

BARTOLO GARIGLIO

*Professor emeritus of the University of Turin
Chairman of the Committee for Gobettian Editions (Italy)*

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MEMORY OF ANTI-FASCISM. THE ITALIAN CASE. PIERO GOBETTI'S BOOKS AND EDITIONS

The report analyzes the importance of the memory of anti-fascism, in a country like Italy where fascism originated. The concept of long Resistance is examined, focusing on the early twenties of the twentieth century, when Mussolini rose to power, considering in particular the notable figure of Piero Gobetti and his activities as a publisher. In the short space of three years, he published 114 volumes. Among the authors there were all the major figures of the anti-fascist culture of the time, from Einaudi to Salvemini, from Amendola to Salvatorelli, from Ruffini to Monti, from Sturzo to Nitti, literary critics such as Fubini and Sapegno, novelists, poets, including Eugenio Montale, future Nobel laureate. A Committee chaired by me took the initiative to republish the entire corpus of Gobettian books, to make available to the new generations the best democratic literature of the time, as a contribution - in an era of right-wing populism and crisis of democracy in various parts of the world - to the struggle against fascism which is always taking on new forms, against the "eternal fascism" Umberto Eco spoke about. Eighty volumes have been released so far (October 2020) which - hopefully - will help to preserve the memory and to maintain an intergenerational message, foreseeing a future without oblivion

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Planning, recalling, proposing again anti-fascism is an essential civil and philosophical task of every living being as Hanna Harent taught with particular energy [4, 5]. Despite several and fierce oppositions, it saw democratic and progressive intellectuals and politicians from all over the world involved. In my report I will focus on the Italian case, on its features and contradictions. Do not forget that this country, which is also my country, was the first in which historical fascism established itself and for the longest time.

After the Second World War, as a reaction to it, the Italian Republic was founded on anti-fascism and the Resistenza. The latter saw the convergence, not always easy, between two generations: the first one was formed at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first two decades of the twentieth century; the sec-

and one arised in the years of the Regime and passed to anti-fascist positions, during the war and especially during the Resistenzap [45]. They gave birth to partisan formations of different political colors: the Garibaldi brigades with a communist majority, Giustizia e Libertà brigades connected to the Action party, the Matteotti Brigades, solcialist dominant, the Berretti Verdi made up of Catholics; but there were also brigades without any political color, so-called autonomous, with a strong military presence [20].

The Italian Constitution, drawn up by a special Assembly in the years 1946-1947, was founded on the Resistenza. If during the War of Liberation there was no lack of tensions between the various political forces of the country, they managed to find a convergence in the elaboration of the constitutional charter, identifying a compromise between different positions. In this case, however, it was not a downward compromise. Rather it was a compromise in the Latin sense of the term (*cum promittere*), promising together to give solid foundations to Italian democracy: objective, that was in a significant part achieved [58]. In fact, the Italians are very proud of their Constitution, which they consider with clear exaggeration "the most beautiful in the world".

In recent years, however, the concept of Resistenza in the long sense is spreading, to the point of including the forms of anti-fascism that arised in the 1920s, which took on non-negligible forms, up to being overwhelmed by fascism, which became a regime (1925-1926). They concerned parties and political forces, whose leaders and intellectuals were forced into prison, exile, in some cases were killed by fascist squads, or died as a result of violence. Among the figures who were assassinated, the best known was Giacomo Matteotti, chief secretary of the Reformist Socialist Party, who was kidnapped and killed after having reported to the Chamber of Deputies, of which he belonged, the electoral fraud that had characterized the 1924 elections. His murder put fascism in difficulty for a few months and caused serious problems for Mussolini [7]. Among the many people sentenced to prison and confinement, it is worth mentioning at least Antonio Gramsci, nowadays perhaps the most studied Italian intellectual at an international level, becoming the subject of a real Gramsci "renaissance", with his atypical Marxism [11]. Among the exiles I mention Luigi Sturzo, priest, founder of the Italian People's Party, the first party of Catholics in Italy, forced to resign and then to exile by the convergent action of Mussolini and the Vatican, who were aiming for conciliation and didn't like an anti-fascist priest. In over twenty years of exile he continued the development and diffusion of his thought, achieving international fame [38, 54].

But in the last few years, the intellectual activities and the editorial efforts around the magazines and the publishing house of another exile, Piero Gobetti, have aroused great interest. All the major figures of the Italian anti-fascist culture collaborated in the Gobettian editions. The publishing house's motto written

in Greek was ΤΙ ΜΟΙ ΣΥΝ ΔΟΥΛΟΙΣΙΝ; “What do I have to do with slaves?”, was proposed by the writer and friend Augusto Monti and drawn by the painter Felice Casorati [16].

