

## Piero Treves

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Followed since adolescence by the fascist police, Piero Treves decided to leave Italy with his brother and mother in 1938, when racial legislation made his already difficult existence impossible.

His father Claudio, a socialist leader, had died in exile in Paris five years earlier. In England, Piero hoped to pursue that university career from which he was barred at home, initially for political rather than racial reasons. With the outbreak of the war, however, the microphones of Radio London opened up for the Treves brothers.

After several attempts, he only returned to Italy in 1955, resuming his studies in classics, and in 1963 he finally became a professor at university.

### **Freedom of the ancients, freedom of the moderns**

Piero Treves was born in Milan on 27 November 1911 to Olga Levi, who belonged to the Venetian upper middle class, and Claudio Treves, who was one of the most prominent members of the Italian Socialist Party, very close to Filippo Turati.

As he would say many years later<sup>1</sup>, his father could not attend his birth because he was «hunted down and stopped» in front of the Milanese headquarters of the newspaper «Avanti!», which at the time he directed, by «Dannuntian [TN: indicates a follower of poet Gabriele D'Annunzio] and nationalist youths», fired up by Giovanni Pascoli's speech in Barga the previous day. Then came the confrontation with Mussolini (29 March 1915), the hate campaign against the «Marquis of Caporetto» that was carried out at

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<sup>1</sup> Piero Treves, *Nel centenario di Claudio Treves*, «Critica sociale», 61, 1969, pp. 681-685, now in Id., *Scritti novecenteschi*, edited by Alberto Cavaglion and Sandro Gerbi, Bologna, il Mulino, 2006, pp. 17-26, 22.

the end of 1917 by the so-called left interventionist circles and finally, in 1926, the flight to France, to escape the violence of the black shirts and the concerned protection of the police.

The following year, in 1927, Piero, very young at the time, enrolled in the School of Letters of the University of Turin, where Gaetano De Sanctis, the most important Italian ancient historian of the time, was teaching. In 1931, De Sanctis, who in the meantime had been appointed to teach in Rome, was among the very few professors who refused the oath of allegiance to fascism and was declared as having forfeited his academic position<sup>2</sup>. Treves, who had followed him to the capital city, was the last student to graduate under his guidance, on 19 November 1931. He had not yet turned twenty.

Just as Benedetto Croce was defining his conception of history as the story of liberty, at the school of De Sanctis in those years a discussion was taking place on freedom in ancient Greece<sup>3</sup>. Underneath the philological and historiographical questions that it raised, the debate (mainly involving Aldo Ferrabino and Arnaldo Momigliano) revealed political positions and attitudes towards the present. Treves participated in the discussion with the research he conducted for his thesis on the last phase of Demosthenes' life, whom he presented, like Mazzini and Pisacane, as an «apostle» of liberty: that very freedom that was lacking in Fascist Italy. Partly written in Paris in one of the rare periods in which Piero was able to reunite with his father in exile<sup>4</sup>, the thesis was published in 1933 by Laterza at the behest of Croce and with the intercession of Alessandro Casati, whose son Treves privately tutored. The numerous journals in which Piero published well reflect the vast network of his relations: «Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione classica» edited by De Sanctis

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<sup>2</sup> Giorgio Boatti, *Preferirei di no. Le storie dei dodici professori che si opposero a Mussolini*, Turin, Einaudi, 2001, pp. 46-63.

<sup>3</sup> The political and philosophical implications of this debate are illustrated in Dino Piovan, *Tucidide in Europa: storici e storiografia greca nell'età dello storicismo*, Milan-Udine, Mimesis, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Paolo Treves, *Quello che ci ha fatto Mussolini*, with an introduction by Bruno Trentin, Manduria, Lacaita, 1996, p. 272.

and Croce's «La Critica», «Athenaeum» by Plinio Fraccaro, «Nuova Rivista Storica» by Gino Luzzatto and Corrado Barbagallo, in addition to the journals directed by Ernesto Codignola, Ernesto Buonaiuti and Giuseppe Canepa, and «La Cultura», among whose collaborators was also his friend Leone Ginzburg<sup>5</sup>.

