

## Italian Eurasian Diplomacy: Giulio Melegari and his Work as Ambassador Between Tokyo and St. Petersburg (1896-1912)

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**Abstract:** *One of the most painful pages in Russian history is represented by its defeat in the Russian-Japanese war of 1904-1905. From that event derive the notorious Bloody Sunday (January 1906) and the October Manifesto which forced the Tsar to give the people popular representation- Duma. An observer of these events was Giulio Melegari, son of the ex Minister of Foreign Affairs Luigi Amedeo. From Tokyo to St. Petersburg, where his career will end, he will be a careful witness of two powers in the center of world history and a worthy diplomat; author of the Racconigi Agreement (1909).*

**Keywords:** *Russia, Diplomacy, Giulio Melegari, Italy, Russian-japanese war; Kokovcov, Witte, Nicola II*

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The year 1861 represents an important one for Italians and also for Russians. At the completion of the Risorgimento Movement, under the Savoy lead, the Romanov Empire responds by emancipating approximately forty million peasants. The historic harmony embraces unanimous sympathies in Italy but clashes against Minister Aleksandr Michajlovič Gorčakov (1798-1883) resistance in recognizing the new kingdom in which territorial limits were not established and to admit it could have disturbed the peace in Europe, especially in the hot zones like the Balkans<sup>1</sup>. Such diplomatic perplexities are testified by Ministers Filippo Oldoini and Gioacchino Pepoli, Envoy Extraordinaries of the Kingdom of Italy in Russia (Petracchi, 1993). Talks between Consul Pepoli and Minister Gorčakov are famous for being inherent to problems of the principal of liberty and nationality of the people; too risky for the security of Europe according to the statesman, rich in virtue for the Italian<sup>2</sup>. In effect, to recognize the struggle for Italian liberation would have aroused the recognition of Polish problems which were in turmoil after the insurrections of 1863. After the exit of Pepoli from the scene, Italian-Russian relations became positive, because of Edoardo De Launay's fervent work, he knew how to mend and fortify these relations: supporting authoritarian and conservative Russian ideas and expansionistic goals in regards to central Asia and Ottoman territories. Ideas of Minister De Launay, in the wake of the collective phenomena of Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism, are summarized in his statement "*ce sont là des grands mots. Comme les feux follets, quand on court sous, on le fait reculer*" (Chabod, 1965).

Italian foreign policy, after its unification, was projected initially on tying the country's destiny to that of other European powers in order to complete a reunification to be achieved in stages. The crisis of the Ottoman Empire following the defeat against the Russians, and the subsequent Congress of Berlin in 1878, momentarily reanimated interest regarding the fate of Italians in Trento, Trieste and Dalmatia "with the typical idea of Mazzini's; Mazzini wanted to recall the power of Slav Risorgimento to dissolve the Habsburg monarchy and promote, weakening Austria, the full realization of Italian unity" (Chabod, 1965).

Germany's Chancellor Bismarck is undoubtedly a strong ally able to avert the danger of a France who's intent is declaring war on Italy because of the famous "clerical affair" which destabilized not only Italian domestic politics but gave rise to a heated debate between different schools of thought (Biagini-Reichel, 1991). Francesco Crispi, the protagonist of politics between 1870 and 1890's, though ousted from the Depretis cabinet, chose as companions Nicotera, Amedeo Melegari, Zanardelli, Mancini, Mezzacapo, Coppino, Brin and Majorana, to lead Italy towards the neo-colonial adventure diverting for several years away from its main mission; the enlargement of the universal suffrage, the underdevelopment of many southern areas and the combination, according to historian Ghisalberti, which still exists between the "rigida centralizzazione amministrativa con la quale era governato il regno di Sardegna fino al 1861 e [...] il moderno liberalismo" (rigid centralized government with which it ruled the kingdom of Sardinia until 1861 and [...] modern liberalism, Ghisalberti, 1993). Crispi's way proved not to be the route to undertake, therefore, towards the mid- nineties, with Antonio di Rudini, Italy partially abandons the venture and proceeds with the intent to consolidate foreign affairs and to improve internal conditions. The two countries, Italy and Russia lived different stages of evolution and progress; only after the

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<sup>1</sup> Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (DDI), s. I, (1861-1870), Vol. II, (31 dicembre 1861-31 luglio 1862), n. 87, 11 febbraio 1862, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> DDI, s. I, 1861-1870, Vol. III (1 agosto 1862-9 luglio 1863), n. 525, 19 Aprile 1963, p. 471.

intervention of Piedmont in the Crimean War, interest by Russian liberal groups grew for the Italian Risorgimento, which became the ideal common theme where ideologues and intellectuals of the time constantly confronted one another.

On the eve of the twentieth century, Russia was experiencing a time of intense economic and social transformation. This process was not widely supported by the Tsarist regime, resulting in a slow and cumbersome maturation process under the pressure of innovative ideas from the Decembrist Revolt of 1825 onwards accompanied a phase of modernization. The social transformations underway as evident by the copious and fascinating literary and cultural activity of the time, in addition to rapid industrialization, leading to a modest growth of capitalism and two social groups: Bourgeoisie and the Urban proletariat, which nevertheless represent a small percentage compared to the mass of the peasantry who still lives mainly within the traditional community structure in Russia, the *obsina*. This change did not go unnoticed in the eyes of many Europeans, most notably many Italians, who left during the time of the Crimean War, which marked a setback in relations between Russia on one side, the Kingdom of Savoy, ally of the Ottoman Empire, France and England on the other. The review of that judgment is clear through books published in Italy during those years (Modrich, 1892; Carletti, 1894; Barbiera, 1894).

Among the aspects most highlighted by the new literary production are the reformist force of Tsarism, latent energies of the Russian people and reforms in the social field. Tomaso Carletti, a young employee of the Embassy of St. Petersburg, emphasized the parallels between *mir* and the way of English self-government meanwhile strikes, riots and student protests were increasingly common in a country that was headed toward a mixed phase of revolution and reform as never before in its imperial history.

Even the resounding defeat of the Tsarist empire in Manchuria against the emerging Japan, takes a back seat to the Bloody Sunday of January 1905, that pushes for the first time the Romanov Dynasty to accept the compromise of a constitutional monarchy. The theory of a liberal model takes off; it cyclically invests a country and tends its history towards an inescapable need for individual freedom and parliamentary democracy.

In an effervescent climate relations are renewed between Italy and Russia. Thanks especially to the diplomatic actions of Giulio Melegari who in substitution to Conte Roberto Morra di Lavriano, knew how to build a diplomatic action that tends to favor a rapprochement between the two countries culminated with the encounter of Raconigi: truly an important success of his diplomatic action.