Piero Gobetti had a clear idea about his own model of publisher. In a fragment of a diary he wrote: «I have in mind my ideal figure of an editor. I console myself, in the evening on the most tumultuous days, 5, 6 for each week ... Fourteen hours of work a day between typography, paper mill, correspondence, bookshop and library (because the publisher must basically be a man of the library and typography, artist and retailer) are not too many even for my ideal publisher. The important thing is that he does not have to live by expedient between the persecutions of the prefect, the blackmail of politics through trade. I think of a publisher as a creator. Creator from nothing if he has managed to dominate the main problem of any industry: the business that guarantees the infinite multiplication of even a small amount of currency. My ideal publisher controls the prices, with a printing house and an association in a paper mill: with four model libraries he knows the daily fluctuations of the market, with two magazines he keeps in touch with the most important movements of ideas, arouses them, invigorates them, he doesn't need to be a Rockefeller ... My publisher prints 10 collections, he finds experts where they don't seem to be ... As long as he was logical: it is important he didn't make transactions with his principles as a cultured man» [25].

Gobetti was referring to the model of the *Voce* by Prezzolini: a publishing house connected to a magazine [12, 59].

The people who most influenced his education in this period were Luigi Einaudi, lecturer of Finance at the University of Turin, which he attended. He learned the free trade from Einaudi and absorbed the central core of the concept of classical liberalism: the idea of the fruitfulness of the struggle for the development of human capacities (conflictualism), the hostility to any organicistic conception of society and the State, such as fascist corporatism [46].

With the historian Salvemini, Gobetti shared the anti-nationalist (but not anti-national) tendencies, the sympathies for the Slavic peoples, and in particular for the newborn Yugoslav state, strongly opposed by the right wing, anti-transformism and meridionalism [51].

On the philosophical level, the Turin anti-fascist was affected by the idealism of Benedetto Croce, from whom he recovered above all the concept of dialectic and the methodological dimension "I have always accepted from Croce - he wrote - the resolution of philosophy in history and its limitation to the methodological moment" [26, 8].

In the twentieth century, Italian culture was largely done in magazines; in the first fifteen years of the century the Florentine periodicals were in first place,

immediately after the war the primacy fell to Turin with the magazines by Gobetti and Gramsci.

After the periodical of his university years *Energie Nove* [27], in February 1922 Gobetti gave life to the most important of his magazines *La Rivoluzione Liberale*. He had developed the conviction that Italy had not experienced an authentic "liberal revolution", having missed the appointment with the two upheavals that had given birth to modern nations: religious reform and bourgeois revolutions. That's the reason for the title of the magazine and the clash with fascism that characterized his cultural commitment and marked his publishing activity as well as his life [6; P. 23-29, 9].

Gobetti was thinking of promoting his own publishing house as early as 1919, but only on 19 October 1922, on the eve of the coming to power of Fascism, its creation was announced [66].

Gobetti was against the idea of the eclectic and commercial publisher, of which Treves was the greatest example in Italy at that time. I was convinced that a publisher had to contribute to the development and clarification of ideas about political, artistic and philosophical matters. He could not have been a generalist, but he was called to make precise choices. It was not supposed to place himself above the fray, but to have a militant function, in the specific anti-fascist case. "The publisher must represent a whole movement of ideas. He must be convinced of it, know it deeply. Even better if he brought his contribution to it, even better if he is actually the initiator" [28]. The confrontation with fascism led him to a clash with Giuseppe Prezzolini. Gobetti published an article on the *Rivoluzione Liberale* where Prezzolini proposed the constitution of the Congregation of Apoti, from the Greek "a potòs", of those who do not drink the lies of the fascists and but also of the anti-fascists [49]. He replied to him in the pages of his magazine on October 25, three days before the March on Rome: "In the face of a fascism that, with the abolition of freedom of vote and of the press, want to suffocate the seeds of our action, we will not form the Congregation well of the Apoti, but the company of death" [29]. Despite the disagreements, the relations between the two intellectuals did not fail. The following year Gobetti published the book *Io credo* by Prezzolini, which collected his thoughts on the theme of the "religion of idealism" [50]. Prezzolini and his wife were very close to Gobetti during the days of exile and death, which took place in Paris on the night between 15 and 16 February 1926 [21].