It was an article by Treves, which was strongly critical of the figure of Caesar and of the Augustan Bimillenary celebrated by the regime, that caused the seizure of the issue of «La Cultura», in which it was published in 1934. The issue was put back into circulation only after the essay was censored out<sup>6</sup>. Treves' article was one of the most explicit examples of the «politicalness» of his work, of that «political value - political *sensu lato* - that culture holds, the freer and less helpful or useful it is (and *wants* to be) to political interests *sensu stricto*, whether regime or partisan interests»<sup>7</sup>, a value which was less and less tolerated in Italy at the time.

In 1938 the situation worsened further: not only was there no longer room for the «energetic demand of minority and opposing choices»<sup>8</sup>, which permeated Treves' scientific production, but the «persecution of the rights»<sup>9</sup> of Italian Jews began. And so, at the end of September, a few weeks after the implementation of the first measures «for the defense of the race», Treves left, with his brother Paolo and his mother Olga, a Country that had already placed him under «strict surveillance»<sup>10</sup>, checked his correspondence<sup>11</sup> and

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<sup>5</sup> P. Treves, *Demostene e la libertà greca*, Bari, Laterza, 1933, p. 168, n. 17. A bibliography of Treves' writings can be found in Carlo Franco, *Piero Treves: from 1930 to 1996*, Naples, Enchiridion, I.U.O., 1998, now revised and expanded in *Piero Treves. Tra storia ellenistica e storia della cultura*, edited by Anna Magnetto. Pisa, Edizioni della Normale, 2021, pp. 223-307.

<sup>6</sup> C. Franco, *Piero Treves: «Interpretazioni di Giulio Cesare»*, «Quaderni di Storia», 37, 1993, pp. 115-126.

<sup>7</sup> P. Treves, *Profilo di Antonello Gerbi* in Antonello Gerbi, *La disputa del nuovo mondo. Storia di una polemica: 1750-1900*, new edition, edited by S. Gerbi, Milan-Naples, Ricciardi, 1983, pp. XVII-LXXII, now in Id., *Scritti novecenteschi*, cit., pp. 131-173, 137.

<sup>8</sup> C. Franco, *Introduzione* to P. Treves, «*Le piace Tacito?*» *Ritratti di storici antichi*, edited by C. Franco, Turin, Nino Aragno Editore, 2011, p. XVI.

<sup>9</sup> Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista: vicende, identità, persecuzione*, Turin, Einaudi, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Telegraphic dispatch with absolute priority dated 24 December 1926 from the Ministry of Interior, Ufficio Cifra, to the Prefetti frontiera Terra et Mare, Commissari P.G. Zona Frontiera, in

prevented him and his brother from pursuing an academic career<sup>12</sup>.

### A foretold departure

In the study of intellectual emigration from fascist Italy, «we cannot level history and our interpretation at the year 1938»<sup>13</sup>, and this is all the more true if we consider the figure of Piero Treves. In his case, in fact, anti-Semitic persecution was preceded by political persecution. The avowed anti-fascism of the Treves brothers prevented them from holding any position at the university or in the public school system even before 1938. As soon as they left Italy, on 28 September 1938 Paolo wrote from Geneva to his older friend Giuseppe Emanuele Modigliani: «In reality, even without the uncertainties of the situation at the end, Piero and I had practically nothing more to do over there»<sup>14</sup>.

Furthermore, exile was «a grave and honorable paternal legacy»<sup>15</sup>. Since 1926 the family unit had been broken by the forced flight to Paris of their father, whom his children could only rejoin for a few short periods. It is therefore significant that, on the road to their exile, they stopped at the Parisian cemetery of Père-Lachaise, where Piero Gobetti and the Rosselli brothers also rested like Claudio Treves.

Already in 1937, thanks to a scholarship, Piero was able to carry out his research abroad, first in Strasbourg, then in London and finally, in Cambridge. This experience of a few months abroad was fundamental for his

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ACS, MI, DGPS, CPC, b. 5210, dossier Treves Claudio.

<sup>11</sup> Ivi and dossier Paolo Treves.