Giulio Melegari, born in Turin, on December 11, 1854, he was the son of Luigi Amedeo Melegari<sup>3</sup> (1805-1881), a well-known politician and state counselor of the Kingdom of Italy and of Maria Carolina Mandrot (called Magdalene). He graduated law school from the University of Pisa in 1877. On August 10<sup>th</sup> of the same year he was admitted to the Ministry as Honorary Officer of Legation, two years later he was effectively admitted in the diplomatic service. Dispatched to Bern, where his father resided as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, he was also appointed as attaché to the Bern Embassy (May 7, 1879), for three subsequent years from 20 May 1879 he worked in a familiar reality as a result of exposure to his father's profession. After several months in the Swiss capital he was appointed Second Secretary of Legation (Royal Decree of 25 December, 1880). In this regard, given the esteem granted to him at high levels, January 14, 1880, he wrote to Benedetto Cairoli, President of the Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs, the following words of appreciation:

"Signor Cavaliere, coll'ossequiato Dispaccio del 3 corrente mi si annunciava che con Decreto del 25 ultimo scorso Sua Maestà aveva degnato conferirmi la qualità di Segretario di Legazione di seconda classe. Sento di dover particolarmente codesto onore e tutto il bene che potrà derivarne in avvenire per me all'Eccellenza Vostra, onde sia che la mia vita Le rimanga vincolata da un perenne debito di riconoscenza che con ogni

<sup>3</sup> Figlio di Pietro e di Maria Simonazzi, Luigi Amedeo Melegari nacque il 19 febbraio 1805 a Meletole di Castelnuovo di Sotto in provincia di Reggio Emilia. Conseguita la laurea in giurisprudenza a Roma, venne nominato professore di diritto costituzionale all'Università di Torino nel burrascoso anno 1848. Diversi anni li trascorrerà a Losanna dove si ritroverà esule patriota insieme a Mazzini, di cui divenne amico, e tanti altri. Deputato dalla II all'VIII legislatura per i collegi di Bticherasio, Bosco di Alessandria, Correggio e Montecchio, sarà nominato consigliere di Stato nel 1859 mentre l'anno successivo sarà assegnato alla sezione grazie e giustizia. Nel 1862 viene nominato senatore. Rivestirà per diversi anni la carica di inviato straordinario e ministro plenipotenziario a Berna mentre la sua carriera culmina nel gabinetto Depretis dove ricoprirà dal 25 marzo 1876 al 26 dicembre 1877 la carica di ministro per gli Affari Esteri. Note sono le sue corrispondenze con Giuseppe Mazzini pubblicate da D. Melegari in una serie di scritti (Lettres intimes de Joseph Mazzini, Paris, 1895; La Giovine Italia e la Giovine Europa. Dal carteggio inedito di Giuseppe Mazzini e Luigi Amedeo Melegari, Milano, 1906). Morirà in servizio a Berna il 22 maggio 1881. Notizie tratte dal volume La formazione della diplomazia internazionale (1861-1915). Repertorio bibliografico dei funzionari del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Roma, Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1987, pp. 486-487. Sui rapporti di Mazzini con Melegari si veda anche il contributo di Giovanni Ferretti, Luigi Amedeo Melegari a Losanna, Roma, Vittoriano, 1942, XLX, pp. 368, in 8°. I. 45.

studio curerò di scontare ogni qual volta mi se ne porga l'augurata opportunità. Gradisca intanto, Signor Ministro, coi miei più vivi ringraziamenti, l'espressione del mio profondo ossequio<sup>4</sup>.

In July 1881, two months after the death of her husband Luigi Amedeo, Maria, wife of the former State Senator, wrote a letter to Cairoli from Bern for her son Giulio referencing the position of first secretary in Rome where the family wanted to relocate to (letter in French from Bern on July 11, 1881). Almost a year later, May 27, 1882, Giulio Melegari returned to serve in the Ministry (where in the meantime the Minister of Foreign Affairs is Mancini) but for a short period because, in place of Cavalier Riva, he returned to serve temporarily in Bern August, 1882 (Ministerial Decree of July 19<sup>th</sup>). In February 1883, Melegari went to Florence where his sister Dora had called for him due to their mother's health problems. He then asked for three months leave which were granted. Upon return from leave he was relocated from Bern to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome<sup>5</sup>. With the Ministerial Decree of 5 May, 1885, he was called to serve in the Royal Legation of Rio de Janeiro as First Secretary. Melegari arrived in the capital on September 6<sup>th</sup>. In regards to this period there isn't a lot of information, only that Melegari requested a period of leave, through Ambassador Ernesto Martuscelli, for the summer of 1887 in order to tend to "domestic interests"<sup>6</sup>. From Rome, on January 19, 1888, Melegari addressed a letter to the Ministry in which he criticizes his colleague Giulio Silvestrelli, Second Class Secretary of the Legation, for the length of his career, even through several non-operational years. Above all, the reason that pushes a diplomat into a career is the actual count of occupational time as an honorary officer, which is not valid for seniority. He writes:

non sarebbe, a parere dello scrivente, cosa giusta ed equa, qualora, senza tener alcun conto dei quattro anni e mezzo passati dal Silvestrelli fuori di servizio (la metà della sua carriera), lo si riammettesse in attività di servizio nella stessa posizione che prima occupava, e ciò a scapito di chi, avendo quasi uguale anzianità, prestò per dieci anni un non interrotto servizio di cui parte in America<sup>7</sup>.

(it's not, in the writers opinion, right or fair, without taking into consideration the four and a half year Silvestri was out of service (half of his carrier), putting him back into service in the same position as occupied before, that in spite of who, having almost the same seniority, served without interruption for 10 years of which in part in America.)

Melegari's "observations" would yield some effects; after a few months on 20 April, 1888, he was invited to the Royal Legation in Berne with the duties of First Secretary rendering "diligent and intelligent work"; the Italian Ambassador to Switzerland praised and affirmed this in his letter to the Ministry on July 5, 1888. He replaced Cav. Vigoni for a short period after which, by Royal Decree, on June 18<sup>th</sup> he was dispatched to Monaco of Bavaria where Barone Cova was acting ambassador. The promotion to First Class Secretary of Legation took place on November 14, 1888, with the effective date of December 1<sup>st</sup> and an "annual salary of 4000 lire". During these years he came into contact with the German-Prussian mentality and followed the evolution of the Bismarckian policy without leaving any particular sign. In 1888, Guglielmo II came to power in a German state dominated by a military caste and a parliament which submitted to the government, though elected by universal suffrage. The Kaiser, who had an impulsive temperament, within a few years, shattered the Bismarck project aimed at creating a network of diplomatic relations in favor of Germany. The new address briefed to foreign affairs, the belief that they could act without the contribution of the Tsarist Empire against rivals England and France, brought about in a short time the following: the rapprochement between the courts of St. Petersburg and Paris (1892); the discharge of old Chancellor Bismarck and an active economic cooperation with the Sublime Porte with an enormous capital for the construction of the Baghdad Railroad that connected Constantinople to the Persian Gulf. In the summer of 1890 because of a poorly treated case of diphtheria caught in May, Melegari is forced to ask for two months leave from work. Two years later, February 15, 1892, with Ministerial Dispatch no. 5607/121 he received the decoration, "Officer of the Crown of Italy". In a letter to the Marquis of Rudini, then president of the council, he expressed his gratitude for "the precious certificate of kindness in my regards by which I will always try, within the limits of my feeble

