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**BRIEF COOPERATION:
RELATIONS BETWEEN FASCIST ITALY
AND NATIONALIST CHINA (1931-1937)**

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INTRODUCTION

The first half of 1930s is a period to which the researchers interested in the relations between Italy and China had paid much attention. Guido Samarani and Laura De Giorgi, for instance, argued that it appeared in the history of relations a so-called “anni d’oro”; namely, the Manchurian crisis of September 1931 represented undoubtedly a turning point in relations between Italy and China, paving the way to a stage, albeit brief, strong development in bilateral relations, so that there is a saying of “anni d’oro” in the history of relations between the two countries. In fact, their writing objectively generalized the historical facts of bilateral relations from the unification of Italy to the beginning of 21st century, covering the fields of politics, economy, culture, and religion. Particularly, it started the thesis on the “anni d’oro” with Galeazzo Ciano,

È opinione diffusa che un ruolo essenziale nello sviluppo delle relazioni italo-cinesi in quegli anni fu svolto da Galeazzo Ciano, anche se ad oggi non è disponibile qualcosa di paragonabile al *Diario* che egli tenne nel periodo in cui fu ministro degli esteri (1936-43).¹

Subsequently, it drew the lines of Italo-Chinese relations, which included almost all the keywords of bilateral communications in this period, such as “Commissione Lytton,” “penetrazione italiana in Cina,” “ordinazioni industriali,” “consiglieri ed esperti italiani,” “missioni e forniture aeronautiche,” “Consorzio aeronautico per la Cina,” “settore economico-commerciale,” “Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente,” “la presenza del cattolicesimo in Cina,” and so on.² This writing particularly discussed “l’aggressione italiana all’Etiopia e le relazioni cinesi,” arguing:

Le relazioni tra i due paesi cominciarono a deteriorarsi con l’invasione italiana dell’Etiopia (ottobre 1935) e l’approvazione da parte della Società delle Nazioni di sanzioni contro Roma (novembre dello stesso anno), sanzioni alle quali la Cina aderì e che applicò con determinazione.³

In short, these two writers offered quite a clear and brief description of Italo-Chinese relations in 20th century, albeit lack of some details. Yet in the latest contribution for this theme, Samarani examined the “Italian presence” in China from 1902 to 1947, and, in particular, the history of hundreds of Italians who lived and worked in China during this historical period.⁴ Samarani’s chapter drew on a set of Italian sources that had become available to scholars only in recent years, especially during the run-up to the celebrations for the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of

¹ Guido Samarani, and Laura De Giorgi, *Lontane, vicine: Le relazioni fra Cina e Italia nel Novecento* (Roma: Carocci editore, 2011), 60.

² *Ibid.*, 60-69.

³ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴ Guido Samarani, “The Italian Presence in China: Historical Trends and Perspectives (1902-1947),” Maurizio Marinelli and Giovanni Andornino, eds., *Italy’s Encounters with Modern China: Imperial Dreams, Strategic Ambitions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 49-66.

Italy's unity (1861-2011). Based on these sources, Samarani analysed four aspects of "Italian presence": 1) some statistical trends; 2) military; 3) diplomatic; 4) economic and commercial. While as he pointed out, the chapter offered some preliminary results of a wider, ongoing investigation of the characteristics of the Italian presence in China in the first half of the twentieth century.¹

Similarly, Michele Fatica indicated that the relations between Mussolini's Italy and Jiang Jieshi's China during the period from 1930 to 1937 as "idyllic" relations.² He worked on more dimensions about these years, including ideological, religious, and economic aspects: 1) exporting Mussolini's myth and Fascism to China; 2) the patronage of Catholic Missions; 3) aircraft factory; 4) shipping lines; and 5) Italian community. Obviously, Fatica's chapter drew a large picture of the special period, which offered of course a holistic approach to this topic. Unavoidably, it was lack of complete examination in each dimension.

Giorgio Borsa, on the other hand, asserted, during the period from 1932 to 1937, "Contrary to what is commonly believed, Fascist Italy's efforts to assert her influence in China ended in failure."³ He also started thesis on this period with Manchuria crisis and Ciano, which from his point of view were two factors contributed to change the "situazione di relativo disimpegno dell'Italia in Cina".⁴ As for the former factor, Borsa observed that the Italy's attitude could be called as "imparzialità (ma sostanzialmente di ambiguità)" towards Sino-Japanese conflict in 1931-32. Moreover, he laid stress on the presence of Ciano in China, which "contribuì ad orientare l'interesse italiano verso quel paese." Borsa argued,

Con il prestigio derivantegli da questi successi (e dal matrimonio con la figlia del Duce) Ciano si mise d'impegno per aprire la strada alla penetrazione economica e politica italiana in Cina.⁵

Then Borsa also summarized the main points of Italo-Chinese relations, including Tianjin Concession, the great admiration of Jiang Jieshi⁶ (also Jiang Zhongzheng, Wade-Giles: Chiang Kai-shek, 蒋介石, 蒋中正) for Mussolini, the discussion on a comprehensive economic agreement, Italian Aeronautic Mission and a Naval Mission, Italian Aeronautical Consortium, etc. However, Borsa noted that this promising start did not produce the results hoped for. In conclusion, he argued that the Economic Agreement negotiated in Rome was never implement because of the Italian scarcity of capital, the timidity of Italian entrepreneurs, Japan's opposition and the League of Nations sanctions against Italy due to Italian invasion of Ethiopia, in which China unreservedly joined hoping that she would also get support against Japan. On the other hand China herself was less interested in her own development than in luring the western powers with promises of business in the hope they would resist Japan's expansion. The Italian experts produced wonderful blueprints that remained on paper.

¹ Ibid., 62.

² Michele Fatica, "The Beginning and the end of the Idyllic relations between Mussolini's Italy and Chiang Kai-shek's China (1930-1937)," Maurizio Marinelli and Giovanni Andornino, eds., *Italy's Encounters with Modern China: Imperial Dreams, Strategic Ambitions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 89-115.

³ Giorgio Borsa, "Tentativi di penetrazione dell'Italia fascista in Cina: 1932-1937," *Il Politico*, no.3 (1979):419.

⁴ Ibid., 388-390.

⁵ Ibid., 390.

⁶ In this dissertation, the names of Chinese will be used according to the system of Pinyin (officially used in the PRC), except some names of localities, such as Manchuria, Manchukuo, which were used before the PRC and kept in the historical writings.

Now this dissertation will draw on a set of both Italian and Chinese sources that were taken in little or no consideration until now, go further based on the excellent but a bit general studies to probe into the historical facts of the brief cooperation between the two governments with more details, to reveal the reasons behind it and to understand the motivations or considerations of the foreign policies of Fascist Italy and Nationalist China towards each other. The dissertation, first of all, will introduce the context vis-à-vis foreign affairs of both sides.

CONTEXT

ITALY'S INTERESTS IN CHINA AND POLICY OF EXPANSION

Italy's interests in China before 1930

Prior to 1866 the protection of Italian interests (mainly reporting about trade and shipping) in China had been entrusted to a British merchant resident in Shanghai, assuming the title of Sardinian honorary consul, who had been asked by Cavour in 1858 to represent the King of Sardinia, then King of Italy. The official diplomatic relations between Italy and China started with the treaty of friendship, trade and navigation of 26 October 1866¹, according to which Italy was to enjoy most-favoured-nation privileges. In the same year a similar treaty was concluded with China, followed two years later by a commercial agreement.² The choice of the Kingdom of Italy to regulate diplomatic relations with the Chinese government was more due to economic pressures than to political ones.³

At the end of the 19th century, plans of the Kingdom of Italy were initially made for the establishment of naval bases in the Far East. In 1899 Italy demanded the lease of Sanmen Bay (三门湾) in Zhejiang Province of China, on the same footing with the privileges obtained by the other major imperialist powers such as England, France and Russia between 1897 and 1898 after the Chinese defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. The Qing Imperial Government of China refused Italy's claims on that occasion and thus Rome recalled her minister from Beijing,

¹ About the diplomatic presence in 19th century, see Samarani, "The Italian Presence in China," 56-57; and about the *Trattato di Amicizia, di commercio e navigazione*: "Altissimo e potentissimo Sovrano, Nostro carissimo e perfetto amico. La sapienza, la giustizia, la magnificenza e le virtù, che tutte eminentemente rifulgono in Vostra Maestà, mentre ricolmano di gioia e di splendore l'Impero della Cina, destarono in Noi vivissimo desiderio di stabilire e stringere colla Maestà Vostra vincoli sinceri di costante amicizia, e di aprire relazioni di vicendevole utilità fra il Regno d'Italia e il grande Impero di Lei. A questo effetto, noi abbiamo incaricato il Cavaliere Vittorio Arminjon, [...] di recarsi presso l'Imperiale Corte Celeste, coll'onorevole missione di far conoscere a Vostra Maestà i Nostri sentimenti di altissima stima e di verace amicizia.

E come, ad esempio della Maestà Vostra, siamo noi pure animati dal vivo desiderio di promuovere il maggior bene dei nostri popoli, così abbiamo munito dei Nostri pieni poteri il sullodato Cavaliere Arminjon, accordandogli piena autorità e ogni qualunque siasi facoltà necessaria per concludere e sottoscrivere un solenne Trattato di amicizia, di commercio e di navigazione, tra l'Italia e la Cina, riservandoci di dare sul medesimo le Nostre ratificazioni. VITTORIO EMANUELE II PER GRAZIA DI DIO E PER VOLONTÀ DELLA NAZIONE re D'ITALIA" Amedeo Tosti, *La spedizione italiana in Cina (1900-1901)* (Roma: Ministero della Guerra, Ufficio Storico, 1926), 23-24.

² Andrea Francioni, *Il trattato Italo-Cinese del 1866 nelle Carte dell'Ammiraglio Arminjon*, Working paper 46, Università degli Studi di Siena, Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Giuridiche, Politiche e Sociali, 2003. And Giorgio Borsa, *Italia e Cina nel secolo XIX* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1961), 11.