<sup>12</sup> In 1931 Paolo took the public examination to receive a university professorship in History of political doctrines, but it was the then Minister of National Education, Balbino Giuliano, who directly excluded him because he did not possess the «civil and political requisites for taking the qualifying exams» (Andrea Ricciardi, *Paolo Treves: biografia di un socialista diffidente*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2018, p. 101).

<sup>13</sup> Patrizia Guarnieri, *Introduzione: 1938-2018 non solo un anniversario*, in Ead. (edited by), *L'emigrazione intellettuale dall'Italia fascista. Studenti e studiosi ebrei dell'Università di Firenze in fuga all'estero*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2019, pp. 3-13, 8.

<sup>14</sup> A. Ricciardi, *Paolo Treves*, cit., p. 159.

<sup>15</sup> Carlo Dionisotti, *Ricordo di Arnaldo Momigliano*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1989, p. 45.

future, both because it projected him into a European milieu and because it made it possible for him to forge important personal and professional relationships.

Back in Milan in mid-October 1937, already in December he applied to the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning to receive the necessary funds to continue his research on Plato's early years, which he had begun in France and had continued in England in the previous months<sup>16</sup>. In addition to the letter of introduction signed by Werner Jaeger, one of the greatest classicists of the twentieth century, whom he knew only through letters<sup>17</sup>, Treves could count on the support of Max Cary, reader and then professor of ancient history with whom he had worked at University College London, and of Michail Rostovtzeff, the famous Russian-born scholar whom he had met at a papyrology congress in Oxford.

The British organization, founded in 1933 to help German scholars fleeing Nazi Germany<sup>18</sup>, at first did not find accommodation for the young Treves. He had to wait a few more months, until he was awarded the *Strathcona Research Exhibition*, a scholarship of 150 British pounds offered annually by St. John's College of the University of Cambridge to allow students, who had graduated from other universities, to undertake doctoral studies there. In short, Treves' decision to emigrate was not immediately and exclusively determined by the anti-Jewish persecution. Moreover, an awareness of their origin emerged in the Treves brothers only at the moment when it was being questioned<sup>19</sup>. The

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<sup>16</sup> On the relationship between Treves and this organization see BLO, MS, SPSL, b. 260, f. Piero Treves, which I was able to consult courtesy of the *Council for At-Risk Academics*.

<sup>17</sup> On the relationship between Treves and Jaeger see C. Franco, *Werner Jaeger in Italia: il contributo di Piero Treves*, «Quaderni di Storia», 39, 1994, pp. 173-193.

<sup>18</sup> David Zimmerman, *The Society for the Protection of Science and Learning and the Politicization of British Science in the 1930s*, «Minerva», 44, 2006, pp. 25-45.

<sup>19</sup> Paolo Treves, in the months between 1938 and 1939, wrote: «The author of this book is also a Jew. Indeed, it was only when the anti-Semitic struggle began in Italy that this fact emerged from the complex of his personality as a man, and only since then did he feel particularly proud of it. Before he had never paused to reflect on this fact» (*Quello che ci ha fatto Mussolini*, cit., p. 296). Piero, instead, in the first half of the thirties and under the influence of his teacher, the profoundly Catholic Gaetano De Sanctis, had briefly embraced a Christian spirituality.

enactment of anti-Semitic legislation caused them to act more quickly, for fear of no longer being able to obtain a passport and, consequently, of no longer being able to leave Italy<sup>20</sup>.

In Cambridge Piero Treves was finally able to undertake that path from which, in the increasingly fascisticized Italian university, he had been excluded. In those years, his articles appeared in prestigious international journals such as «Classical Review», «Journal of Hellenic Studies», «Classical Philology», «American Journal of Philology», «Les Études Classiques» and «Révue des Études Anciennes». In 1940 he entered the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies<sup>21</sup> as Student Associate and from 1 July 1939 until the end of 1940, he received an additional scholarship, this time funded by the aforementioned Society for the Protection of Science and Learning. In fact, on 17 May 1939, Professor Francis Macdonald Cornford, who followed Treves' research in Cambridge, requested the support of the Society so that the young scholar could continue collaborating on the *Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi* project, under the direction of Raymond Klibansky. After the matter was discussed at the subsequent executive committee meeting, Treves was awarded a scholarship worth one hundred British pounds per year, which would then be extended every three months<sup>22</sup>.