<sup>4</sup> MAE, Archivio Personale, Serie VII, Fondo M 5, "Giulio Melegari". Dalla Legazione di Berna, Lettera di Giulio Melegari al Signor Benedetto Cairoli, presidente del Consiglio, ministro degli Affari Esteri in data 14 gennaio 1880. Insieme a tale documento vi è una lettera del giorno prima scritta da Luigi Amedeo Melegari, padre di Giulio, nella quale oltre a ringraziare il ministro per la benevolenza dimostrata nei confronti del figlio, l'ex vecchio ministro invoca per il figlio un posto "onorevole nel nostro corpo diplomatico".

<sup>5</sup> MAE, Archivio Personale, Serie VII, Fondo M 5, "Giulio Melegari". Lettera del ministro Mancini al cav. Giulio Melegari in data 11 febbraio 1883.

<sup>6</sup> MAE, Archivio Personale, Serie VII, Fondo M 5, "Giulio Melegari". Lettera dell'ambasciatore Martuscelli al cav. Depretis, presidente del Consiglio e ministro degli Affari Esteri in data 24 aprile 1887. Depretis concederà il permesso di rientro in Italia del primo segretario cosicché dal 14 agosto Melegari poté usufruirne.

<sup>7</sup> MAE, Archivio Personale, Serie VII, Fondo M 5, "Giulio Melegari". Lettera personale di Giulio Melegari al Ministero degli Affari Esteri di Roma in data 19 gennaio 1888.

strength, to make myself always worthy of, even in the future"<sup>8</sup>. In January 1893, Melegari is offered a transfer to the Embassy in Lisbon that he refuses. On June 14, 1894, he is assigned for duty at the Royal Legation in Bucharest, headed by Count Curtopassi, where he finds a very different situation from the previous location. He leaves Monaco of Bavaria definitively on August 7<sup>th</sup>. The Balkan world was still troubled by a lively nationalism that reanimated after the Congress of Berlin in 1878. The various kingdoms and principalities of the Balkan Peninsula experience a very critical domestic situation due to the constant contrast among the conservative nobles, pro-Austrians, and small peasant proprietors. In particular Charles I of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen's (1866-1914) Romania was in a state of agitation because of the sale of Bessarabia to Russia in 1878. This implied its approach to a dual monarchy even if within a deep resentment towards the Magyarization policy initiated by the Hungarians against the Romanian population of Transylvania.

In Bucharest on February 11, 1895, Melegari receives the news of having been awarded with the decoration "Officer of the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus", by the Decree of 20 January, 1895. After two years from his arrival in the Romanian capital, in April 1896, he is transferred for the first time to St. Petersburg, where in the summer of that same year he worked at the embassy pro tempore. His resistance to accept the assignment is overcome by the insistence of the ministry and with a letter dated simply "*Sunday night*", he surrenders and accepts the assignment. He speaks to Minister Onorato Caetani of Sermoneta with these words: "I surrender to your advice and accept the post in Petersburg in the hope of, in a not too distant future, to receive another more convenient destination for me" not knowing that this post, in the near future, would mark an important step, last and decisive of his diplomatic career.<sup>9</sup> He went in hopes of soon obtaining a more favorable destination along with a promotion to counselor because St. Petersburg is for every career diplomat a "punitive" assignment in which you receive more for demerits than merits. Additionally the post was run for years by simple business managers, like Count Francesco Bottaro and Joseph Costa Silvestrelli (Petracchi, 1993). The reasons were clear why even the old Ambassador Costantino Nigra outright refused to return to the Russian capital, considering the refusal of Conte Luigi Tonielli before him and the sudden death of Francesco Curtopassi during his trip from Vienna to St. Petersburg. But, as pointed out by Giorgio Petracchi in his volume on Italian diplomacy in Russia, at the base of the resistances of the men assigned to that post, other than economic reasons, the Russian post is considered the most expensive of Europe because of its numerous representation parties, there are also political reasons and there are particular problems "in reconstructing and interpreting the Tsarist political process, both domestic and foreign" which discourages many ambassadors from applying themselves with any study of Russia for that period. It's a Russia that looks with suspicion upon the neo-colonization initiated by western countries, to the detriment of the African territories because of the limited navigability of the Suez Canal, vital for its Asian interests.

The Tsar, in the meantime, paid attention to the newspapers propaganda which at the time deemed completely inappropriate the attitude of those kingdoms that have "invaded" the African regions. One of these pamphlets, entitled "*Abessincy, v' bor'be za svobodu*" [Abyssinia, in war for liberty]<sup>10</sup> strongly condemned the Italian adventure in Abyssinia citing a Latin phrase "Concordia parvae res crescunt, discordia maxumae dilabuntur". It's with great enthusiasm that Russia embraces the announcement of the new government run by Rudini. The Italian ambassador in St. Petersburg, Maffei, after hearing about the change of management responds in this way: "it's not necessary that I say how hostile Russian public opinion is to the Italian policy of expansion in Abyssinia" and attaches excerpts and translations of articles extracted from the "Journal de St. Petersburg", official agency of the state, and of "Novosti" and "Novoe Vremja" which in unison applaud the entrance of the new staff of men like Colombo and Branca, who are not partisans of the triple alliance<sup>11</sup>. With Rudini's new staff there is a perception of a change of course in Italian foreign policy, guided previously by Crispi, and the feeling of archiving the disastrous experience in Abyssinia (even though Russian newspapers, like Novoe Vremja, continue until the end of May to condemn the Italian government's behavior for not letting convoys of the Red Cross transit in Abyssinia).

The Marquis, Carlo Alberto Maffei of Boglio, a former ambassador in Madrid and appointed to the seat in St. Petersburg, wrote from St. Petersburg on June 11, 1896, to the Foreign Minister Duke of Sermoneta, that the Tsarist controlled official media "Il Journal de S. Petersburg", devoted several pages to the Anglo-Italian question about "African

<sup>8</sup> MAE, Archivio Personale, Serie VII, Fondo M 5, "Giulio Melegari". Lettera dalla Regia Legazione d'Italia a Monaco di Giulio Melegari al Marchese di Rudini, 18 febbraio 1892.