³ Bertuccioli wrote: "Una costante della nostra politica estera: il presenzialismo, ai fini soprattutto di politica interna, il desiderio di non essere da meno degli altri, anche nell'espansionismo coloniale, pur non avendo i mezzi e le forze necessarie, il sogno alquanto fumoso di risuscitare passate glorie imperiali e che ci ha portato a disperdere energie e ricchezze oltremare, mentre avremmo fatto meglio a impiegarle per modernizzare il nostro paese." Giuliano Bertuccioli, "Gli avvenimenti in Cina a cavallo tra i due secoli nei documenti dei diplomatici italiani a Pechino," QA-Atti del Convegno *Le riforme del 1898 e del 1978 in Cina* (Roma: Associazione Italia/Cina, 1999), 34-35. See Vincenzo Moccia, *La Cina di Ciano, La diplomazia fascista in Estremo Oriente* (Padova: libreriauniversitaria.it edizioni, 2014), 11.

but did not formally break bilateral diplomatic relations.¹

During the Boxer Rebellion an Italian contingent participated in the international military expedition to Beijing. With the Final Protocol of 1901 for the resumption of friendly relations with European Powers, Italy received an allotment of 5.91 per cent of the Boxer Indemnity (26,617,005 Haiguan taels or 99,713,769 gold lire), the concession² in perpetuity of a small zone (around 500,000 square metres) on the left bank of the Hai River, in Tianjin (Tientsin, 天津)³, to start there an Italian Concession as the other imperialists had done, and she joined the other Great Powers in the extraterritorial privileges which they had received in the Legation Quarter in Beijing and in the right to garrison the Mukden-Beijing Railroad. Italy kept from 1900 until a few years ago a garrison⁴ at Shan-Hai-Guan (山海关), where the Great Wall divides, on the seashore, Manchuria from China proper.⁵

Furthermore, in the previous year, Italy had obtained the recognition of other claims, for instance, the Italian Franciscan Mission came under the protection of the Italian Legation with the consent of the Holy See. Nevertheless, in the early years of the 20th century, several attempts were made to renew the commercial agreement with China of 1868, but the discussions were broken off in 1906 and never resumed until 1928.

In respect of the economic interests, the Italian trade in China could be divided to three phases:

1) Smooth and steady phase, from 1905 to 1913, in which the total trade was kept between 8.6 million and 11.3 million *liang* (traditional unit of weight of Chinese silver, 1 *liang* about 3.125 gram), little rise and fall. Yet as the directorate general for economic affairs of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out, in the four-year period 1909-1912, the Italian import trade from China maintained a size of considerable importance, while the export trade to China remained within the usual modest proportions. Furthermore, the directorate emphasized that the occasional contractions in the Italian exports to China could be attributed to factors such as fluctuations in currency exchange rates. Nevertheless, the competition against which Italian business had to contend was not only coming from other countries, but also coming from the indigenous industry, which was becoming more enterprising then. Besides, the Chinese market conditions varied from year to year and the improved communications with foreign countries (with the exception of Italy) facilitated new shipping lines, strengthening the Italian's rivals' positions and weakening Italian themselves.⁶

2) Phase of decline, from 1914 to 1922, in that period, because of the Great War, Italy's limited share in China was also effected to decline. Followed the end of the First World War was the creation of the Sino-Italian Bank (Banca Italiana per la Cina), and of the Italian Company in the

¹ Guido Samarani, *Lontane, vicine*, Chapter 1.

² Balossini, *Concessioni in Cina*, 28, 44-50, 58-59.

³ Archive of Tianjin & Nankai University, *Anthology of Archives about Tientsin Concession* (Tianjin: Tianjin People Press, 1992), 388; and see Daniele Comberiat, "La colonia cinese: le rappresentazioni culturali e letterarie della Concessione italiana di Tientsin nella letteratura e nella cultura italiana del Novecento," *Forum Italicum*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (2014): 398-410; Laura Rampazzo, *Un pizzico d'Italia nel cuore della Cina: la concessione di Tianjin*, Tesi di Laurea magistrale, Università Ca'Foscari Venezia, 2011/2012.

⁴ About the Italian garrison and military presence, see Samarani, "Italian Presence in China," Marinelli, *Italy's Encounters with Modern China*, 53.

⁵ Frank M. Tamagna, *Italy's Interests and Policies in the Far East* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1941), 3-5.

⁶ *Bollettino del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, parte commerciale*, 1909-1912. As quoted in Samarani, "Italian Presence in China," Marinelli, *Italy's Encounters with Modern China*, 60.

Far East (Compagnia Italiana d'Estremo Oriente). The former one was constituted in 1920, on the initiative of *Credito Italiano*. At the very beginning it was an Italo-Chinese company set up with the purpose of assisting Italian business in China and the Far East, with headquarters in Tianjin and two agencies operating in Beijing and Shanghai respectively. Cooperation with the Chinese partners, however, lasted only for a short time. In 1924, after the withdrawal of the Chinese, the Italian Bank for China was established, with a head office in Shanghai and branch in Tianjin.¹ The latter one was intended to facilitate the distribution of Italian products in China. Amongst the products introduced to China through the mediation of such a company were the famous felt hats from Monza, and textiles. With China's acquisition of tariff autonomy, duties were introduced, on manufactured goods in particular. While Italian exporters felt the urge to revisit their strategy, at least in part, so that in the 1930s the *Compagnia Italiana d'Estremo Oriente* focused particularly on the industrial sector, advancing the ambitions of the Italian industrialists operating in the fields of electrical machinery, airplanes, and radio apparatuses.²

3) Phase of development, from 1923 to 1934, when the Fascist regime was established and strengthened, the production and export increased a lot. As a result, Italy's trade with China was developing obviously. From 1923 to 1929, the total trade between Italy and China was growing year by year, from 10 million up to 30 million. After the Crisis of Manchuria 1931-1932, the total trade declined to 17 million and in 1934 to 12.33 million, which was the least year since 1924.³ In general, between the late 1920s and the mid-1930s, a revival of Italian exports was accompanied by a clear contraction of imports. Yet the overall trade volume remained modest and the proportion of Italian exports to China accounted for just around 1 percent of total national exports. The main Italian imports from China were a variety of oilseeds (soybean, sesame, etc.), raw silk and silk offcuts, and leather. The principal exports, on the other hand, were rayon and other textiles, electric motors and generators, metal, and marble.⁴

As Samarani suggested, from the very beginning of the bilateral relationship, even in the years of greater development, Italy's economic and commercial presence in China was rather limited, particularly if compared to that of the major powers of that time.⁵

Fascist Italy's foreign policy

The first years of Mussolini's rule were characterized by a right-wing coalition government

¹ *Dictionary of Foreign Industrial and Commercial Enterprises in China* (Chengdu: Sichuan People Press, 1995), 280-281; Shou Chongyi, and Shou Leying. *The Foreign Banks in China* (Beijing: Chinese Literature and History Press, 1996), 194.

² Samarani, "Italian Presence in China," Marinelli, *Italy's Encounters with Modern China*, 61.

³ Tamagna, *Italy's Interests and Policies in the Far East*, 6-7. And see Piero Corradini, "Italia e Cina: dalle prime relazioni consolari al trattato di pace del 1947," in *Mondo Cinese*, 76 (1991), 7-48; Giacomo De Antonellis, "L'Italia in Cina nel secolo XX," in *Mondo Cinese*, 19 (1977), 51-58; Frank Tamagna, *Italy's Interests and Policies in the Far East* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1941), 3-6; Claudia Maris Mancini, "Appunti per una storia delle relazioni commerciali e finanziarie tra Italia e Cina," in *Rivista di diritto valutario e di economia internazionale*, XXXI, II (1987), 401-433, and III (1987), 659-705.

⁴ Sun Yanjing, and Zhang Yan, eds., *Historical-Material Collection of Republican China, Continuation, Vol. 0681, Economy and Commerce* (Zhengzhou: Daxiang Press, 2012), No. 0681 Economy and Trade, 94-149. Also see Samarani, "Italian Presence in China," Marinelli, *Italy's Encounters with Modern China*, 60-61.

⁵ Samarani, "Italian Presence in China," Marinelli, *Italy's Encounters with Modern China*, 59.

composed of Fascists, nationalists, liberals, and two Catholic clerics from the Popular Party. The Fascists made up a small minority in his original governments. Mussolini's domestic goal was the eventual establishment of a totalitarian state with himself as supreme leader (*Il Duce*), a message that was articulated by the Fascist newspaper *Il Popolo*, which was now edited by Mussolini's brother, Arnaldo Mussolini. To that end, Mussolini obtained from the legislature dictatorial powers for one year (legal under the Italian constitution of the time). He favored the complete restoration of state authority, with the integration of the *Fasci di Combattimento* into the armed forces (the foundation in January 1923 of the *Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale*) and the progressive identification of the party with the state. In political and social economy, he passed legislation that favored the wealthy industrial and agrarian classes (privatizations, liberalizations of rent laws and dismantlement of the unions).¹

As a matter of fact, after the March on Rome, Mussolini still only had 34 deputies in Parliament and 10 Nationalist allies. He was in a weak position and relied on a coalition with other parties that could easily unravel and force the King to dismiss him. The idea was to change the voting system from proportional representation to a system which would allow Mussolini to have a clear majority. As a result, it came to the Acerbo Law, which stated that the party gaining the largest share of the votes – provided they had gained at least 25 percent of the votes – gained two-thirds of the seats in parliament. The remaining third was shared amongst the other parties proportionally. Such a law transformed Italy into a single national constituency. And then it was applied in the elections of 6 April 1924. The national alliance, consisting of Fascists, most of the old Liberals and others, won 64 percent of the votes.²

The assassination of the socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti, who had requested that the elections be annulled because of the irregularities, provoked a momentary crisis in the Mussolini government. Mussolini ordered a cover-up, but witnesses saw the car that transported Matteotti's body parked outside Matteotti's residence, which linked Amerigo Dumini to the murder. Mussolini later confessed that a few resolute men could have altered public opinion and started a coup that would have swept fascism away. Dumini was imprisoned for two years. On his release Dumini allegedly told other people that Mussolini was responsible, for which he served further prison time. The opposition parties responded weakly or were generally unresponsive. Many of the socialists, liberals, and moderates boycotted Parliament in the Aventine Secession, hoping to force Victor Emmanuel to dismiss Mussolini. Fearing a revolt by his own militants, Mussolini decided to drop all trappings of democracy. On 3 January 1925, Mussolini made a truculent speech before the Chamber in which he took responsibility for squadristi violence, though he did not mention the assassination of Matteotti.³ At the same time of those domestic consolidations, one of the immediate tasks of Mussolini in foreign affairs was liquidating those leftover problems.⁴ Their

¹ See M.E. Tonge, Stephen Henry and Gráinne Collins, ed., *Living history 2: Italy under Fascism* (Dublin: EDCO, 2004), Chapter 2.

² Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919-1929* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 75-77. And Federico Boffa, "Italy and the Antitrust Law: an Efficient Delay?" (1 February 2004), website: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/9312442.pdf>

³ See Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004); Benito Mussolini, "3 gennaio 1925, discorso sul delitto Matteotti," website: https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Italia_-_3_gennaio_1925_Discorso_sul_delitto_Matteotti

⁴ "Under the various peace settlements Italy had seen herself in danger of total exclusion from the eastern Mediterranean, an anomalous fate for the heir of Venice and Genoa. France and Great Britain had allotted to themselves the mandates for Syria, Palestine, and Transjordan, while Great Britain held the predominating position in Egypt and owned Cyprus. If the Dodecanese had been lost or bartered Italy would have been left without a port in the eastern Mediterranean, and in no position to compete for the trade in those waters." See

methods of liquidation are negotiations and agreements. Mussolini's first public speech after assuming office was delivered in the Chamber of Deputies on November 16, 1922. He criticized the weakness of Liberal Government and because of this weakness Italy had lost strong positions in the Adriatic and the Mediterranean.¹

In fact, most of the foreign questions of vital concern to Italy left over from the Peace Conference of 1919 were still pending. "The basic significance of the Peace Conference, however, so far as Italy's future was concerned, was that it left with the whole nationalist and conservative sector of Italian public opinion the conviction that their country had been swindled of the rewards of victory. This unhappy memory was to overshadow the next two decades of Italian foreign policy."² For instance, the settlements already reached with Yugoslavia and Turkey, under which Italy received Istria and the Dalmatian city of Zara (including Fiume was to become a free city), had become obsolete. And the question of colonial compensation in Africa had made little progress.³ Therefore, motivated by eagerness of showing his own people that he had a unique talent for chalking up points for Italy on the international scorecard,⁴ Mussolini even occupied the Greek island of Corfù with bombardment in August 1923, and he finally got his indemnity and Italy's prestige was enormously increased. At the same time, this incident earned for Mussolini the reputation of being a danger to peace.⁵ Diplomats of Fascist Regime, Raffaele Guariglia suggests that the Corfù incident encouraged the Duce to start on other expansionist ventures.⁶ In addition to the settlement at Lausanne with Turkey, the Duce tried to come to terms with Yugoslavia on the question of Fiume, and with Britain and France in the matter of colonial compensation.

Italian career diplomats in the Palazzo Chigi, well knew that the inadequacy of Italy's financial and military resources made it impossible for their *Patria* to compete with the more prosperous powers in the game of building up client states. Thereby they continued to insist on the traditional

Muriel Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy: 1918-1932* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1932), 84.

¹ Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 79.

² H. S. Hughes, "The Early Diplomacy of Italian Fascism: 1922-1932," in Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, eds., *The Diplomats (1919-1939)* (Princeton University Press, 1953), 212.

³ But according to H. Stuart Hughes, 'this situation was not nearly as grave as the Fascists made it out to be. It had resulted from a combination of normal delays, a lack of governmental prestige, and a too rapid succession of Foreign Ministers. All Fascist propaganda to the contrary, the governments from 1919 to 1922 had made no irrevocable mistakes, and Italy's relative standing among the Powers was just about what it had always been—last among the great or first among the little depending on how one looked at it. Italy's international difficulties were largely psychological.' See Hughes, "The Early Diplomacy of Italian Fascism," in Craig and Gilbert, eds., *The Diplomats*, 214.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁵ Corfù Incident: There was a boundary dispute between Greece and Albania. The two nations took their dispute to the Conference of Ambassadors, an inter-allied organization of the Entente in the period following the end of World War I (formed in Paris in January 1920). The Conference of Ambassadors created a commission of English, French, and Italian officials to determine the boundary, which was authorized by the League of Nations to settle the dispute. The Italian General Enrico Tellini became the chairman of the commission. From the outset of the negotiations, the relations between Greece and the commission were negative. Eventually the Greek delegate openly accused Tellini of working in favour of Albania's claims. On August 27, 1923 Enrico Tellini, three of his assistants and their interpreter fell into an ambush and were assassinated by unknown assailants at Kakavia, a town within Greek territory. Then anti-Greek demonstrations broke out in Italy. On August 29, Italy sent an ultimatum to Greece. Greece had replied to Italy on August 30, but Mussolini and the Italian Cabinet were not satisfied with the reply and declared that it was unacceptable. On August 31, 1923, a squadron of the Italian Navy bombarded the Greek island of Corfù and landed troops on it. Airplanes aided in the attack. The Greeks immediately took the question to the League on September 1. Mussolini refused to co-operate with the League and demanded that the Conference of Ambassadors should deal with the matter. Britain favored referring the Corfù matter to the League of Nations. But with the threat of Mussolini to withdraw from the League and the French support the matter went to the Conference of Ambassadors. On September 8, the Conference of Ambassadors announced to both Greece and Italy, as well as to the League of Nations several terms upon which the dispute should be settled. Italy's prestige was safeguarded. See Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 103-112.

⁶ R. Guariglia, *Ricordi: 1922-1946* (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1950), 14, 28-31.

alignment with Britain. Most of the pending questions between France and Italy, those Italian diplomatic elites believed, could best be approached from the British direction.¹ Although between Britain and Italy, after 1919 there existed some long-delayed questions on colonial compensation², the settlement was never seriously in doubt. It involved little more than the formal ratification of the pledges already made by the British in the Treaty of London of 1915 and the Milner-Scialoja accord of 1920. On July 15, 1924, convention for the cession of territory in Jubaland between Italy and Great Britain was fixed.³ In December 1925, an agreement with Britain that provisionally recognized an Italian sphere of influence in eastern Ethiopia, made a good start for Italy's yearnings for standing alongside Britain.

On the other hand, the relations between Italy and France proceeded not very well. Once in 1923, the Franco-British estrangement made appearance of a series of articles in the French press, in which were discussed the desirability of an Italian-French Entente. "Clemenceau's policy of an entente with England and the United States had proved a failure, and France should now seek a close alliance with Italy."⁴ But Italy rejected a bilateral Italian-French alliance. Mussolini's explained his objection to bilateral Italian-French alliance: "In the first place, the Fascist Government, as a general principle, intends to follow a foreign policy of absolute independence; in the second place, the Fascist Government will never enter alliances which do not fully protect the interests of Italy, and which do not constitute a solid guarantee of peace and of prosperity for Italy in particular and of Europe in general."⁵ Actually, with France, various questions were still remained to be settled, such as territorial adjustment in Africa⁶, struggles for domination in the

¹ Hughes, "The Early Diplomacy of Italian Fascism," in *The Diplomats (1919-1939)*, 226.

² The article 13 of the Treaty of London, 1915, which promised Italy colonial compensation, and under which Italy had asked for certain rectifications of the frontier between Cyrenaica and Egypt. These negotiations had begun in Paris, but were still unfinished when in February 1922 Great Britain declared the independence of Egypt, and consequently the negotiations had had to begin afresh between Italy and Egypt. The matter was delayed by various side issues, and at last, in the beginning of 1925, sensational reports began that the Italians intended to seize the oasis of Jarabub, which was of considerable local importance. It was the *point d'appui* of the caravan route between Cyrenaica and Egypt, and it also contained a very important religious school of the Senussi sect, which was a centre of anti-Italian propaganda. On February 2, 1925, the Italian Government sent a formal communication to the Egyptian Prime Minister to ask for an immediate settlement. After a very evasive reply, Egypt consented to nominate delegates to delimit the frontier. Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 147.

³ Question of Jubaland had its origin in the application of article 13 of the Treaty of London, which guaranteed to Italy certain compensations. The request to Britain for the cession of territory in Jubaland was made in May 1919, and negotiations were continued without reaching any definite result, the difficulties being political and technical, involving the problem of the nomadic tribes in proximity to the proposed new frontier. See the Mussolini's speech to the Fascist Party on the eve of the reopening of Parliament (November 11 1924). Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 135.

⁴ "All kinds of suggestions were made as to the ways in which the two countries could co-operate: unemployed Italians could be recruited to work in the mines in the Ruhr; the French colonies in northern Africa could be developed by Italian labour, and would supply both countries with raw materials." Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 89, 92.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁶ For instance, problem of boundary between Libya and French Equatorial Africa was not finally settled until 1935. In September 1919 a treaty had been signed with France by which Italy was to obtain a rectification of the western frontier of Libya as part of the colonial concessions to which she was entitled under the Treaty of London, and in July 1922 the French Ambassador informed the Italian Government that this agreement had now been approved by the French Chamber and Senate. The Italian Government, in acknowledging this communication, stated that in their opinion this did not constitute a final liquidation of their claims under the Treaty. See Muriel Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy: 1918-1932* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1932), 101-102. All through the 1920s and well into the 1930s, the question of a general accord with France held a permanent place on the Italian diplomatic agenda. But nothing substantial ever resulted. Italy wanted to recover her historic and ethnic rights to Nice and Corsica. Italy also wanted Tunisia and French Somaliland. These claims against France were considered a 'moral' problem especially in the case of Nice and Corsica. They represented a point of national pride to Mussolini, as well as a popular issue that could strengthen his regime. On the other hand, Mussolini did not operate with a time schedule for the recovery of these territories. *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, Series D, Volume VI (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956), no.341, 460. And Mario Toscano, *The Origins of the*

Balkans¹, anti-Fascist propaganda², etc.

As far as Germany was concerned, Italy preferred a cautious attitude. Take the crisis of Ruhr as an example, on January 11, 1923, the French and Belgian troops marched into the Ruhr in order to compel Germany to carry out the reparation clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Great Britain refused to take any part in this enforcement of sanctions, while Mussolini informed France and Belgium that Italy had only taken part by sending some engineers to safeguard the deliveries of coal. Italy “had restricted her diplomatic action to pointing out to Germany the danger of her present attitude, and to a friendly intervention in Paris, calling the attention of the French Government to the political and economic dangers of a long occupation of the Ruhr.”³ According to Mussolini’s words—replying to the foreign affairs debate in the Senate on February 16, 1923—“If we owned coalfields, if we had in some way solved the problem of raw materials, if we had larger reserves of gold to support our exchange, we could follow a given policy, even that of generosity towards Germany, but we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of prodigality and of generosity when we can hardly live ourselves, and must devote all our energies to saving ourselves from the abyss... You will therefore understand that Italy could not be absent from the Ruhr, nor refuse to take part economically and technically.”⁴

Nevertheless, Mussolini was not willing to wink at excessive actions of France directing against Germany. For instance, with respect to the question of reparations, Mussolini expressed his moderate attitude, he said, “It would be truly paradoxical and unjust if concessions were made to Germany, and if we who have paid with so much blood were compelled to pay in money as well. I think, however, that France and Italy should make the same concessions to Germany as are made to them in the matter of inter-Allied debts.”⁵ Nine months after Ruhr crisis, Mussolini established objectives of the Italian Government, first clause of which declared reduction of the German debt to a reasonable figure, and a consequent proportional reduction of inter-Allied debts. Besides, “no interference in the internal affairs of Germany, but moral and political support for a Government which will re-establish order and bring about the financial recovery of Germany.”⁶

Furthermore, Fascist Italy did not forget to keep vigilant with Germany’s potential power and ambition, particularly on guard against *Anschluss*. Mussolini repeatedly stressed Italy must paid

Pact of Steel (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), American Edition, 90. [Italian edition: *Le origini diplomatiche del patto d'acciaio* (Firenze: C.G. Sansoni, 1956)]

¹ France’s interests in Balkans are strategic and political, while Italy’s are strategic, political, and commercial. France sought allies for some possible future war with either Germany or Italy, in which, strategically, Yugoslavia would be of the greatest importance. For Italy her relations with the Balkan nations are not only a question of national security or political prestige, they are of vital interest from the point of view of commerce. Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 122-123.