During this time, however, Piero tried to maintain his relations with Italy. He continued to write to his friend Vittorio Enzo Alfieri and to his two mentors, De Sanctis and Croce; he proposed to Ernesto Codignola the translation of Rostovtzeff's *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* and to Giulio Einaudi, the translation of Jaeger's *Demosthenes and Humanistische Reden und Vorträge*; he also continued to publish short contributions in Italian journals (in truth, rather marginal periodicals).

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<sup>20</sup> On this point, see the aforementioned letter from Paolo Treves to Giuseppe Emanuele Modigliani reported in A. Ricciardi, *Paolo Treves*, cit., p. 159.

<sup>21</sup> See «The Journal of Hellenic Studies», 60, 1940, p. X.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Francis Macdonald Cornford to «Dear Sir», 17 May 1939 and letter from Esther Simpson to F.M. Cornford dated 26 May 1939, BLO, MS, SPSL, b. 260, f. Piero Treves.

The situation, however, was gradually getting worse: some articles were signed only with the initials «P.T.» and on 14 December 1939, due to the «racial» provisions, his *Demostene e la libertà greca* was subjected to a seizure order issued by the Directorate General for the Italian Press<sup>23</sup>. When, on 10 June 1940, Italy declared war against the United Kingdom, Treves' life changed abruptly, once again.

### **From «enemy alien» to Radio London**

With Italy's entry into the war, all men of Italian nationality, aged between 16 and 70 and residing in the United Kingdom for less than twenty years, were taken into custody. The plan, ready since the end of April, was implemented without exception<sup>24</sup>. The Treves brothers, despite their well-known anti-fascism, were also taken into custody. Unlike many other Italians, however, their imprisonment did not last long and already on 14 July 1940, Piero could write to the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning that he had left the Palace Internment Camp set up on the Isle of Man and that from that moment on, he had ceased to be considered an «enemy alien». Nancy Searle, a member of the organization, replied congratulating him and said that she was also «extremely glad to know how you achieved this miracle!»<sup>25</sup>. The «miracle» had occurred thanks to the intervention of William Gillies, secretary of the International Department of the British Labour Party, who, at the end of June, had put pressure on Alexander Maxwell and Nigel Roland, of the Home Office and of the Foreign Office respectively, for the release of a dozen

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<sup>23</sup> Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Laterza, *Carteggio*, IV, edited by Antonella Pompilio, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2009, pp. 995-996, n. 1. Along with *Demostene* by Piero Treves, Paolo's book on *La filosofia politica di Tommaso Campanella* was also seized. More generally, on the subject see Giorgio Fabre, *L'elenco: censura fascista, editoria e autori ebrei*, Turin, S. Zamorani, 1998.

<sup>24</sup> On these phases see Lucio Sponza, *Divided Loyalties: Italians in Britain during the Second World War*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2000, pp. 95-121.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from P. Treves to «Dear Sir», 14 July 1940, and letter from Nancy Searle to P. Treves, 16 July 1940, BLO, MS, SPSL, b. 260, f. Piero Treves.

anti-fascists, including the Treves brothers<sup>26</sup>.

The return to freedom did not mean a return to normality or to studying only: for Piero, a new phase of his existence was opening up, marked by a more direct political commitment. In September 1938 (these were the days immediately preceding the Munich agreement), Paolo confided to Giuseppe Emanuele Modigliani: «Piero is terribly restless and belligerent and wants to run I don't know where to enlist! [...] It seems to me that my little brother is too heroic and romantic, he talks about volunteering in English battalions and similar things... I certainly don't want to hide, but I do want to see things straight and clear»<sup>27</sup>. Despite his initial intentions, Piero Treves devoted the first phase of his English stay mainly to classical studies.