<sup>9</sup> MAE, Archivio Personale, Serie VII, Fondo M 5, "Giulio Melegari", Lettera privata di Giulio Melegari al ministro degli Affari Esteri, da Roma, senza data.

<sup>10</sup> Gli autori del libello sono anonimi e si firmano con A. T. e V. L. *Abessincy, v' bor'be za svobodu*, S.-Peterburg', *Ekonomič. Tipo-Litografija*, 1896, pp. 1-43. In MAE, Serie Politica "P", Russia 1896-1898, Busta 342, f. 66

<sup>11</sup> MAE, Serie Politica "P", Russia 1896-1898, Busta 342, Lettera di Maffei al Ministero degli Affari Esteri del 12 Marzo 1896, allegato n.3.

things" highlighting how *l'affaire* is strongly felt among Russian public opinion and the Tsarist court<sup>12</sup>. Maffei, in his last reports from the Russian capital, before the reign of Melegari, openly blames Nicholas II, saying that "it is not a hazard to already affirm that who expects great things from today's Emperor will experience bitter disappointment, notwithstanding that he has already given proof of irresolution and weakness of character. These defects are always serious for anyone who is called to lead the destiny of a nation, they become fatal to the one who wears the crown of the Tsar, who had the appearance of physically crushing Nicholas II on the day he put on the crown in the historic church of the Assumption"<sup>13</sup>.

Melegari held the embassy position throughout the summer of 1896, and subsequently, returned in charge a few days before Maffei's death on May 15<sup>th</sup> of the following year. Here Melegari comes into contact for the first time with the Russian world that he observed with curiosity and interest. Russia is no longer a distant and unknown power but a partner with which to establish new social and political relations since the Italian government, which tended to have hands free in neo-political colonial Mediterranean Africa. They welcomed the work of containment pursued by Tsarist regime in the Balkans as an anti-Austrian function. Melegari's first report from St. Petersburg is dated June 30, 1896, and is report n. 405/241. In it, the ambassador speaks of the immense carnage in Moscow during the celebrations of the coronation and the strikes by the government factory workers of St. Petersburg. He underlined how these events impacted heavily on the "good-hearted Nicholas II" who would become ill with jaundice; "malattia che facilmente trae la sua origine da cause morali" (disease that easily takes its origin from moral causes). The Italian diplomat was convinced that these disturbances were due to progress made in Russia by socialist ideas and the Tsar. To defeat them, he had a choice to take into account suggestions from the influential Attorney General of the Holy Synod, Pobedonoscev, which wanted strict enforcement measures, or from various advisers and ministers who would opt for milder solutions<sup>14</sup>. In subsequent reports, Melegari deals with a variety of different issues, among which were: Russian-Chinese relations in regards to the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway; new loans to Russia by French capitalists<sup>15</sup>; the resignation of Baron Vorontsov-Daskov as Minister of the Imperial Household (one of which was directly responsible for the massacre in Moscow); and the possible trip of the Tsar and Tsarina to visit various European courts, not only in Berlin, as not to offend the French sensitivity, etc., etc. With regard to the latter issue, Melegari writes: "I'm told that the mother Empress raised many problems against the planned visit. The widow of Alexander III, determined to see her son persevere in the attitude of reserve, which was a constant trait of the late Emperor, in her relation with foreign courts she openly demonstrates her opposition (being particularly unfavorable to the trips to England) and insists that the Imperial trip be limited to the usual visit to the Danish Court."<sup>16</sup> In another communication to the Italian government, Melegari complains because of the tight knit Tsarist group's level of cooperation which was little to none and created a scarcity of information.

Russia, despite the large influx of foreign capital that goes in part to finance projects such as the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway that links St. Petersburg to Vladivostok (on the Pacific Ocean), remains an empire with semi-feudal features and a despotic and reactionary regime, poorly tolerated by the vast majority of Russian people, ready to revolt. Despite that, Russia was not willing to give up the influential Asian area; on the contrary, it initiated a campaign for the colonization of the East, in which she clashed with England for control of the Pamir region<sup>17</sup>. In March 1896, the

<sup>12</sup> MAE, Serie Politica "P", Russia 1896-1898, Busta 342, f. 66, Lettera di Maffei al Ministro degli Affari Esteri avente per oggetto "La politica Anglo-Italiana nell'Africa, giudicata in Russia", rapp. n. 328/199 dell'11 giugno 1896

<sup>13</sup> MAE, Serie Politica "P", Russia 1896-1898, Busta 342, f. 66, rapp. n. 384/227 del 24 giugno 1896 avente come oggetto "Il nuovo Czar e la politica nazionale di Alessandro III". In questa lettera indirizzata dal Maffei al Duca di Sermoneta, ministro degli Affari Esteri, l'ambasciatore italiano fa un lungo excursus sulla "russificazione" operata durante gli anni dello zar Alessandro III nei confronti di tutte le amministrazioni pubbliche. Se infatti con Alessandro II l'elemento tedesco aveva "dominato supremo su tutte le amministrazioni pubbliche", con il sovrano successivo tale tendenza fu ampiamente abbandonata a favore della cosiddetta "coscienza nazionale" che avrebbe arginato l'antica propaganda nihilista, "più o meno caldeggiata dai nobili, disgustati dalle riforme liberali di Alessandro II".

<sup>14</sup> MAE, Serie Politica "P", Russia 1896-1898, Busta 342, f. 66, rapp. n. 405/241 del 30 giugno 1896 avente come oggetto "Ritorno a Pietroburgo delle Loro Maestà. Scioperi a Pietroburgo".

<sup>15</sup> A tal riguardo, una relazione dell'ambasciatore italiano a Berlino, Giorgio Calvi Di Bergolo (1852-1924), del 6 agosto 1896, riferiva al nuovo ministro degli Affari Esteri, marchese Visconti Venosta, che i banchieri tedeschi stavano per affrettarsi a concedere nuovi prestiti al governo russo il quale aveva bisogno di più soldi rispetto a quelli realmente chiesti dal ministro Sergej Vitte. In MAE, Serie Politica "P", Russia 1896-1898, Busta 342, f. 66, rapp. n. 1080/361 del 6 agosto 1896 avente come oggetto "prestito russo".

<sup>16</sup> MAE, Serie Politica "P", Russia 1896-1898, Busta 342, f. 66, rapp. n. 455/268 del 2 agosto 1896 avente come oggetto "viaggio all'estero delle Loro Maestà Imperiali".