² Anti-Fascist propaganda came from both Italian political refugees in Paris and French unofficial press. A certain number of the critics and enemies of Fascism left the country and began an anti-Fascist campaign, establishing their headquarters in Paris. They issued a considerable amount of propagandist literature and, led by Francesco Nitti, the former Prime Minister, and Carlo Sforza, the former Foreign Minister, they received considerable support and sympathy from the elements of the Left in France. As ruler of a country where the whole educated class could read French, Mussolini rightly feared the contagion of ideas from across the Alps. R. Guariglia, *Ricordi: 1922-1946* (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1950), 110-111; G. Salvemini, *Mussolini diplomatico: 1922-1932* (Bari: Laterza, 1952), 127-128. Furthermore, Mussolini had been for years a most determined enemy of Freemasonry as an anti-Italian and Communist organization. But the campaign against Freemasonry in Italy immediately rallied all French Masons to the assistance of the anti-Fascist movement in Paris, and had considerable influence on the policy of the French Government towards Italy. Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 145.

³ Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 83.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁵ Mussolini’s reply to the debate in the Chamber on November 15, 1924. As quoted in Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 139.

⁶ Speech of November 16, 1923. *Ibid.*, 116-117.

closest attention to the Danubian countries, especially the possibility of a union between Austria and Germany in the near future. “The time will come when Germany will return effectively to the game of European politics.”¹ He emphasized it is necessary to guarantee not only the Rhineland frontier but also the Brennero frontier. And the propaganda of *Anschluss* in public opinion could not be permitted. “Italy would never tolerate such a patent violation of the treaties as the union of Austria and Germany.” This union “would render the Italian victory valueless, would increase the population and the territory of Germany, and would create this paradoxical situation, that the only nation to increase its territories and its population, making the most powerful block in Central Europe, would be Germany!”²

With regard to the League of Nations, Fascist Italy was one of the three tendencies of revisionism during the inter-war years, the other two were Germany and Japan. Fascist Italy was unsatisfied with the Versailles settlement, first raised a flag of revisionism on dealing with foreign affairs. In short, as one of the victors in Great War, Italy could not realize her expectations through Versailles settlement. Thus, when Mussolini appeared on the international scene, he spared no expense to revise Italy’s dilemma in order to regain as much interest as possible in Europe. As the vanquished country of the Great War, Germany had long resented the Versailles system which was absolutely constructed by victors. In addition, this system constrained considerably Germany’s ambition for “living space”. Also there are some historians analyze about Japanese revisionism, arguing that in the 1930s, Japan felt dissatisfied because of racial prejudice among imperialist states. Compared with traditional European imperialists, Japan should have had an equal right to expand.³

Indeed, Mussolini was fairly dissatisfied with the League of Nations in the Corfù incident. He stated in the speech of November 16, 1923, in the Senate on international affairs, “I instructed the Italian Delegation at Geneva to maintain the thesis of the incompetence of the League. ...I cannot admit that the prestige of Italy and its vital interests should be at the mercy of unknown and distant states. ... all that shady world of social democracy and plutocracy are furious because Italy is now governed by Fascism. ...Italians have never been very much interested in the League of Nations; they believed that it was a lifeless academic organization of no importance.” Moreover, he dealt with the membership of the League, said “Should Italy leave the League of Nations? Speaking generally I prefer rather to be inside than out. Because we must remember that once outside it is not possible to be found shortly afterwards knocking at the door. Italians have not forgotten the unhappy episode in Paris when our representatives left, and then, as we remember, were obliged to

¹ Ibid., 119.

² Mussolini’s speech in the Senate on May 2, 1925. Ibid., 150.

³ For instance, Susan L. Carruthers suggests that Japan “felt dissatisfied by the terms of the Versailles settlement too. Japan had tried, and failed, to have the principle of racial equality written into the terms of treaties. That the Western powers were indeed racially prejudiced against the Japanese seemed to be confirmed by America’s 1924 immigration legislation, which virtually prevented further Japanese immigration into the US. The Japanese government also felt that the country had not received adequate territory in recognition of its part in the war. As the 1920s progressed, Tokyo additionally protested against the way in which America and Britain sought, through the Washington treaties, both to limit Japan’s naval construction and to prevent China falling more effectively under Japanese domination. As the army increasingly gained prominence in Japanese political life, the officer class pressed ever more forcibly for Japanese expansion in China.” See Susan L. Carruthers, ‘International history 1900-1945’, in J. Baylis and S. Smith, eds., *The Globalization*, 64. Besides, argues that the decline of European imperialism and the rise of Wilsonian internationalism strengthened the position of the Japanese internationalists, which enabled them to push their agenda in the 1920s. And from then on, Japan experienced ‘encounter, join and leave the West’ and Japan’s conduct was increasingly seen as revisionist acts by the Anglo-Saxon states. See the PhD dissertation of Kaori Nakajima Lindeman, *Norm-driven change: The international normative system and the origins of Japanese revisionism (1860-1930)*, Johns Hopkins University, 2008.

ask permission to return.”¹

In spite of that, “collective security” was one of the keywords in Fascist Italy’s foreign policy. On October 15, 1925, Mussolini as the Foreign Minister² of Italy attended in the final discussion at Locarno. Next day he gave interviews to press and talked about the reason why Italy adhere to the Treaty of Locarno. “Italy could not refuse to take part in an agreement which is destined to ensure peace in a dangerous zone, and to create a new atmosphere in the relations between France and Germany, and therefore in the relations between European states as a whole. Italy occupies the same place as England as guarantor of this agreement, and therefore of the general peace.”³

Shorn of legal phraseology, terms of the Treaty of Locarno consisted of an undertaking by Germany never again to try to alter the Rhineland frontier by force of arms, and Italy and Great Britain undertook that in the event of an unprovoked attack by Germany on either France or Belgium, or an unprovoked attack by those Powers on Germany, they (Italy and Great Britain) would immediately go to the assistance of the country which was attacked. At the same time Germany undertook to apply for admission to the League of Nations, the Treaty not coming into force until she was a member.

From the beginning of 1926, “Mussolini had embarked on the second phase of his diplomatic activity—the phase of expansion.”⁴ This new phase marked a change in the nature of Italian expansionism: centralization and state intervention came to dictate foreign economic policy and the free trade orientation was gradually abandoned.⁵ In his address of May 29, 1926 at the Senate, Mussolini reiterated his understanding of imperialism. He indicated that every human being who has the desire to live has “imperialistic tendencies”, and that therefore, as a nation is the sum total of beings who have “the will to live”, a nation inevitably develops that “will to power” without which it becomes enfeebled and old and the prey of a stronger nation in which the ‘will to power’ is better developed.

Therefore, he continued, “Italian Imperialism is the outcome of the qualities of the Italian race and of its moral dignity. Secondly, it is the outcome of the need for economic and intellectual expansion of a people who arrived too late.” Mussolini hated “high-sounding phrases,” such as “international solidarity,” “the brotherhood of nations,” “friendly relations between countries.” He was convinced that “no nation pursues a policy of international brotherhood; every nation protects itself behind high walls, which to-day are economic and political.”⁶

Meanwhile, Mussolini denied that Italian imperialism existed in an aggressive, explosive sense; it was not preparing a war. About the question of disarmament, however, Mussolini insisted that it was not possible to think of abolishing armies and leaving navies, or abolishing navies and leaving air reserves, which were, in his opinion, basis of Italian independence and liberty.⁷ Consequently, Mussolini made it clear that it was necessary to possess raw materials, factories and works which

¹ Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 117-118.

² Benito Mussolini was first time in charge of Foreign Minister from 30 October 1922 to 12 September 1929, then Dino Grandi from 12 September 1929 to 20 July 1932, Mussolini again from 20 July 1932 to 9 June 1936, then Galeazzo Ciano from 9 June 1936 to 6 February 1943, Mussolini last time from 6 February 1943 to 25 July 1943.

³ Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 157.

⁴ Craig and Gilbert, eds., *The Diplomats*, 222.

⁵ Luca de Caprariis, *Fascism and Italian Foreign Policy: 1922-1928*, Ph.D dissertation of University of Wisconsin-Madison (April 1998), 107.

⁶ Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 179-180.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

could produce a great number of guns, of aeroplanes, of ships.