Gobetti's struggle against fascism was particularly hard, which he did not interpret as a transitory phenomenon like the conservative liberals as Giolitti or a parenthesis in the Italian history, as Croce would later do, but as the "autobiography of the nation", that is, as the expression of the lacks and evils present in the history of the country [6; P. 22-23]. In his opinion, therefore, the overcoming of fascism would not have been a short process and it would have required sig-

nificant changes in culture and more generally in Italian society. The fight against fascism, undertaken by the pages of his magazine, earned him his first arrest, on February 6, 1923, just after his honeymoon, for "belonging to subversive groups conspiring against the state". Only thanks to the involvement of various influential people, he was released after five days [22]. On May 29, Gobetti was arrested by the police. The Italian press gave great importance to the episode and the members of Parliament Canepa and Rossi presented parliamentary questions to the Undersecretary for the Interior Finzi, who replied "Gobetti had been editor of the *Ordine Nuovo* of Turin, an anti-national newspaper, the magazine he directs has been running for long time a campaign against the institutions and the fascist government: the Prefect therefore felt entitled to take Gobetti's search and arrest for public order measures» [60]. The persecutions continued the following year, on 1 June just after the political elections, Mussolini telegraphed the prefect of Turin to "make the life difficult again" for the political writer, defined as an "vapid opponent of government and fascism". On 9th June, on the eve of the Matteotti's crime, his home was searched and his copies of the *Rivoluzione Liberale* and all political were seized [47]. On 5th September Gobetti suffered a violent fascist attack, which greatly affected his weak health conditions. In 1925, *La Rivoluzione Liberale* was subjected to continuous kidnappings until on 11th November the Turin commissioner ordered Gobetti to stop any editorial and political activity: in those days he was suffering from heart failure, which required him more than a month of bed [48].

The publishing houses founded by Piero Gobetti published a total of 114 books. A Committee chaired by me took the initiative to republish the entire corpus of Gobettian books, to make available to the new generations the best democratic literature by authors who in the first post-war period, even if from different positions, were among the first to deal with fascism and attempted an interpretation of it. The works published in anastatic edition are accompanied by the commentary of some of the best scholars of the subject, from Italy and from abroad. The Editions of History and Literature, specialized in critical editions, took on the responsibility of publishing. The first of the books released, *Risorgimento senza eroi* by Piero Gobetti bears a writing by Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, President emeritus of the Italian Republic[30]. About eighty volumes have been published so far (October 2020). The work is expected to be completed by December 2025, on the eve of the Centennial of Piero Gobetti's death.

Some of the works are now considered classics of Italian political and historical literature, such as *Nazionalfascismo*, by Luigi Salvatorelli, which Emilio Gentile, perhaps the greatest historian of the subject, still considers the volume closest to his interpretation of fascism [55]; as *Diritti di libertà* by Francesco Ruffini, passionate and courageous testimony against the elimination of

fundamental freedoms, but also an important contribution of history and constitutional law [53]; such as *Le lotte del lavoro*, in which Luigi Einaudi enunciated his conflictualist and anti-corporate theories [15]; such as Salvemini's *Dal patto di Londra alla pace di Roma*, which recalled the issue of the Adriatic border from 1915 to 1920, and reported the anti-Slavic policy both of Italian governments and diplomacy [56]; such as Guido Dorso's *La rivoluzione meridionale*, one of the masterpieces of Italian meridionalism [13]. But we should remember the three books of the former Prime Minister Francesco Saverio Nitti, *La tragedia d'Europa*, which was followed by *La pace*, which took into consideration the economic, social and demographic consequences of the "European civil war"; *La libertà* that inserted the pacifist message in a perspective of freedom and justice [42, 43, 44]. The volumes had great circulation. *La Pace* reached 10,000 copies, "the highest circulation of a political book reached in Italy, and was translated into about twenty languages [3]. The three books of the aforementioned Luigi Sturzo, also had considerable interest, *Popolarismo e fascismo*; *Pensiero antifascista*; *La libertà in Italia*; which the author considered among his best and most successful works [61, 62, 63]. As we have seen, many of the texts had freedom as their object. In this regard, Gobetti wanted to republish with a new translation, probably revised by his wife Ada, a classic on the subject, *La libertà*, by John Stuart Mill, with a preface by Luigi Einaudi [40].

Gobetti, a layman, did not disdain to open his editions to members of different religious confessions, from an evangelical like Giuseppe Gangale [19], to catholics like Igino Giordani, author of the *Rivolta Cattolica*, for which the process of beatification has already started [24].

But in his publishing houses Piero Gobetti also published volumes written by himself starting from his graduation thesis, *La filosofia politica di Vittorio Alfieri*, almost a manifesto of anti-tyranny [31]; to the great Matteotti, dedicated to the Socialist deputy after his assassination [32, 33], to the aforementioned *Risorgimento senza eroi*.