Yet, in Cambridge he soon began to frequent the house of Decio Pettoello, where numerous exponents of Italian anti-fascism gathered: from Angelo Crespi, a former socialist deputy, to the «Rosselli women» – their mother Amelia Pincherle, and the two widows, Marion Cave and Maria Todesco<sup>28</sup>. It was precisely through these circles that, in the summer of 1941, Piero and his brother joined the *Free Italy Movement*. The organization was born on 10 February of the same year with the name of *Free Italy Committee*, on the initiative of Carlo Petrone. However, Petrone, a Catholic anti-fascist, did not have strong contacts with the already small group of Italian exiles, and was unable to gain the trust of either the Labour Party members<sup>29</sup> or the officials of the Foreign Office<sup>30</sup>. In April, given the initial failures, Petrone agreed to allow the other souls of anti-fascism who were in the U.K. in what would henceforth be precisely the *Free Italy Movement* (FIM). On 26 July, Alessandro

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<sup>26</sup> L. Sponza, *Divided Loyalties*, cit., p. 100. In this regard, see also Francesca Fiorani, *Paolo Treves. Tra esilio e impegno repubblicano (1908-1958)*, Rome, Donzelli, 2020, pp. 86-87.

<sup>27</sup> A. Ricciardi, *Paolo Treves*, cit., p. 159.

<sup>28</sup> F. Fiorani, *Paolo Treves*, cit., p. 79.

<sup>29</sup> Pietro Sebastiani, *Laburisti inglesi e socialisti britannici. Dalla ricostruzione del PSI(UP) alla scissione di Palazzo Barberini da Transport House a Downing Street (1943-1947)*, Rome, Quaderni della F.I.A.P., 1985, p. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Antonio Varsori, *Gli alleati e l'emigrazione democratica antifascista (1940-1943)*, Florence, Sansoni, 1982, pp. 88-94.

Magri was elected president of the movement, flanked by two vice-presidents (Crespi and Pettoello), a secretary (Riccardo Priuli-Bon) and a steering committee made up of nine members. Among them, the name of Piero Treves stood out. Since then, for just over a year, he also actively collaborated with «Notiziario Italiano» [Italian Bulletin], the weekly of the FIM.

The arrival of Umberto Calosso in September 1942 broke the precarious balance that had been reached within the movement, divided among different political positions. After just three months, the issue of 12 December of «Notiziario Italiano» reported the motion that Treves himself had made the previous week to impeach the executive council of the association. The motion passed, but it was the Treves brothers who left the FIM soon after. On 7 January 1943 Piero wrote to his cousin Antonello Gerbi:

Fortunately [...] we resigned from Free Italy, now completely in the hands of a communist gang of cheaters and liars. [...] We would like to hope as not too far ahead the announced visit of Count Sforza, whose movement and policies we are resolutely in favor of and loyal to, as much as we are resolutely opposed to the communist «unity» with former fascists (and perhaps not even former...) of any kind and color.

On the following 31 October, again in a letter to his cousin, Treves returned to the question and expressed all his disappointment: «the so-called anti-fascists here (Calosso, first among them) simply suck and discredit our cause»<sup>31</sup>. The fracture, then, occurred on account of likely personal incompatibilities, the resolute anti-communism that the two Treves also maintained over the years, and a different vision regarding the relationship with other anti-fascist organizations, first of all the Mazzini Society, and, more generally, the political strategies to be adopted in such a delicate phase.

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<sup>31</sup> Letters from P. Treves to A. Gerbi, 7 January 1943 and 31 October 1943, Archivio Storico Intesa Sanpaolo, *Patrimonio Banca commerciale italiana, Carte personali di Antonello Gerbi*, b. 57, f. 2. On the FIM see L. Sponza, *Divided Loyalties*, cit., pp. 169-180. On the participation of the Treves brothers in the movement see A. Ricciardi, *Paolo Treves*, cit., pp. 180-207 and F. Fiorani, *Paolo Treves*, cit., pp. 90-109.

Anyway, Treves' political commitment did not end with his participation in the FIM. From the time of his release from custody until the end of World War II, Piero devoted himself full time to what, in a letter to Egidio Reale dated 4 October 1942, he defined «our work as Italian anti-fascists»<sup>32</sup>. As can be seen from the same letter, Treves was at the time secretary of the London section of the Italian Socialist Party. Furthermore, as early as 27 December 1940, he had joined the BBC with a temporary contract, as Italian translator in the Overseas News Department<sup>33</sup>.