In respect of the spheres of Italy's expansion, two regions bear much significance: Mediterranean and the Balkans. Some anti-Fascists have written that the Mediterranean was "never far from ... Mussolini's mind."¹ On the other hand, the Fascists have made much of a supposed "single program" for gradual political and cultural penetration eastward.² Early in February 1924, Mussolini declared that the lines of Italian expansion lay "towards the east."³ Mussolini's eastern policy included penetration of Albania, friendship with Bulgaria, a pact with the Yemen, the encouragement of Italian commercial and linguistic interests in the Levant. At least eight pacts or agreements were signed from 1926 to 1930. Raffaele Guariglia indicates, "No country ever signed so many pacts and treaties as Mussolini's Italy; he never refused his signature to any convention that was proposed to him, even the most contrary to his ideas and purposes."⁴

Moreover, Africa played an important role in Fascist Italy's imperial plan. In April 1926, Mussolini paid a visit to the Italian colonies in northern Africa. He said: "These colonies had cost much to acquire and maintain, and had brought but little satisfaction or material advantage, but Signor Mussolini was determined to do all in his power to arouse popular interest, and to awaken a sense of pride in Italy's overseas possessions."⁵ On May 17, 1930, Mussolini declared Italy would not remain prisoners in the "Roman" sea. "Words may be fine-sounding things, but rifles, machine guns, ships, aeroplanes, and cannon are more beautiful, because right, if it be not accompanied by might, is a vain thing; as Machiavelli said, 'Unarmed prophets will perish!' ... Tomorrow this display of armed force will prove to the world the firm and warlike spirit of Fascist Italy, and Fascist Italy strongly armed will offer the simple alternatives—warm friendship or relentless hostility."⁶

On January 8, 1929, Mussolini gave an important interview to a representative of the Anglo-American News Service, referring to Fascist international policy. He said: "The problem of Italian expansion is urgent, the people must be ready. But that should not cause any alarm; our aim is not war, but preparation. I believe that in 1935 certain circumstances will exist which will necessitate a change in the European situation. ... The problem of colonial expansion, so vital for Italy, must be dealt with in common with other great problems which are so vital to the whole world. But you must understand me; what I say is not a threat of war; treaties can be revised by peaceful and friendly means."⁷

Thus, Fascist Italy refused American proposal of disarmament. On February 1927, when the President of the United States invited the other signatories to the Washington Treaty to a fresh conference of reducing armaments, Italian Government sent a carefully reasoned refusal.⁸

In June 1928, Mussolini announced several fixed principles on the problem of limitation or reduction of armaments, including:

- 1) The proportion of armaments must not be based on the *status quo*;

¹ Maxwell Henry Hayes Macartney and Paul Cremona, *Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy: 1914-1937* (New York: H. Fertig, 1972), 9.

² See Carlo Capasso, *Italia e Oriente* (Firenze: La nuova Italia, 1932), 219; Latinus, *L'Italia e i problemi internazionali* (Milano: Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale, 1935), 395-399.

³ Capasso, *Italia e Oriente*, 192.

⁴ Guariglia, *Ricordi*, 40.

⁵ Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 175-176.

⁶ See Mussolini's speech at Florence on May 17, 1930. Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 287.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

2) The limits of Italian armaments cannot be of an absolute character, but must be relative to the total armaments of the other states (parity with the most-armed nations of Europe);

3) The premise of the limits of armament is that Italy is not surpassed by another European Power.¹

Briefly, up to 1930, the main characteristic of Mussolini's foreign policy was "absolutely no war" but military preparation. That's why in this stage Italy signed so many international treaties—in the name of revisionism, through which Mussolini excluded the possibility of conflict in Europe and meanwhile affirmed Italy's power.²

When Dino Grandi started to be in charge of Foreign Affairs from September 1929, he appeared to be more peaceful and cooperative. He advocated some lofty concepts, such as "international co-operation", "new standard of international morality", "new international law", and "peace of justice," etc. That was so-called "*periodo Grandi*"³, which had three dispositions in regard to new international situation:

- 1) In Italy concluding the phase of edification and establishment of regime;
- 2) In Europe facing to the new situation of Germany and of British policy as the Labour Party won election;
- 3) In the world dealing with the burst of great crisis.

Instead of Mussolini's former unruly expressions, for example valued the League of Nations as "a lifeless academic organization of no importance," Grandi admitted: "To say that Italy is a loyal member of the League would be saying too little." And he continued, "it is deeply convinced that the League is destined to become more and more an effective instrument of international solidarity." Yet similar to Mussolini's words, Grandi stressed parity as well. "In the League of Nations there is no hierarchy of states; all alike, both great and small, have equal rights and equal duties towards each other and towards the League."⁴

Then on New Year's Day 1931 Mussolini broadcast a speech to the people of the United States, in which he also reasserted that Fascism desired to secure for the Italian people, in cooperation with all the other peoples of the world, a future of prosperity and peace. Even with Russia, economic cooperations was going on although Mussolini stated that the trade relations were of economic value without affecting Italy's internal policies. Fascism and Bolshevism still were at the antipodes, both in theory and practice, especially due to the appeals constantly sent out to the proletariat of the world by the International at Moscow to fight Fascism to the death.⁵

With respect to China, on 17 October 1928, Mussolini sent telegram to the Ambassador in Tokyo Aloisi, putting forward the conciliatory and peaceful policy towards China. In his opinion, "Interessi italiani in Cina meno importanti quelli di altre potenze non sono tuttavia trascurabili e

¹ See Mussolini's review of foreign policy in Parliament on June 5, 1928, "Disarmament," as quoted in Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 253.

² Renzo De Felice, "Alcune osservazioni sulla politica estera mussoliniana," R. De Felice, ed., *L'Italia fra Tedeschi e Alleati: la politica estera fascista e la seconda guerra mondiale* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1973), 63.

³ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴ See Dino Grandi's speech in the Chamber on the estimates for the Foreign Office on May 9, 1930. Currey, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 284-299.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 299.

sono suscettibili sviluppo.” The reason was quite apparent:

- 1) Cina ha riserve materie prime e mercato cinese potrà assorbire in avvenire quantità prodotti.
- 2) Italia come grande potenza deve esser presente anche in Cina e, pur non essendo disposta tollerare soprusi da parte quelle autorità, tenta politica conciliante e pacifica in quanto condizione sviluppo nostri interessi mi sembra essere costituzione colà di un Governo stabile e ordinato.¹

Unavoidably, Mussolini also expressed his opinion on Japan. He realised that the competition between Japan and Russia was predominant in Asia, whereas Italian interests were predominant in Europe. As a result, any possible Italo-Japanese agreement should first of all be contextualised in the general European policy of Italy. He advised Ambassador Aloisi that “non spingere le sue conversazioni [con presidente consiglio giapponese] oltre i limiti di un semplice scambio di idee”.²

Based on his consideration about China, Mussolini told Aloisi about his idea regarding Japan,

Da quanto precede apparirà a V. E. opportunità non concludere in questo momento accordo formale col Giappone. Circostanze diranno in seguito se converrà avvicinarsi ancora di più al Giappone nella sua politica estremo-orientale. V. E. potrebbe pertanto nei suoi contatti con codesto Governo tener preparato terreno per tale eventualità senza che ciò abbia a turbare corso nostre trattative con la Cina.

Infine non mi sembra che politica giapponese verso U.R.S.S. possa formare materia accordo con Italia poichè nostri interessi sono prevalentemente europei; del resto da un lato pressione Russia su Mongolia e Manciuria non minaccia interessi italiani in estremo oriente e dall'altro non sembra che Giappone possa darci valido appoggio nelle questioni europee.³

It can be seen that up to the Manchurian crisis of 1931, Mussolini had expressed interest in the potential for expansion in China with a view to obtain raw materials and market; at the same time, he did not intend to be involved too much in the Far East for the complex relations between Japan and Soviet Union. Besides, at that time he was convinced that the principle interests of Italy lay in Europe, on which Japan had little favourable effects for Italy. This situation was changed by the Manchurian crisis, which raised the issue of the Far East into the international scene, concerning not only Japan, the Soviet Union and the United States, but also Britain, France and the League of Nations.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT

Since the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, China went through several decades of chaos

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.VII, N.42, 36-37.

² *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.VI, N.517, 453.

³ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.VII, N.42, 36-37.

and turbulence. One of the most significant missions was to unify the whole country. However, the period before 1927 was characterized by “warlordism,” as regional militarists maneuvered for power and wealth.¹ Although it was the Beijing Government that appeared as a so-called legitimate government of China, the regional militarism flourished between 1912 and 1928.²

The Nationalist Party (Guomindang, or Kuomintang, KMT, 国民党) traced its ideological and organizational roots to the work of Sun Zhongshan (also Sun Yat-sen, 孙中山), a proponent of Chinese nationalism and democracy, who founded Revive China Society in Honolulu in the Republic of Hawaii on 24 November 1894. In 1905, Sun joined forces with other anti-monarchist societies in Tokyo, Empire of Japan to form the Tongmenghui (同盟会) on 20 August 1905, a group committed to the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of a republican government. The group planned and supported the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 and the founding of the Republic of China on 1 January 1912. However, Sun did not have military power and ceded the provisional presidency of the republic to Yuan Shikai (袁世凯), who arranged for the abdication of the Puyi the Last Emperor on February 12. But Yuan soon began to ignore the parliament in making presidential decisions. Yuan dissolved the Nationalists in November 1913 (whose members had largely fled into exile in Japan) and dismissed the parliament early in 1914. Yuan Shikai proclaimed himself emperor in December 1915.

Sun returned to China in 1917 to establish a military junta at Guangzhou, in order to against the Beiyang government, but was soon forced out of office and exiled to Shanghai. There, with renewed support, he resurrected the Nationalist Party on 10 October 1919, under the name Guomindang of China (中国国民党) and established its headquarters in Guangzhou in 1920.³ After Sun’s death in March 1925, Jiang Jieshi⁴ became the leader of the Nationalist Party. Four months later on 1 July 1925, the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China was established in Guangzhou.⁵

The civil war among various warlords badly damaged China in 1920s. Those warlords were backed by varied Euro-American business interests. The Northern Expedition, also known as the Northern March, began from the Guomindang’s power base in Guangdong province. In 1925 the May 30th Movement⁶ announced plans for a strike and protest against western imperialism and

¹ Hung-Mao Tien, *Government and Politics in Kuomintang China, 1927-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 9.

² About the birth of Republic of China and the warlords, see James E. Sheridan, *China in Disintegration. The Republican Era in Chinese History, 1912-1949* (New York&London: The Free Press, 1975), Chapter II and III.

³ In 1923, the Guomindang and its Guangzhou government accepted aid from the Soviet Union after being denied recognition by the western powers. Soviet advisers – the most prominent of whom was Mikhail Borodin, an agent of the Comintern – arrived in China in 1923 to aid in the reorganization and consolidation of the Nationalist Party along the lines of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, establishing a Leninist party structure. The Communist Party of China was under Comintern instructions to cooperate with the Nationalist Party, and its members were encouraged to join while maintaining their separate party identities, forming the First United Front between the two parties. Soviet advisers also helped the Guomindang to set up a political institute to train propagandists in mass mobilization techniques.

⁴ See “Generalissimo” in Lawrence K. Rosinger, *China’s Crisis* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 47.

⁵ About National Government and Guomindang, see Rosinger, *China’s Crisis*, 31-38.

