the loss of such a great Italian. She ends the piece with words taken from the then mayor of Florence, saying that it was "The closing of the terrible winter of Fascism and Nazism, and the opening of a new season of civilization."¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Schesinger, 184.

¹⁷⁹ Elizabeth Mann Borgese, "Salvemini's Last Message," *The Nation* Vol. 193, Issue 18, 435-437.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 435.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 437.

In a tribute issue of *Controcorrente*, an anti-Fascist review published in Boston by an old friend, included articles printed both in Italian and in English and commemorated Salvemini's life. Friends and colleagues, including Myron Gilmore, H. Stuart Hughes, George LaPiana, Renato Poggioli and Louis Lyons, wrote an affectionate piece describing Salvemini's work. They write; "In his struggle against the fascist enemies of freedom and their sympathizers, Salvemini held no one beyond his reach and beneath his contempt. He was as ready to take up the cudgels with the heads of government, the princes of the Church, the leaders of intellectual life, as he was with naive eulogists and paid propagandists. He sought only to prove them all wrong before the bar of public opinion. His mocking and moving eloquence, inspired by indignation and common sense..."¹⁸² Salvemini's willingness to take on his enemy with unrelenting force is an aspect of his character most respected by those closest to him.

In another piece from this tribute, Louis M. Lyons says of Salvemini that he was "One of the most colorful and brilliant professors in the modern period of the University [Harvard]...He was one of the world's great scholars and the vigor and simplicity of his nature and utterance made him a vital teacher...You could always understand Salvemini."¹⁸³ His very nature is what made Salvemini a great resource both for intellectuals and the general public. His work is easy to read and understand, his lectures easy to follow. His directness and simplicity, extraordinary assests, may be attributed to his Southern upbringing.

¹⁸² *Controcorrente*, Tribute, 76.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 77.

Salvemini's life was a rollercoaster ride of success and failure, tragedy and triumph; a man full of love and laughter yet firmly grounded in his Southern pragmatic and often pessimistic roots. Salvemini's passion and tenacity made him a true warrior for democracy, and his intelligence and attention to detail made him into Fascism's greatest enemy. All the while he never forgot about his peasant upbringing and the people for whom he fought. Salvemini never enjoyed a place on center stage, because his polemicist attitude precluded a widespread following. In a world where people accepted compromise, Salvemini would have no part of it. An "honest man" like Salvemini would not give up even an inch in order to create a general agreement.

Always the historian, Salvemini first never missed a lecture even when he served in Parliament, as many of his colleagues did.¹⁸⁴ He very quickly realized that the life of a politician was not for him and that integrity prohibited him from becoming one. Salvemini's life was completely changed with the rise of the Fascist regime. He became one of Fascist's greatest enemies and dedicated his life to debunking the myths of the regime and its leader.

It is hard to imagine that a man who experienced such tragedy and illness produced such important works, he is famous not only for his books and articles attacking Fascism but for seminal studies in Medieval history. Salvemini always kept his humor and was known for his laughter, but his tragedies were not far from his mind and he was known to carry around some of his children's toys and a fading picture.¹⁸⁵ Salvemini always remained a Southerner and never quit his fight for Il Mezzogiorno. A peasant

¹⁸⁴ *Controcorrente*, Tribute, 75-76.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

from his home region, Puglia, stopped Salvemini on the street one day and said to him “you never betrayed us.”¹⁸⁶ This stuck with Salvemini and he even wanted it put on his tombstone.

In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, “Tribute to Gaetano Salvemini,” an admirer wrote of Salvemini: “a man quite without fear...His stamina was tested in combat with Mussolini un the days of the Black Shirt rise to power, but afterward even more searchingly in the long years of exile...We must not forget him, one of the historians who live and make history as well as write it.”¹⁸⁷ It is clear that Salvemini had a great impact on many people. It is not often that a person who pledges his life to academia also makes an impact by actively participating in current affairs. Salvemini’s life work left in its wake a timeless legacy in the fight for freedom.

¹⁸⁶ *Controcorrente*, Tribute, 79.

¹⁸⁷ *New York Times*, 15 September 1957.

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