The BBC Italian Service had gradually begun its broadcasts in September 1938. After about a year, in November 1939, Uberto Limentani, a cousin of the Treves brothers and an exile himself for racial reasons, joined it. In the same days, on the advice of Curt Sigmar Gutkind, who at the time was teaching at Bedford College for Women in London, Paolo Treves also contacted the BBC and in the following April, had a job interview<sup>34</sup>. Due to the onset of hostilities between Italy and the United Kingdom and the related need for counterpropaganda, the Italian Service grew further, and it was at this point that Piero Treves was included in the staff.

He was certainly not passionate about working for the British broadcasting company. To his cousin Antonello Gerbi, on 2 May 1944, he wrote very bluntly: «What a bore this B.B.C.!»<sup>35</sup>. It was not easy for him to give up his studies. As soon as he joined the staff of the Italian service, on 5 January 1941 Piero voluntarily returned the last installment of the scholarship that the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning had made available for the entire duration of the conflict<sup>36</sup>; then, he drastically reduced his collaboration

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<sup>32</sup> Letter from P. Treves to Egidio Reale dated 4 October 1942, ACS, Archivio Egidio Reale, b. 7, f. 179, sottot. Piero Treves.

<sup>33</sup> The documentation is held in the BBC Written Archives Center, Piero Treves Left Staff File (L1/427).

<sup>34</sup> F. Fiorani, *Paolo Treves*, cit., pp. 79-87.

<sup>35</sup> Letter from P. Treves to A. Gerbi, 2 May 1944, Archivio Storico Intesa Sanpaolo, *Patrimonio Banca commerciale italiana, Carte personali di Antonello Gerbi*, b. 57, f. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from P. Treves to «Dear Sir» dated 5 January 1941, BLO, MS, SPSL, b. 260, f. Piero

with scientific journals; finally, he suspended, and never took up again, his research on Plato, which he had begun at the end of 1938 and which had brought him to Cambridge.

Treves felt the moral duty to contribute concretely to the fight against fascism and collaborated with Radio London until 1945. His primary task was to re-elaborate the information provided daily by the Monitoring Service and to compose the texts that were subsequently read by the presenters. In addition to this editorial activity, between 10 March 1941 and 29 January 1945, he himself delivered about thirty newscasts of various kinds from the London microphones: from the commemoration of episodes in the history of Italy to the commentary on contemporary events, from the discussion of books just published to the profiles of some members of the second Badoglio government<sup>37</sup>.

Paolo and Piero Treves' work with Radio London was so important that the BBC leadership opposed their desire to return to Italy as soon as possible. Paolo, Piero and their mother Olga, in fact, wanted to return already in March 1944. After hearing about their intention, Ivone Kirkpatrick, supervisor of the European Service, expressed his concerns to Armine Dew, of the Foreign Office:

In my opinion this country has nothing to gain at the present moment by facilitating their return to Italy. On the contrary we should definitely lose since they are capable and almost irreplaceable members of the B.B.C Italian team. I feel that in the last resort the prime consideration should be the national interest; and I am convinced that it is in the national interest that these two men should be kept in England, at all events for the present<sup>38</sup>.

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Treves.

<sup>37</sup> The list of Treves' reports can be found in Maura Piccialuti Caprioli (edited by), *Radio Londra, 1940/1945. Inventario delle trasmissioni per l'Italia*, I-II, Rome, Ministero per i beni culturali ed ambientali, 1976, *ad indicem*.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Ivone Kirkpatrick to Armine Dew dated 22 March 1944 reported in Italian translation by F. Fiorani, *Paolo Treves*, cit., p. 163.

Paolo had to wait another seven months before leaving, with his wife Lotte Dann, for Naples on 5 January 1945. For Piero, however, the return was still far away.