⁶ Alongside public grief at the death of China’s Republican hero Sun Zhongshan, the Nationalist Party sought to foment pro-Chinese, anti-imperial and anti-western organizations and propaganda within major Chinese cities. On the morning of May 30, 1925, Shanghai Municipal Police opened fire on Chinese protesters and arrested fifteen ringleaders of a student protest being held on and around the foreign-controlled International Settlement. On May 31, crowds of students posted bills and demanded shops refuse to sell foreign goods or serve non-Chinese. They then convened at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce where they gave a list of demands, including an end to extraterritoriality, and closure of the Shanghai International Settlement. The Municipal Council declared a state of martial law on June 1, calling up the Shanghai Volunteer Corps militia, and requesting foreign military assistance to carry out raids and protect vested interests. Over the next month Shanghai businesses and workers went on strike, and there were sporadic outbreaks of demonstration and violence. Trams and foreigners were attacked, and

its warlord agents in China. Briefly, from the China's point of view, to achieve the unification, the Chinese people ought to cope with the imperialism of Western Powers, including America and Japan, as well as the warlords. Thus, both the Nationalist Party and Communist Party of China advocated anti-imperialism, though the former was not so radical as the latter. As a matter of fact, when Jiang Jieshi had succeeded in purging the Guomindang of Chinese Communists, and Nanjing Government inaugurated in 1928, one of the fundamental principles of Guomindang was Jiang's famous catchphrase "rang wai bi xian an nei" (domestic stability takes precedence over resisting foreign invasion, 攘外必先安内), albeit facing the increasing threat of Japan in particular.¹

Given that Jiang's Nanjing administration was under the context of purging the Nationalist party of the Communists, it was not surprising that the foreign policy of Nanjing Government was, first of all, characterized by its anti-Soviet/anti-Communist position though it used to be helped by the Soviet Union and Chinese Communists. On 13 December 1927, Jiang issued a statement, vowing to sever diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia, and to re-enact the policies and regime of Guomindang. Nanjing Government would join together with the other countries to cope with the Third International. On the next day of this statement, Nanjing Government ordered that all the national commercial agencies of Russia in Chinese provinces should stop business and ordered to repatriate Russian nationals.²

On the other hand, Jiang devoted his efforts to obtain the understanding and support of Western Great Powers. Early in August 1926, when the forces of the Northern Expedition captured Changsha, Jiang said in a foreign press conference that he used to have 15 Soviet advisors because he needed their assistance and the ordance and ammunition of Soviet Union. But at that moment, he was determined to get rid of all the Soviet advisors. Meanwhile, he decided to protect commerce and foreigners. To respond one of the foreign corrispondents who asked him why he had ordered to occupy the property of the Church, encouraged anti-British movement and boycott campaign against Japanese products, Jiang asserted that it was not his policy but the ideas of the Students' Union who had been abetted by the Bolshevik. He should make the two sides reconcile in order to ensure the smooth progress of the Northern Expedition.³

On 7 February 1927, in the fourth plenary session of the second National Congress of Guomindang, there was a statement regarding foreign policy, saying that the sole and fundamental purpose of the national revolution was to achieve equality of nation and equality of state. While the abolition of unequal treaties was only a concrete program which aimed at achieving that fundamental purpose. At that time, China would not rely upon strong force to contend with the world imperialists; instead, the Chinese would devote themselves to firm and resolute construction so as to achieve that goal of equality. The nationals of China should remember that for all the imperialists' movements, the real achievements could only be obtained by practical construction. The means used by the Communists, however, would make the poor and weak China sink into the fierce combat between the "white imperialism" (Western imperialism) and the "red imperialism"

there was looting of shops that refused to uphold the boycott of foreigners. A number of Chinese killed and injured in the May 30 Movement's riots. Policemen, firemen, and foreigners were also injured. By November, with Jiang Jieshi having finally wrested power from his rivals, the strikes and protests began to burn out.

¹ About Guomindang's policy "rang wai bi xian an nei," see the Ph.D dissertation of Shao-Kang Chu, *On Chiang Kai-shek's Position on Resisting Japan: An Analysis of "Domestic Stability Takes Precedence over Resisting Foreign Invasion" Policy, 1928-1936*, University of British Columbia (1999).

² Cao Xue-en, and Xu Guangwen, eds. *A Brief History on the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China* (Xi'an: Shanxi People Press, 1989), 210.

³ Zhang Xianwen, ed. *History of the Republic of China* (Zhengzhou: Shanxi People Press, 1985), 289-290.

(Soviet Union and Communism), even fell to be destroyed.¹

When Jiang arrived in Shanghai, he made a secret order, changing the slogan “combat imperialism” (dadao diguo zhuyi, 打倒帝国主义) to “peaceful struggle for national salvation” (heping fendou jiuguo, 和平奋斗救国). And Jiang promised that the National Revolutionary Army was good friend of the various Powers; they would never use force to change the *status quo* of concessions.² As the Nanjing Government was established, the Foreign Minister Wu Chaoshu (also Wu Ch’ao-shu, 伍朝枢, September 1927-February 1928 as Minister of Foreign Affairs) issued a statement declaring foreign policy of the new government: “1) do not take means of violence and turmoil; 2) propose the abolition of the unequal treaties at the appropriate time; 3) ‘combat imperialism’ without xenophobic nature”³.

On February 21, 1928, Huang Fu (黄郛, February-May 1928 as Minister of Foreign Affairs), the Foreign Minister of Nanjing Government issued a declaration on foreign affairs. Specifically, it pointed out that:

1) It is now recognized as the unequal treaties between China and foreign countries, which the National Government is ready for the early abolishment. We expect in the shortest possible period to start negotiating new treaties with various friendly countries, on the basis of equality and mutual respect for territorial sovereignty.

2) Until the new treaties has been formulated, the National Government is prepared to maintain and enhance its goodwill with various friendly countries in order to conform to the changes of the modern situation and to remove the indirect difficulties and misunderstandings between the Chinese and foreign peoples.

3) The National Government shall, in accordance with public international law, endeavor to protect the life and property of the foreigners.

4) Any contracts and treaties between any subsequent local governments and foreign governments or foreign companies or individuals, which entered into or permitted by the National Government shall be deemed valid. And any treaties and agreements between various foreign countries, which regarding the Republic of China and with its participation shall be deemed valid as well.

5) In respect of important outstanding cases, the National Government shall prepare in an appropriate period and try to resolve them in the spirit of fairness and mutual understanding.

6) As regards the foreign country interferes in China’s internal affairs, National Government had to adopt and implement the most appropriate way to deal with. (“foreign” in Article 6 refers specifically to the Soviet Union).⁴

As a result, on November 27, 1928, a new treaty was signed, replacing that of 1866. With it, Italy recognized China’s tariff autonomy and clung to the abolition of extraterritorial rights; however, subjecting to the actual renunciation of similar decisions by the signatory powers of the Washington treaties. As Daniele Varè (ministro plenipotenziario e inviato straordinario in Cina) wrote,

¹ Zhu Zishuang, ed. *Chinese Kuomintang Foreign Policy* (Chongqing: National Book Publishing House, 1942), 51-52.

² Cao and Xu, *A Brief History*, 209.

³ Li Zhenhua, ed. “The Memorabilia of Modern China,” *The Sequential Edition of Historical Materials of Modern China*, Vol.67, N.668 (Taipei: Wenhai Press, 1979), 4942.

⁴ Cheng Daode, ed. *Selected Compilation of Diplomatic History of the Republic of China* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1985), 211.

... i sudditi italiani saranno soggetti alle leggi e alla giurisdizione cinesi dalla data che sarà fissata dalla Cina dopo che essa avrà raggiunto un accordo circa l'abolizione dell'extraterritorialità con tutte le Potenze firmatarie dei Trattati di Washington, restando convenuto che tale data dovrà essere applicabile a tutte le dette Potenze.¹

In fact, such a sort of treaty did not aim to abolish unequal treaties, but to consolidate the principle of “Open Door” of Washington treaties, namely to waive any special privileges in China among those countries in Washington Conference: the United States, Great Britain, France, Japan, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, and Portugal.² Under this context, when the Japanese army invaded Manchuria, the Nanjing Government preferred appeal to mediation of the League rather than resistance. Therefore the cooperation period between Nationalist China and the Western countries became possible.

¹ The text of treaty and letters between Wang Zhenqiang (Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Daniele Varè, *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia*, parte prima, Anno 70, Roma, 10 giugno 1929, N.134, 2586-2588. See also G. Samarani and L. De Giorgi, *Lontane, vicine: le relazioni fra Cina e Italia nel novecento*, 57-58.

² “Treaty relating to Principles and Policies concerning China – Washington, February 6, 1922: Article I. The Contracting Powers, other than China, agree: ... (3) To use their influence for the purpose of effectually establishing and maintaining the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations throughout the territory of China; (4) To refrain from taking advantage of conditions in China in order to seek special rights or privileges which would abridge the rights of subjects or citizens of friendly States, and from countenancing action inimical to the security of such States....Article III. With a view to applying more effectually the principles of the Open Door or equality of opportunity in China for the trade and industry of all nations, the Contracting Powers, other than China, agree that they will not seek, nor support their respective nationals in seeking: (a) any arrangement which might purport to establish in favour of their interests any general superiority of rights with respect to commercial or economic development in any designated region of China; (b) any such monopoly or preference as would deprive the nationals of any other Power of the right of undertaking any legitimate trade or industry in China, or of participating with the Chinese Government, ...China undertakes to be guided by the principles stated in the foregoing stipulations of this Article in dealing with applications for economic rights and privileges from Governments and nationals of all foreign countries, whether parties to the present Treaty or not. Article IV. The Contracting Powers agree not to support any agreements by their respective nationals with each other designed to create spheres of influence or to provide for the enjoyment of mutually exclusive opportunities in designated parts of Chinese territories. ... Article VII. The Contracting Powers agree that, whenever a situation arises which in the opinion of any one of them involves the application of the stipulations of the present Treaty, and renders desirable discussion of such application, there shall be full and frank communication between the Contracting Powers concerned.” T’ang Leang-Li, *The Puppet State of “Manchukuo”*, Appendix II, 188-189.