<sup>17</sup> La controversia fu Russia e Inghilterra fu risolta con l'istituzione di una Commissione per la delimitazione dei confini russo-afgani che dall'11 marzo al 28 luglio 1895 lavorò per l'elaborazione di un Protocollo di intesa. La trattativa finale, contenente 10 protocolli di cui l'ultimo stipulato in data 10 settembre 1895, venne fatta alla presenza di due delegati dell'emiro afgano, Ghulam Mohi-ud-din Khan e Mufti Ashoor Muhammad Khan, per parte russa dal generale di Stato Maggiore A. Povalov-Schveikovskij, il Consigliere di Stato P. Ponafidin e il colonnello di Stato Maggiore A. Galkin, per parte inglese dal general-maggiore Montagu G. Gerard, C. B.. Da questi accordi la Russia ne ricava che la Gran Bretagna si impegna a non annettere né a stabilire porti militari od opere di fortificazioni tra la

Ambassador Maffei, in St. Petersburg, reports the new imperial project created "two new army groups, assigned to the eastern frontier of the empire" (rapp. Riservato n.137/90 del 3 Marzo 1896) and the reinforcement of the naval squad of the Pacific, commanded by Rear Admiral Alekseev.

After the interlude of a few years in Berlin (1898-1901), on April 18, 1901, he was transferred to Tokyo with minister credentials. There he was granted on May 2, 1901, the license for Consul General. In the same year he was promoted to Envoy Extraordinary and Second Class Minister Plenipotentiary. Now his diplomatic career was at a turning point, having gained years of experience Melegari was seasoned enough to hold the fate of a prestigious embassy. In Tokyo he experienced the extraordinary accession of the "Rising Sun Empire" that, after defeating China to which it imposed the Treaty of Shimonoseki (known to China as the Treaty of Maguan), it was determined to challenge Russia on land. In this, England favored Japan and in an attempt to counteract Russian expansionism in central Asia, Korea and Manchuria, concluded a treaty of alliance<sup>18</sup> with the Japanese Emperor Meiji; whose reign lasted for more than forty years, from 1868 to 1912. During this period of time, contemporaneously to what was happening in Italy, the unitary Japanese state formed, unlike Italy, where the Albertine statute went to form the basis on which to build the new political reality, devoid of a constitution that came to light only in 1889<sup>19</sup>. The Italian diplomat wrote in his reports from the Japanese capital; despite its basic political problems, Japan had begun to broaden its horizons into the international political scene with an army and navy fleet. He also included that their military was well equipped and able to thwart the ambitions of Russia against Korea and East Asian regions<sup>20</sup>. In those years an extensive correspondence, on the policy of rearmament implemented by the Japanese government, occurred between the Italian ambassador and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Italy. Giulio Melegari witnessed the preparatory phase of the Russian-Japanese war and in some of his reports he analyzes, in detail, the internal situation in Japan, highlighting the features of Emperor Meiji's policy and diplomacy. In a letter sent from Tokyo on August 7, 1901, to G. Prinetti<sup>21</sup>, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Melegari, referred to multinational force commander, British General Alfred Gaselee's trip to Japan; from Tientsin he left for the liberation of Beijing in the summer of 1900, and described the British officer's reception as being particularly warm, adding "the more than flattering way, major British newspapers corresponding from China, have consistently spoken about the Japanese troops, have greatly contributed to increase in these populations this undoubted wave of sympathy towards England and its army". Clear, therefore, are the moves of the government in London which aims to promote Japan in the Far East Asia to contain aspirations and preserve their colonies. The Italian diplomat speaking of tensions between Russia and Japan for control of Manchuria stated that the official newspaper of the empire published the text of the agreement which stipulated the concession of a large area of land in Musampò as a settlement between the Japanese and Korean government. The grant was undoubtedly a new success for Japan in its dispute to have influence over Russia which "come già è risaputo anelo per lunghi anni di fare di quell'importante punto strategico prospiciente alle coste giapponesi una formidabile stazione navale e dove pure arrischiò un tentativo di settlement ora quasi interamente fallito. Al posto dei fortificati, degli arsenali e delle corazzate Russe si vedranno erigersi fra qualche anno a Musampò i fumaiuoli degli opifici e le fattorie a un prospero *settlement* giapponese chiamato a costituire un nuovo anello di quella salda catena con cui l'operosità economica dei sudditi del Mikado ha saputo in pochi anni avvolgere tutta la costa meridionale della Corea, da Chunulpo a Fusan e che assai più dei cannoni russi varrà a stabilire l'incontrastata supremazia di quest'Impero sulla vicina penisola"<sup>22</sup>. These are the years in which Russia and Japan took advantage of China's weaknesses and planned an expansion of their economic interests in Korea and Manchuria. The intervention in the Chinese Boxer Rebellion highlighted the quality of the Japanese military contingent which consisted of more than seven thousand units represented by far the largest international coalition. Included were: Russians (3480), English

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frontiera russa e il territorio dell'Indo-Kush, appartenente ufficialmente all'Afganistan. I documenti sull'accordo sono contenuti al MAE, Roma, Archivio degli Affari diplomatici, Serie Politica "P", Russia, 1896-1898, Busta 342, f. 66, rapp. n. 57/20 da Londra in data 26 gennaio 1897 avente per oggetto "Pamiro" e indirizzata al ministro degli Affari Esteri il marchese Visconti-Venosta dall'ambasciatore italiano a Londra A. Ferreri.

<sup>18</sup> Il Trattato viene firmato il 30 gennaio 1902 a Londra ed è strutturato in 6 punti con validità di cinque anni. L'accordo, in funzione anti-russa, spingerà lo zar Nicola II a stipulare una nuova alleanza con Francia e Inghilterra rispettivamente nel 1904 e nel 1907.

<sup>19</sup> Sull'argomento vi è uno studio abbastanza completo frutto del primo Convegno italo-giapponese di studi storici che ha avuto luogo nel 1985 dal tema "Lo Stato liberale italiano e l'età Meiji". I punti sostanziali di tale convegno sono stati ripresi da Hatsushi Kitahara nel suo saggio *Dal Giappone in una edizione curata da Filippo Mazzonis, L'Italia contemporanea e la storiografia internazionale*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1995, pp. 269-281.

<sup>20</sup> Un enorme quantità di relazioni diplomatiche attestano la corsa all'approvvigionamento di materiale navale da parte del Giappone durante gli anni che precedono la guerra contro la Russia e Melegari stesso documenta con cifre alla mano tale mobilitazione.

<sup>21</sup> MAE, Roma, Lettera di G. Melegari al ministro degli Affari Esteri Giulio Prinetti del 7 agosto 1901, da Tokyo, rapp. n. 144/50.