### **A failed return and his journalistic activity (1945-1955)**

Whether leaving Italy or choosing to return or not, «each case was a case in itself and each person tried to extricate him/herself from his/her own peculiar tangle of considerations»<sup>39</sup>. While the war was still ongoing, on 9 October 1944 Piero wrote to his cousin: «we ought to go back. De Sanctis urges me, and I too would like to return, eagerly, provided that, however, I could only do my job»<sup>40</sup>. The job that he felt to be truly his own was not that of the militant anti-fascist, which, as we have seen, circumstances had led him to undertake, but it was the profession of the historian. If those professors who had been dismissed following the 1938 laws had to confront the thorny question of their return<sup>41</sup>, Treves, instead, had to confront the question of finding access to the academic world.

This is how his decision, almost obligatory but certainly well regarded by the BBC management, came about to continue working for the English radio station. On 1 October 1945, he became Programme Assistant for the European Service, a position that probably did not fully reflect his interests and that he carried out more out of convenience than out of conviction. On 7 December 1947, while updating his cousin on his condition, he confessed: «I hold on to the BBC where I work little and earn a lot»<sup>42</sup>. At the same time, Treves also began to work as a journalist for various Italian newspapers and

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<sup>39</sup> Henry Stuart Hughes, *Da sponda a sponda. L'emigrazione degli intellettuali europei e lo studio della società contemporanea (1930-1965)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1977, p. 329.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from P. Treves to A. Gerbi, 9 October 1944, Archivio Storico Intesa Sanpaolo, *Patrimonio Banca commerciale italiana, Carte personali di Antonello Gerbi*, b. 57, f. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Roberto Finzi, *Da perseguitati a «usurpatori». Per una storia della reintegrazione dei docenti ebrei nelle università italiane*, in *Il ritorno alla vita. Vicende e diritti degli ebrei in Italia dopo la seconda guerra mondiale*, edited by M. Sarfatti, Florence, Giuntina, 1998, p. 97.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from P. Treves to A. Gerbi, 7 December 1947, Archivio Storico Intesa Sanpaolo, *Patrimonio Banca commerciale italiana, Carte personali di Antonello Gerbi*, b. 57, f. 2.

periodicals, an activity to which he devoted himself for the following fifteen years. In 1945 (and until 1950), he became the London correspondent for «Corriere della Sera», writing several dozen articles. Through this and various other collaborations (with newspapers - «Il Resto del Carlino», «La Nazione» - and magazines - «International Relations», «Il Mondo», «Idea», «Il Mercurio» - just to name a few), he informed the Italians about the great political and social transformations taking place in England at the time<sup>43</sup>.

The opportunity to return to Italy came to him in 1948 with the *concorso* [a public examination to secure a teaching position in a given discipline] for the chair of Greek and Roman history and Latin epigraphy at the University of Catania. It was the first *concorso* in ancient history since the end of the war, and the evaluating commission was chaired by Gaetano De Sanctis. While it was acknowledged that politics had prevented Treves from teaching, he was not included among the top three winners. Once he found out the result, on 9 July 1948 Treves wrote to his teacher a letter, which was very courteous but did not hide his «disappointment at the rejections [he] had suffered, and sadness for the faded hopes». After noting the «unanimous hostility of my judges, [their] very firm and equal intention to deny me today I will not say reparation for some misfortunes, but trust in the possibility and reality of my eventual work tomorrow», Treves concluded: «I played the very fate of my existence on the examination. [...] Today others have chosen for me - perhaps against me. Obviously, I have no other choice but to decide to not take the exam again, to not repatriate, and to continue my different profession up here»<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> For a comprehensive account see Roberto Pertici, *Piero Treves in Inghilterra 1938-1955: un osservatore politico*, in Id., *Storici italiani del Novecento*, Rome, Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 2000, pp. 259-264.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from P. Treves to G. De Sanctis, 9 July 1948 reported in Antonella Amico, «Piero mio» - «Mio caro, caro Maestro»: un rapporto sull'orlo dell'abisso. Uno sguardo al carteggio tra Gaetano De Sanctis e Piero Treves, «Rationes Rerum», 11, 2018, pp. 1-29.