1 PRELUDE: MANCHURIAN CRISIS AND FASCIST ITALY'S PARTICIPATION

1.1 FASCIST ITALY'S POLICY REGARDING THE MANCHURIAN INCIDENT

1.1.1 Manchurian crisis

Modern China's fate has been intricately intertwined with the foreign policies of the powers, in particular Japan.¹ China's international position on the eve of the Republican revolution was affected profoundly by the rise of Japan to a position of power and a relative decline in the role of Western powers in East Asia.² After 1901 the Western powers had increasingly confined themselves to the maintenance of the *status quo* and to the pursuit of their own established economic interests – Russia and Germany excepted. Russia proceeded with her penetration of Mongolia and North Manchuria, even after relinquishing her unequal treaty rights in China proper following her 1917 Revolution; and Germany, in the aftermath of the First World War, disappeared altogether from the East Asian theatre until her resurgence in the 1930s. Japan by contrast not only pursued her expanding economic interests but flexed her political muscle in diplomacy and military action. The primary focus of her activity, after the absorption of Korea, was Manchuria.³

The homeland of the Manchu tribes (now known as China's Northeast) was the most attractive one of all the thinly populated regions around China. After the Manchu conquest of China the Qing Dynasty reserved the area as a racial preserve and governed it as a military frontier. By the 1890s the Qing Dynasty in self-defence had begun a programme of railway-building northward from the Great Wall to counter the threat of Russia's projected trans-Siberian line, but Chinese efforts were too late and too little. Japan's victory over China in 1895 led directly to the Sino-Russian alliance of 1896 and Russian building of the Chinese Eastern Railway across Manchuria. Russian military occupation of Manchuria at the time of the Boxer rebellion in 1900. Japan led the other powers in demanding that the Russians leave Manchuria, while the tsarist government did its best to pressure Peking for secret agreements that would suit its interests. The onetime Manchu homeland was now a focus of Great Power rivalry, particularly between Russia and Japan. Unlike the other Powers who reached China mainly by sea, these two were

¹ See Sara R. Smith, *The Manchurian Crisis 1931-1932: A tragedy in international relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948); "Republican China 1912-1949," *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.13, Part 2, 74.

² See Richard Storry, *Japan and the Decline of the West in Asia 1894-1943*, (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1979); for the general context see Marius B. Jansen, *Japan and China: from war to peace 1894-1972* (Rand McNally College Pub. Co., 1975).

³ "Republican China 1912-1949," *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.13, Part 2, 82.

encroaching by land. Within another five years, Japan had supplanted Russia in the Liaodong peninsula¹ and along the trunk railways to the north.²

The Sino-Japanese Treaty of Beijing was signed on 12 December 1905.³ Within two years, however, discussions for American and British participation in Manchurian communications found the Chinese disputing this arrangement. Japan simultaneously sought to strengthen its alliance with Great Britain. As initially concluded in 1902, the Anglo-Japanese alliance applied only to China and Korea, but as the confrontation between Britain and Russia during the Russo-Japanese War had spread across the entire Eurasian continent, Britain wanted to strengthen the alliance, while Japan wanted a stronger bond to help deter Russia from a war of revenge. Accordingly the Anglo-Japanese alliance was revised on 12 August 1905, with its scope extended to India. After Anglo-Russian relations took a sudden turn for the better in 1907, in response to the swift rise of German power, the character of the Anglo-Japanese alliance changed once more. By 1911, in a third revision that ran for ten years, its focus was on Germany as well as Russia. An exclusion of countries with whom either power had a treaty of arbitration (such as that between Britain and the US) relieved English fears of conflict with the United States.⁴

France meanwhile felt it necessary to secure additional guarantees for its position in Asia. In 1907 Japan reached agreement with France in a compact which began with affirmations of respect for Chinese sovereignty and equal opportunity, and went on to forswear interference with each other's special interests and spheres.⁵

Japan's relations with the United States at the same time were strained over the anti-Japanese exclusion movement on the west coast. Although China's first big patriotic boycott in 1905 was of American goods, in protest against the treatment of Chinese in the United States, the makers of Qing foreign policy saw a chance to profit from the American-Japanese antagonism. Chinese strategy in Manchuria echoed that of Li Hongzhang in Korea twenty years before – to open the area to foreign trade and so give the trading powers a vested interest in preserving China's paramount position, or at least opposing Japan's or Russia's encroachment – an “Open Door” strategy (proposed by the United States in late 19th century).⁶ Seldom did Japanese ambition in the Far East, in a manner of speaking, come across any resistance from European major powers, although the United States opposed Japanese action in the beginning of inter-war years.⁷ Under the “Open Door”, this kind of opposition against Japan played a role as a drop in the ocean. Or precisely, what the United States cared was only the portion of interest but not Japanese imperialism. Moreover, European major powers was busy with European affairs, problem of Far East was descending to the second level of their agenda. In fact, no one of European powers at that moment was able to act against Japan.⁸ Besides, China, since the last emperor was toppled in

¹ The old Chinese pale below Mukden (Shenyang), known as Liaodong, had been a settled part of China since the Han Dynasty.

² “Republican China 1912-1949,” *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.13, Part 2, 82-84.

³ The secret protocol is included in John von A. MacMurray, ed. and comp. *Treaties and Agreements with and concerning China, 1894-1919* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1921), I, 554.

⁴ Ian H. Nish, *Alliance in Decline: a study in Anglo-Japanese relations 1908-1923* (London: Athlone Press, 1972), 70.

⁵ “Republican China 1912-1949,” *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.13, Part 2, 86.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

⁷ Ennio Di Nolfo, *Storia delle relazioni internazionali, 1918-1992* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1994), 83.

⁸ “La Gran Bretagna era troppo impegnata a ricostruire la sua dimensione imperiale e non intendeva allontanarsi troppo dalla tradizionale amicizia che la legava al Giappone; i Sovietici avevano ben altri problemi ai quali pensare, sebbene l'azione giapponese li minacciasse da vicino; gli Americani (che tra l'altro vivevano il momento più duro della recessione) attraversavano una campagna elettorale che consigliava solo prudenza; i Francesi potevano anche avvertire la portata globale dello «strappo» che il sistema di Versailles subiva ma non avevano certo né la forza, né

1911, fell into internal chaos and the absence of strong central government, where various provincial warlords fought one another. Japan also profited from this situation of chaos. Holding the flag of establishing a “co-prosperity sphere” in Asia, Japan came to carry out her increasingly assertive foreign policy, the “Manchurian crisis” of 1931, for example.¹

In some respects Japan’s position in Asia during the first decades of the twentieth century was akin to Germany’s in Europe.² Since both Japan and China had participated in the First World War as allies of Triple Entente, they were treated differently in the Peace Conference of Versailles: Japan gained what he wanted as a victor³, but China lost what should be returned like a vanquished country. Since the Versailles rejected the Chinese demands that German rights in Shandong be returned to China, the Chinese delegation walked out and the 4 May 1919 demonstration erupted in Beijing.⁴ Furthermore, the settlement of Versailles encouraged Japan to develop his imperialist blueprint toward China in the inter-war period, for Japan looked towards China as the most suitable sphere for expansion.

Great Britain, France and the Netherlands, although exhausted by the war, desired nevertheless to maintain their interests in the Pacific and the Far East. But to do so would require the cooperation of both the United States and Japan, which not only had not suffered from the European war but had benefited economically from it. Canada, Australia and New Zealand were wary of Japan’s recent expansion and Britain felt it essential to gain the goodwill of the US to contain Japan. Yet, at the same time, Britain needed the friendship of its ally Japan to protect its own interests in China. For all these reasons, the British desired a large-scale conference to adjust with one stroke their relations with the dominions, with the United States, and with Japan.⁵

The Washington Conference met from November 1921 to February 1922. Armaments and Far Eastern relations were taken up in parallel sessions. The Chinese plenipotentiary, Shi Zhaoji (Alfred Sao-ke Sze, 施肇基), made an effort to chip away at the unequal treaty system. He confirmed the “Open Door” for equal commercial-industrial opportunity of the treaty powers in China but demanded that all agreements concerning China must be openly declared, made only with Chinese participation, have stated time limits, and be strictly construed in favour of the grantor.

In the end, two treaties and nine resolutions on China came out of deliberations on sixteen separate items such as tariffs, spheres of influence, the Open Door, and a ban on military supplies to China. The Anglo-Japanese alliance was ended and a four-power treaty (Britain, France, Japan and the United States) took its place but without any military provisions, merely promises to consult. A naval limitation treaty agreed to a 5:5:3 ratio for the British, American and Japanese fleets, which would leave Japan secure in her home waters. Concerning China, it was agreed that the Powers would subsequently convene a separate conference aimed at the abolition of extraterritoriality. On tariff matters, since the Chinese Government was in severe financial straits,

la possibilità, né la volontà di agire da soli, mentre la Germania e l’Italia si preparavano a compiere le loro mosse in Europa.” Di Nolfo, *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, 158.

¹ See Susan L. Carruthers, “International history 1900-1945”, 64-65.

² Susan L. Carruthers, “International history 1900-1945,” 63.

³ Di Nolfo indicates that, after the Peace Conference of Paris, “Il Giappone usciva così come il grande vincitore della guerra per quanto riguardava il Pacifico,” *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, 84.

⁴ See *The Pact of Paris: Three Years of Development An Address by the Hon. Henry L. Stimson, U.S.A. Secretary of State*, in the Appendix I, *The Puppet State of “Manchukuo”*, 179.

⁵ See Roger Dingman, *Power in the Pacific: The Origins of Naval Arms Limitation, 1914-22* (University of Chicago Press, 1977); Thomas Buckley, *The United States and the Washington Conference* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1970); Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism: the search for a new order in the Far East, 1921-1931* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965).

a major objective was to increase Chinese Government revenues. A treaty provided for revision of tariff rates at the same time that it called for a future conference to revise the entire tariff structure. The most important was the Nine-Power Treaty of 6 February 1922 on China,¹ which incorporated strict and concrete stipulations regarding the “Open Door” and equal opportunity, and against unfair discrimination on railways in China. Japan and China settled the Shandong question through direct negotiations from 1 November to 4 February 1922, when they signed a treaty returning the former German leased territory of Jiaozhou to China. Japan withdrew all troops from Shandong province. The Qingdao custom-house was integrated into the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, and the Jiaozhou-Jinan railway and all its properties were transferred to China.²

The Washington Conference formulated high ideals but provided no way to enforce them. It left China’s sovereignty still impaired by the unequal treaty system, partly because China in 1922, split between two regimes in Beijing and Guangzhou, had no single government capable of exercising sovereignty. At the same time the Soviet Union and Germany were left out of the new system. At first glance the chief practical result was a negative one, that Japan’s expansion during the First World War had been cut back to the boundaries of 1905. Great Power expansion had been forsworn, but only by the nine-power signatories and only on paper.³

If a government existed as the central government in anything more than a name, it was because the Powers chose to recognize it as so. For the Powers required a central government to pay China’s debts, negotiate new foreign privileges and deal with various matters under international law. Without one main conduit through which to channel their interests, the Powers would have had to negotiate individually with numerous territorial warlords. Thus, the Beijing Government was a mockery as a central government – no more, really, than a fiction – but it was kept in being by the powers. Despite political instability, they went ahead with a special tariff conference, convened in 1925, to discuss tariff revision in accordance with the Washington Conference agreement. Ironically, the convening of such meetings coincided with the launching of a nationalist revolution led by the Nationalist Party and its Communist allies, who denounced the Washington Conference as imperialist collusion and demanded the unconditional return of full sovereignty to China. Meantime warlord dealings with foreign countries surged ahead, as exemplified by the ties of Zhang Zuolin (张作霖) and Duan Qirui (段祺瑞) to Japan, of Wu Peifu (吴佩孚) and Chen Jiongming (陈炯明) to the British, and of Feng Yuxiang (冯玉祥) and the Guomindang to the Soviet Union.⁴

In the aftermath of the Nanjing incident 1927⁵, Britain reinforced her Shanghai defences, and

¹ See *The Washington Nine-Power Treaty of 1922*, in Appendix II, *The Puppet State of “Manchukuo”*, 188.