Forty percent of the books by the Turin publisher were works of literature, poetry, theater.

Gobetti was a "Leonardensque" man. Among his books is Felice Casorati pittore, considered a distinction, destined to trace a groove between the before and after in the criticism of this author [34]. Gobetti was an extraordinary discoverer of talents, a feature that was recognized by Benedetto Croce himself. The Turin publisher wanted to give space to young people, to encourage the processes of renewal. He published the debut work of writers and critics such as Debenedetti [10], Gromo [37], Alberti [2], Fiore [18], Sapegno [57] and Montale, Nobel Prize winner, whose masterpiece *Ossi di seppia* was printed by him [41]. Gobetti also made a not insignificant contribution to the theater sector, publishing plays chosen with great caution. He supported Silvio d'Amico and his

battle to introduce the modern figure of the director to Italy, sustained the theater of Anton Giulio Bragaglia's "Indipendenti", and for some time directed the magazine *Scene e controcene*, arousing the interest of Luigi Pirandello [64, 36].

After the injunction of the Turin commissioner to suspend all publishing and publicity activities, Gobetti made the choice of exile. The destination was Paris. He wrote to Giustino Fortunato: "I will be a French publisher, that is my profession, that is forbidden to me in Italy now. In Paris I do not intend to make pamphlets, or simple polemics like the ousted Grand Dukes of Russia: I would like to do a work of culture in the sense of European liberalism and modern democracy". On December 28, 1925 his son Paolo was born. On February the 3rd, 1926 he left for the French capital. On 11 February he fell ill with bronchitis. His condition got rapidly worse. On the 13th he was transported by ambulance to the Clinique de Paris at the Bois de Boulogne, where on the 15th, around midnight, he died. He had not yet turned 25 [52].

On this occasion the most eminent personalities of the anti-fascist culture stood by his wife Ada, by sending letters, telegrams, notes, in which they communicated their dismay, deep pain and, despite the oppressive fascist vigilance, fidelity to the moral and political message of the deceased. These letters are very beautiful, especially those written by women, collected by me in a volume, entitled *L'autunno delle libertà*, which received the Vittoria Aganoor prize, as the best correspondence of 2009, the year of publication [22].

In the letters from his friends, the figure of Gobetti is reconfirmed as a militant intellectual in the fight against fascism, a terrain on which, as we have seen, the break with the "vociana", tradition took place when Mussolini came to power. Around his main magazine *La Rivoluzione Liberale* and his publishing house, Gobetti had been able to gather intellectuals and anti-fascist exponents of different cultural backgrounds, some of whom continued their battle during exile. Thus the "sketch of a counter-history of Italy [...] with the identification of liberal values, expressed by men and groups belonging to a very broad [...] ideological context" [65] was taking shape, as Francesco Traniello wrote.

Among them, the problem of "planning the post-fascism" arose already in the mid-twenties of the twentieth century, as I pointed out in one of my volumes [23]. It is the permanent task for people of culture, or rather for thinking people, looking at the ever new faces that fascism has assumed and is assuming.

In the years of the Mussolini regime, Gobetti's thought continued to feed the work of various figures and currents of anti-fascism, in particular the *Giustizia e Libertà* movement, probably the closest to his thought. Later, during the *Resistenza*, which he had somehow foreseen and of which with his ideas he had been one of the forerunners, with his ideas, his home in via Fabro 6 in Turin became between 1943 and 1945 one of the clandestine headquarters of the Parti-

to d'Azione. While the country was at war, the anti-fascist minorities became active and formed an underground network that gave life to the political and military organs of the Resistenza. Ada Gobetti was one of the promoters of this network in Piedmont. On these issues, at the request of Benedetto Croce, she wrote a successful Partisan Diary, translated into various languages (English, Japanese, Slovenian, Swedish) [35, 1, 39, 17].

After the war the authors, chosen and proposed by Gobetti in his publishing houses, assumed important positions, Luigi Einaudi, was even the first president of the Italian Republic, others held government or parliamentary functions and they were important figures at the institutional level, prominent intellectuals, universities professors, journalists.

In this era of resurgence of right-wing populisms and crisis of the democracies in various parts of the world, it seemed important to me and to the friends of the Committee for Edizioni Gobettiane to re-propose those books to the people of our time, as a contribution to the fight against fascism which always takes on new forms, against the "eternal fascism" Umberto Eco spoke about: "Ur-Fascism can come back under the most innocent of disguises. Our duty is to uncover it and to point our finger at any of its new instances - every day, in every part of the world ... Freedom and liberation are a unending task. Let this be our motto: 'Don't forget' " [14].

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