### The late entry into the university

The return to Italy took place years later thanks to the intervention of the banker Raffaele Mattioli. About a year after the unfortunate outcome in Catania, Antonello Gerbi reported to his cousin: «Mattioli, almost every time we talk about you, recommends that you take care to “return to your studies”. He is ready to promise you a professorship and those ancillary appointments that would allow you to better make ends meet»<sup>45</sup>. Gerbi himself had direct experience of Mattioli's support for scholars: since 1932 - except for the South American interruption due to racial persecution - he had been heading the Research department of Banca Commerciale Italiana (Comit), a prestigious and demanding position that allowed him to continue to cultivate his interests as a scholar of political doctrines first and of the history of the Americas afterwards. However, Treves' disappointment over the unfortunate outcome of the *concorso* (and there were others) was still acute, and he remained in London.

It took a few more years for Piero to make up his mind, faced with the constant insistence of his cousin and Mattioli. The choice held «a tight grip» on him; he felt «the tremendous weight of [his] new responsibility in so uncertain professional, financial and personal circumstances»<sup>46</sup>. On the other hand, his impatience with the BBC job, «which I am really starting to get tired of»<sup>47</sup>, was such that he resigned in April 1955.

While he continued his activity as a journalist (not well regarded in the academic world), he also published two monographs: *Il mito di Alessandro e la Roma di Augusto* (1953) and *Euforione e la storia ellenistica* (1955). Exactly twenty years after the publication of his thesis, they meant his return to the study of ancient history. These works were printed by Ricciardi, a publishing

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<sup>45</sup> Letter from A. Gerbi to P. Treves, 2 November 1949, Archivio Storico Intesa Sanpaolo, *Patrimonio Banca commerciale italiana, Carte personali di Antonello Gerbi*, b. 57, f. 3.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from P. Treves to A. Gerbi, 21 November 1952, *ivi*.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from P. Treves to A. Gerbi, 4 October 1952, *ivi*.

house owned by Mattioli. Also in 1955, Treves entered the university with a teaching appointment in Greek epigraphy in Milan. After eight more years, in 1963, he was finally appointed to the chair of Greek history at the University of Trieste. He remained there for two years, then moved to Florence from 1965 to 1969 and eventually to Venice, where he was the first dean of the newly created *Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia* and where he concluded his university teaching in 1981.

It was a process that began with a delay which is all the more remarkable if one considers Treves' accomplishments at a very young age, and that Treves undertook without the support of his teacher, Gaetano De Sanctis. Instead, he was supported by the people who were involved with the *Istituto italiano per gli studi storici*, of which Mattioli was the funding sponsor and president (1952-1973). In 1962, two other important volumes came out with Ricciardi, which Treves could submit for the *concorso* the following year. It must also be considered that Filippo Cassola and Marcello Gigante were teaching in Trieste at the time; they were both connected with the Neapolitan academic environment, as was Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, whom Treves later replaced when he transferred to Florence<sup>48</sup>. Finally, from the mid-seventies until a few months before his death, in Nice on 7 July 1992, Treves periodically held seminars at Palazzo Filomarino, to which he also bequeathed part of his library.

These complex academic dynamics and the «poor visibility»<sup>49</sup> of his scientific production in later years, albeit noteworthy, perhaps partly demonstrate the «inability (or [...] unwillingness)» – certainly Treves' initial difficulties – «to integrate completely into the new environment in Italy»<sup>50</sup> after the end of

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<sup>48</sup> On this point, see the contribution by Carmine Ampolo, *Discutere di storia greca e libertà negli anni Trenta alla scuola di Gaetano De Sanctis: Ferrabino, Momigliano, Treves tra Croce e Gentile*, in *Piero Treves. Tra storia ellenistica e storia della cultura*, edited by A. Magnetto, pp. 24-52, in part. 47-51.

<sup>49</sup> C. Franco, *Introduzione* to P. Treves, «*Le piace Tacito?*», cit., p. XLVII.

<sup>50</sup> R. Pertici, *Piero Treves storico di tradizione*, «*Rivista Storica Italiana*», 106, 1994, pp. 651-734, 721.

World War II. In brief, independence and separation from the context in which he found himself on each occasion characterized Treves' life, before and after his exile.

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- *Sertorio*, «Athenaeum», 10, 1932, pp. 127-147.
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