<sup>22</sup> MAE, Roma, Serie Politica P., Giappone, anni 1902-1909, Busta 299, Lettera dell'Ambasciatore Italiano a Tokyo Giulio Melegari al Ministero degli Esteri, in data 7 giugno 1902, avente per oggetto "Settlement Giappone a Ma Sampò".

(2232), Americans (1825), and to a lesser extent French, Germans, Austrians and Italians (De Courten-Sarger, 2005; Renouvain, 1946; Vagnini-Gyun Cho, 2008). The Russian political action definitely was hampered by the difficult times the monarchy was experiencing struggling with stagnant economic problems and peasant uprisings; opposed to Japan who was internally strong and stable. Next to the positive notes, reserved for the Japanese ruler's positive actions, Melegari did not hesitate to praise the prestige that a politician like Aleksandr Izvol'skij enjoyed or the authority that surrounded Sergej Vitte, Ambassador in Monaco and Minister of Russian Finances: "il signor Izvol'skij al pari dei suoi predecessori passa a torto o ragione per essere uno dei principali manipolatori della politica Russa, in tale compito molto efficacemente coadiuvato dal noto sig. Oloshevo [...] agli ordini diretti dell'onnipotente Ministro delle Finanze Sig. Witte. Costui come risaputo conduce già da tempo in Asia una politica proficua talvolta più attiva ed efficace di quella ufficiale. [...] Tutto sta ora a vedere in base a quali tendenze e con quali mezzi si svolgerà questo eventuale nuovo programma di azione. Se, mantenendosi scrupolosamente nei limiti fissati dai vigenti accordi russo-giapponesi, la politica del Governo dello Czar sarà unicamente diretta ad un pacifico accrescimento dell'influenza russa in Corea, specie dal lato economica, nulla avrà a ridire il Giappone, e ciò tanto meno che esso è già da tempo ... convinto che in questo terreno poco ho nulla hanno da temere della concorrenza russa. Se invece essa fosse per assumere un carattere più aggressivo e soprattutto se fossero per ripetersi i tentativi di acquisto di una stazione navale lungo la costa prospiciente al Giappone, le cose potrebbero prendere una piega più minacciosa, e ci troveremo di bel nuovo di fronte ad un'altra fase acuta della questione di Corea"<sup>23</sup>. In a subsequent letter, Melegari compares the struggle of influence, which had been fought for the past five years in Korea, like the one Russia was fighting against with the Austrian-Hungarian influence on the Baltic States and, in particular, in Serbia. The ambassador hits the mark, as a matter of fact, throughout 1903; relations between the two empires intensified to the point that war was imminent. Referring the news of General Tamura's death, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Italian Army, Melegari speaks of a man in whom the Japanese had their hopes on in case of war between Russia and Japan which according to our diplomat "is becoming more and more probable"<sup>24</sup>.

A few months later, Melegari speaks of the dissolution of the Japanese Elective Chamber, he justifies such an act for the reason that it could have rendered diplomatic negotiations with the Tsar easier because "a chamber with a majority hostile towards Russia and animated by an aggressive attitude would surely be a source of new agitations and arguments for the negotiators and a serious embarrassment"<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, in admitting state reasons superior to any action, Melegari defended Kabura's Cabinet actions, even though, how he would later say about the dissolution of the second Duma by the Tsar and Petr Stolypin, the act "is legally quite questionable and probably the Crown would not have succumbed if the critical international conditions did not absolutely advise against a government mutation, for now". The following year on January 8<sup>th</sup>, he communicates the rigid application of article 22 of the "Law on the Press" that orders not to publish any news regarding military movements or strategic plans and war operations<sup>26</sup>. On February 11<sup>th</sup>, referring to the annual commemoration of the dynasty foundation, Melegari speaks of a sovereign that with regret, communicates to his guests, all of which are ambassadors, about the fracture in diplomatic relations with a foreign power. We are at the eve of a conflict with Russia, the Italian ambassador who had widely foresaw this, gave account of the Rising Sun's government choices, even though there was almost total absence of detailed information on the sovereign moves. Meanwhile, to the ultimatum imposed by Japan, followed a surprise attack on Port Arthur on behalf of the Japanese naval fleet led by Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō (Milza, 1990; Biagini, 2012). In a letter from the Ministry, about a month after the beginning of hostilities, Melegari traces a first assessment of the war communicating to the Ministry numbers presented from the Imperial government to the newly established Cabinet; far different from the previous, less resentful and surely more willing to collaborate with the government<sup>27</sup>. From such documents the overall amount destined to the war is evident, of which 108 million Yen would go to the War Ministry and 47 million to the Navy. Besides such an action, there was a stronger tax implementation which started with land ownership (25 million), income (5 million), sugar consumption (7 million), salt (almost 3 million), and silk (4 million), etc. It was a detailed account, followed by explicative charts that gave a clear picture of the Japanese economic situation at the time. The losses Japan suffered during the first months of war were considerable; the Russians simply defended themselves without actually replying because they were awaiting

<sup>23</sup> MAE, Roma, Serie Politica P., Giappone, 1902-1909, busta 299, Lettera dell'Ambasciatore Italiano a Tokyo Giulio Melegari al Ministero degli Esteri in data 9 Agosto 1902, avente per oggetto "Russia e Giappone in Corea".

<sup>24</sup> MAE, Roma, Serie Politica P., Giappone, 1902-1909, busta 299, Lettera dell'Ambasciatore Italiano a Tokyo Giulio Melegari al Ministero degli Esteri in data 7 ottobre 1903, avente per oggetto "Morte del generale Tamura".

<sup>25</sup> MAE, Roma, Serie Politica P., Giappone, 1902-1909, busta 299, rapp. n. 391/177, Lettera dell'Ambasciatore Italiano a Tokyo Giulio Melegari al Ministero degli Esteri Tittoni, in data 12 dicembre 1903, avente per oggetto "Dissoluzione della Camera Elettiva".

<sup>26</sup> MAE, Roma, Serie Politica P., Giappone, 1902-1909, busta 299, rapp. n. 11/4, Lettera dell'Ambasciatore Italiano a Tokyo Giulio Melegari al Ministero degli Esteri Tittoni, in data 8 gennaio 1904, avente per oggetto "Ordinanza ministeriale".

<sup>27</sup> MAE, Roma, Serie Politica P., Giappone, 1902-1909, busta 299, rapp. n. 152/69, Lettera dell'Ambasciatore Italiano a Tokyo Giulio Melegari al Ministero degli Esteri Tittoni, in data 17 marzo 1904, avente per oggetto "Bilancio della guerra".

help from St. Petersburg through the Trans-Siberian, a majestic railway project contemplated in the last decade (XIX century) because of a massive Russian colonization of Eastern Siberia, through the Suez Canal and the circumnavigation of Africa. A few months after the defeat of Russia in Port Arthur (9 February 1904), while Melegari tended to his job as diplomat in the Japanese capital, on June 30, 1904, the Italian State sent him to his new destination in St. Petersburg with credentials of Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. Upon communication of change in post, Melegari expressed his perplexity; the letter sent from the Tokyo post on 15 July 1904, starts with these observations:

As soon as my destination to St. Petersburg was here known to all with whom I have official or private relations, I received the most cordial and warm manifestation of affection, without myself nor any member of this Legation being able to recognize, from their mouths, any allusion to indicate how such a destination, in the present moment, be politically judged inopportune or in any way interpreted as a not-so-friendly act of the Italian Government towards Japan. Even the local press, in giving the news of my nomination, refrained indistinctly from any unfavorable comments<sup>28</sup>.

Melegari follows the whole process of belligerence between the two nations with a privileged glance of who knew one first then the other fighting faction. He analyzed many aspects of the Russian-Japanese conflict: from the influence on Korea to the contestation of Sakhalin; from the occupation of the Kuril Islands to the defense of the commercial ports of the Pacific, without leaving out considerations in the order of politics and economics. He, therefore, left Japan to go to the Russian capital where he had already been eight years ago, in a very delicate moment for international relations because of the African neo-colonization, started by several European states, of which one was Italy. The Russia before him is with no doubt different from the one he left behind at the end of the nineties of the previous century. The vast industrialization, the arrival of huge amounts of foreign capital and new authoritative political men, that emerged from those social classes that were betrayed by the Tsarist politics and contributed to the diffusion of liberal ideas. These were new elements that inserted themselves in a political scene that was devastated by errors in foreign affairs, from the misery of the farmers, the revolts in the factories, the famine at the beginning of the century and, last but not least, a monarch that was weak and retrograde as Nicholas II. All this laid before Melegari's eyes; that reaching St. Petersburg during the pre-revolutionary phase, during a typical periodic acceleration of its history and in the clash between conservation and modernization. This stimulated the intellectual interest and passion for the Russian situation, in the attempt to answer the question of its future evolution in international relations. In the beginning of 1905, two closely related events put the Tsarist policy in crisis: the fall of Port Arthur, after a long and bloody siege and the St. Petersburg workers revolt, better known as the Small Russian Revolution. Melegari analyzes the Russian subversive process, on the western revolutionary model, in particular with the stages of the French. The diplomat saw, in the *Zemskij Sobor* the national assembly, the expression of requests, opinions and representation in equal proportions to the Russian social classes, and reproduction of the French General States of 1788<sup>29</sup>. Meanwhile, the Japanese army defeats the Russians in Mukden, meanwhile in the Sea of Japan Admiral Zinovij Rožestvenskij's naval fleet arrived, but was of no use. Rožestvenskij's naval fleet had left from the Kronstadt Naval Base in August 1904, after many hardships and diplomatic incidents it had to overcome, it was then completely defeated on 27 and 28 May, 1905 during the decisive battle of Tsushima. The Portsmouth (New Hampshire) Treaty of the following September, wanted and mediated by the American President Theodore Roosevelt, reinforces the prestige of Japan confirming itself as a great Asian world power. The obtainment of territorial advantages in Korea was annexed five years later, in the Sakhalin Island and in Manchuria, these were losses that took away the remaining prestige the Tsar enjoyed and so begins a "hot" autumn, made of strikes and official contestations. Even though Despite the works of Count Vitte for the peace agreement (which were the object of great appreciation by important Russian politicians, like Kokovcov, who in his biographic memoirs exalts the Russian minister - Kokovcov, 1933) and the social protests which were derived from the peoples malcontent after "Bloody Sunday" in the beginning of the year, did not stop. The strike in autumn 1905, brought about the first assembly called "Soviet" which ensued the signing of the historic October Manifesto. For Ambassador Melegari this represented a point of arrival in the revolutionary process, the institutional way out that would bring the Duma to become a real and true national assembly. The fundamental laws of May, 1906 made the Tsars monarchic prejudices emerge, he agreed to the constitution as an ideological simulation. According to Max Weber, *Iukaz* of 21 October, 1905, with whom the neo president Sergej Vitte created a Cabinet and a prime minister with the function of director, this represented the end of the classic autocracy and the consolidation of the centralized dominium of modern bureaucracy (Petracchi, 1993). Social and constitutional structures of the old order, like king's power and aristocratic supremacy, were preserved based on the Bismarck's style.

<sup>28</sup> MAE, Roma, Serie Politica P., Giappone, 1902-1909, busta 299, rapp. n. 11/4, Lettera dell'Ambasciatore Italiano a Tokyo Giulio Melegari al Ministero degli Esteri Tiltoni, in data 15 luglio 1904, avente per oggetto "Mio trasferimento a Pietroburgo".

<sup>29</sup> MAE, Roma, Serie politica P (1891-1916), Russia, b. 343, rapp. n. 68/28, Pietroburgo, 2/15 febbraio 1905.



In a punctilious manner, Melegari takes note of all Vitte's steps to remove the promises in the October Manifesto. In July 1906, Pëtr Stolypin was nominated Prime Minister in place of the dubious Ivan Goremykin, the Tsar decides to dissolve the Duma and for Melegari such an act represented a true coup d'état<sup>30</sup>. The Russian revolution did not follow the French revolutionary footsteps and the dissemblance of the Tsar brought man, more so than the diplomat, to a sort of discouragement and disillusion. Worthy of note is today's argumentations on the economic field, his detailed analysis on the business-politics duo, in regards to international loans and reforms during the Vitte-Durnovo period. According to Melegari, the Russian empire was obliged to take foreign opinion in consideration because it depended on the financial markets and state improvements that came from European banks, in order to accept huge loans they based themselves on liberal guarantees offered by the October Manifesto<sup>31</sup>. In Italy and in public opinion, incomplete and distorted information arrived, mainly, in regards to strikes, *pogrom* and stories inherent to mutinies. After 1907, when the revolution was surely at its end and western style definitive parliament was awaited in vain the revolution seemed a faraway memory and not only did it not seep into Italy but it actually left Europeans indifferent, too busy with hotter national issues derived from the implosion of the multinational empires.

Melegari's work in the Russian Embassy had excellent repercussions on relations between the two countries. Besides internal problems and his involvement in the Russian social mutations; in the course of eight years, he overturned a situation that saw Italy as not so credible before the Tsarist court. In 1907, Russia and Italy renewed their Commerce and Rates Treaty of 1863, while the meeting of Racconigi in 1909, the two countries set things up for a collaboration in the Balkan area. Melegari inserted himself in a positive context in which several key characters push for a rapprochement of the two countries. Among them were Aleksandr Izvol'skij, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, who knew Melegari since the time he was ambassador in Tokyo, and Nikolaj Murav'ëv, Russian ambassador in Rome, another prominent figure who represented an important contact compared to his predecessor Lev Urusov. The agreement between Russia and England in 1907, in addition to the historic agreement with France, further confirmed the agreement of Racconigi, it completed the European conversion of Russian foreign affairs. Italy was able to insert itself in the Balkan context and to obtain from Russia its first true recognition for its interests. The following events divided the intentions of the two countries; they actually differentiated on the interest they attributed to the conservation of the *status quo* in the Balkans. Italy was aiming a complicated project and the Titoni plans foresaw an Italian-Russian rapprochement as a starting point for a future Austrian-Russian-Italian understanding (Petracchi, 1993). During 1910, certain conditions brought forth the break in the rapprochement which had been recently achieved; the newly nominated minister of foreign affairs from San Giuliano possessed a remarkable pro-Austrian orientation. Melegari himself saw his position compromised and in 1912 was discharged from his job he was substituted with Counselor Pietro Tomasi di Torretta, which ruled the embassy for a year before the arrival of Andrea Carlotti, Marquis of Riparbella. The renewal in December 1912, of the Triple Alliance, suppressed what little was left of the spirit of Racconigi. Such an overturn in intentions should have been foreseen considering the Italian internal events, which were intensifying with the clashes between the extremist left and the imperialist bourgeoisie. During the various phases of the Giolitti government, divergences of a society emerged in continuous change, in a nationalist way, and the Italian-Turkish colonial war in Libya did nothing more than exacerbate the extremist right. Italian-Russian relations did not cease thanks to the successive intervention of Sergej Sazonov, but the divergences in the Balkan area where surely noticed when the Albanese issue divided the two governments. Some months after leaving the diplomatic post in St. Petersburg, the Tsar Nicholas II conferred Melegari the honorary order of St. Aleksandr Nevskij with diamonds, for his long ambassador activities in Russia.

The First World War, for a few years, interrupted Melegari's relations with the state authorities to be picked back up several years later when the ex-ambassador addresses a letter to Benito Mussolini, he complained the restitution of state titles bought in Russia during his stay in St. Petersburg and affirmed:

durante gli otto anni che ebbi l'onore di rappresentare Sua Maestà alla Corte Imperiale di Russia, sia per trovare ai miei capitali un collocamento che vi era allora motivo di ritenere sicuro e proficuo, sia pure, in certa misura, per avere sui luoghi un fondo di riserva di facile ed immediata realizzazione di cui potessi anche valermi per le mie spese di rappresentanza, avevo convertito parte della dote di mia moglie ed il modesto mio avere personale in valori di Stato e di Banche fondiarie russe per un importo complessivo che non oltrepassava le quattrocoto mila lire. Quando agli inizi del 1913 abbandonai definitivamente Pietrogrado, le gravi preoccupazioni domestiche che allora attraversavo non mi permisero di occuparmi dell'alienazione di quei valori. Venne poi improvvisamente la guerra Europea che rese rischiose se non impossibili la trasferta e la vendita dei titoli russi (non contrattabili in Italia) cosicché al principio della rivoluzione bolscevica mi ritrovai quasi interamente rovinato.

<sup>30</sup> MAE, Serie Politica P (1891-1916), Russia b. 344, Rapp. n. 542/222, Pietroburgo, 26 luglio 1906.

<sup>31</sup> MAE, Serie Politica P (1891-1916), Russia b. 344, Rapp. n. 543/223, Pietroburgo, 15/28 luglio 1906.

Le mie gravi strettezze finanziarie mi obbligarono a ritirarmi in campagna, ove vivo tuttora la maggior parte dell'anno<sup>32</sup>.

The long letter continues with Melegari's hope that once commercial relations revive with the new Bolshevik government, the issue of the credits of the Italians towards Russia can be better regulated. In the closure is a brief observation on current events:

la conflagrazione mondiale e le sue travolgenti conseguenze sembrano aver cavato un abisso di secoli fra il passato ed il presente; tutta l'opera diplomatica, anche dello immediato ante-guerra, svalutata e negletta, non rappresenta ormai, nella memoria dei più, che un vago e molto lontano ricordo. Così, i lunghi servigi che fui in grado di prestare durante la mia missione a Pietroburgo, e che furono pure di qualche utilità per il nostro paese, come lo attestano il vantaggioso trattato di commercio che fui in misura di concludere, ed anzitutto il notevole riavvicinamento politico fra l'Italia e la Russia e che ebbe la sua consacrazione nella visita dello Czar a Racconigi, sembrano oggi quasi interamente dimenticati<sup>33</sup>.

A bitter summary that highlights the merits of his own diplomatic activity inside a new Italian and European reality, transformed by the war and even more by the Bolshevik revolution. Perhaps with the intent to not upset the neo relations between the Soviets and Italians, from the Foreign Minister and leading Italian embassy in Russia, no positive answer arrived to the Italian diplomat's request. Hopeless, he definitively abandons the idea of ever appropriating himself of his possessions in Russia and retires to a private life. Last news regarding him go back to the spring of 1934, residing at the Hotel Majestic in Florence, a usual for him during certain periods of the year, he requests a new passport from the Foreign Ministry. From there on all traces are lost. At the age of eighty, he was about to go abroad but surely not in the Soviet Union where his presence is not welcome. The work done by the Italian diplomat was without a doubt important and had its positive consequences with the Racconigi agreement. Melegari's sudden change of post from Tokyo to St. Petersburg during the years of the Russian-Japanese war did not go unnoticed and it is presumed, in light of the agreements success of Racconigi, that the move was well planned out by the Italian government to ingratiate the Tsar and therefore have a solid ally in the Balkan question. Such a hypothesis does not seem entirely without foundation since Melegari himself was surprised by his transfer, considering it as "inopportune" without imagining the government's plan to obtain that action. If we then consider the fact that the Foreign Minister followed the lines traced by Visconti Venosta, who in 1903 assigns General Roberto Morra of Lavriano as ambassador in St. Petersburg, it shows more clearly that the Italian diplomacy had pro-Russian tendencies during the early nine hundreds, a course that will bear its fruits with Racconigi in 1909.

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<sup>32</sup> MAE, Archivio Personale, Serie VII, Fondo M 5, "Giulio Melegari", Lettera privata di Giulio Melegari a Mussolini, presidente del Consiglio e ministro degli Affari Esteri, in data 27 luglio 1924.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.