² “Republican China 1912-1949,” *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.13, Part 2, 103-105.

³ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁵ Nanjing Incident: it started with large scale rioting against foreign interests, launched by uniformed soldiers and local Chinese residents. Nanjing was a treaty port established by an unequal treaty between China and Britain since 1842, which located on the southern shores of the Yangtze River, a large waterway that separates northern and southern China. Because the foreign interests in China were largely American and European, squadrons of foreign naval vessels were stationed along the Yangtze River to protect their citizens doing business at the treaty ports. When the conflict between foreign powers and Chinese soldiers and residents occurred, which was not new since China then was the largest semi-colony in the region of the Far East, the National Revolution Army, warlord, even the communist contingent, and various Great Powers involved. The British, American and Japanese consulates were attacked; residents of the United States, Britain, France, Italy and Japan were killed. In response, the British and American navy immediately sent several warships toward Nanjing to participate in the bombardment. As a result, the Nationalist Government issued a statement blaming the warlord army for starting attacks on the foreign consulates, and also accused the Communist soldiers within the National Revolution Army

pressed Japan and the United States to do likewise. The United States sent reinforcements, but tried to avoid exciting Chinese nationalist feeling. Japanese Foreign Minister Shidehara Kijūrō held fast to his principle of non-intervention in China. Criticism of the moderate Shidehara foreign policy, led by the opposition Seiyūkai party, had been growing in strength for some time. Both the army ministry and the army general staff, moreover, supported joint military action with the British, arguing that the British dilemma of today could well be the Japanese dilemma of tomorrow.¹

At the same time of the establishment of the new Nanjing Government, the Japanese cabinet changed hands. Japan's new prime minister and concurrent foreign minister was retired army general Tanaka Giichi. As head of the opposition party, Tanaka had never missed an opportunity to criticize his predecessor, Shidehara, for the weakness of his China policy. Now suddenly Tanaka was in the position of having to adopt a strong China policy of his own.²

Marshal Zhang Zuolin (Chang Tso-lin, 张作霖), left Peking by special train on 3 June 1927, headed for his Mukden (Shenyang) base. A large explosion just this side of Mukden killed him early the following morning. His assassination had been plotted by a small group of Japanese army officers. Their thinking was that the death of Zhang Zuolin would deprive Manchuria of its leader and plunge it into chaos. The Japanese army would then step in to restore order, and occupy Manchuria.³ But, on the contrary, Manchuria was not plunged into chaos. Zhang Xueliang (Chang Hsueh-liang, 张学良), then in Beijing, rushed back to Mukden where his father's death was kept as a secret until 21 June, when young Zhang assumed his father's mantle. The assassination was soon confirmed to be the work of the Kwantung Army⁴ but, realizing that to make an issue of it might put him at the mercy of Japan, Zhang Xueliang held his peace.

While taking care not to upset Japan, this new ruler of Manchuria also found himself drawn to the rights recovery element of Chinese nationalism. He grasped the hand of his father's old enemy, the Guomintang, and then he hoisted the Nationalist Party's "blue sky and white sun" flag over Manchuria. At the end of secret negotiations with the Nanjing Government, the flag of Nationalist Party went up on 29 December 1928. Zhang joined the Guomintang, and was designated commander-in-chief of the northeast frontier defence army. Thereafter, Zhang gradually adopted

of committing atrocities which were wrongly assigned to the Guomintang (Nationalist Party). National Revolutionary Army commander in chief Jiang Jieshi suspected that the Communist Party of China and Soviet advisors in the Wuhan Nationalist Government used anti-imperialists and anti-foreign sentiments to instigate the Nanjing incident. In other words, the Nanjing Nationalist Government accused warlord and Chinese Communists of stirring up conflict between the Western countries and China, and reached agreements with the Western Powers, settling the damages, apologizing and paying significant compensation. See AP Cina (1919-1931), Busta 960, 966, Incidente di Nanchino; and Ministry of Education (Taiwan) ed., *Nation-building History of Republic of China* (Taipei: National Translation and Compilation Center, 1985), Vol. 2, "Unification and Construction," 670-674.

¹ "Republican China 1912-1949," *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.13, Part 2, 112.

² See William F. Morton, *Tanaka Giichi and Japan's China Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980).

³ See Gavan McCormick, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911-1928* (Stanford University Press, 1977); and Nobuya Bamba, *Japanese Diplomacy in a Dilemma: new light on Japan's China policy* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1972).

⁴ Kwantung Army: Following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, Japan obtained the Kwantung Leased Territory and the areas adjacent to the South Manchurian Railway. "Kwantung" means "east of Shanhaiguan," a guarded pass, east of which lies Manchuria. The Kwantung Garrison was established in 1906 to defend this territory. After a reorganization in 1919, the Kwantung Garrison was renamed the Kwantung Army. In the highly politicized Imperial Japanese Army of the 1920s and 1930s, the Kwantung Army was a stronghold of the radical "Imperial Way Faction," and many of its senior leaders overtly advocated political change in Japan through the violent overthrow of the civilian government to bring about a restoration, with a reorganization of society and the economy along totalitarian state lines. They also advocated a more aggressive, expansionist foreign policy regarding the Asian mainland. See Susie Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun: The rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army* (Random House, 1991).

an anti-Japanese policy and the Chinese anti-Japanese movement in Manchuria came into the open.

The deteriorating situation in Manchuria was marked by a series of incidents. In 1931, about 400 Korean farmers rented land in Wanbaoshan (万宝山), north of Changchun. Chinese authorities forbade them to settle, and ordered them out. The order was temporarily rescinded at the protest of the Japanese consul. On July 1, skirmishes broke out between the Chinese farmers and the Japanese police who rushed to the scene from nearby Changchun. That was the so called Wanbaoshan incident.¹

The Kwantung Army and its supporters in Manchuria equated the postwar international system with the civilian government's "weak-kneed" diplomacy, intent on placating Chinese nationalists and settling difficult disputes through peaceful negotiation, within the framework of the Washington Conference treaties. Such sort of "radicals" of Japanese were determined to disregard all the considerations of cooperation with the Western powers in preserving peace and stability in East Asia, and act boldly to impose their own arrangements for internal political affairs and, as an integral part of this undertaking, for Japanese rule in Manchuria. The Mukden incident of 18 September 1931 was the first decisive step.

The incident consisted of premeditated attacks upon the South Manchurian Railway (owned by Japan) some eight kilometres north of the Mukden station. As worked out in detail a few days earlier, the plot entailed the use of explosives by officers of the Kwantung Army to destroy two to three feet of railway tracks. The explosion served as a signal for nearby detachments to mobilize. Around eleven o'clock at night of 18 September 1931, barely forty minutes after the incident, General Itagaki, the senior staff officer of the Kwantung Army, issued orders for an attack upon Chinese forces in the area. The commander of the Japanese army, General Honjō Shigeru, decided to seize this opportunity to carry out more extensive military action, and on 19 September he telegraphed the supreme command that the time was ripe for the Kwantung Army "to act boldly and assume responsibility for law and order throughout Manchuria". Within several weeks most of southern Manchuria had fallen under Japanese control.

These events stunned Chinese, not only because of the audacity of the Japanese, but also because of the failure of Chinese forces to resist. Manchuria was, or should have been, defended by the forces of Young Marshal Zhang Xueliang, who not only dominated the northeast but also the position of Vice Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Republic of China. Unexpectedly and unfortunately, however, Zhang Xueliang did nothing to defend his vast empire of Manchuria, proclaiming instead a policy of non-resistance. As a matter of fact, in the weeks prior to the Mukden Incident, as trouble brewed between China and Japan, Zhang had advised his followers not to provoke the Japanese in any way. When difficulties erupted, he immediately telegraphed his subordinates to avoid encounters with the Japanese.²

Jiang Jieshi and Nanjing Government³ had not merely acquiesced in Zhang Xueliang's weak policy but had positively urged him to pursue non-resistance both before and after the event. As regards why Jiang Jieshi and Zhang Xueliang opted for the policy of non-resistance despite its

¹ "Republican China 1912-1949," *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.13, Part 2, 113-114.

² Parks M. Coble, *Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism, 1931-1937* (Cambridge, Mass. and London : Harvard University Press, 1991), 11-13.

³ The Guomindang regime had never conquered or directly controlled Manchuria. It could claim the northeast only because Zhang Xueliang, after the assassination of his father by the Japanese, had allied with Nanjing, and accepted positions in the Nationalist party and government, and flew its flag in his provinces. See Coble, *Facing Japan*, 16.

costs to China in terms of territory and wealth and its loss of prestige for the Guomindang government, official Guomindang histories sometimes suggest that the League of Nations officials convinced Jiang Jieshi that they could force Japan to retreat but warned that Chinese resistance might cost Nanjing the sympathy of League members, a scenario that certainly clashes with the view of Jiang Jieshi as a decisive leader. The scholars speculated that Jiang and Zhang believed more liberal elements in the Japanese Government could restrain the Kwantung Army, or that international pressure would prevent Japan from completely seizing the northeast.¹

Indeed, the United States and Britain tried initially to cooperate in order to cope with the Manchurian issue in an international framework. The United States, in particular, was extremely active in late 1931, and one could well argue that these were the first hours of postwar American internationalism. Britain was much less active, but it did go along halfway with the American initiative.

America's initial response to the Mukden incident was to internationalize it. Having the idea of international cooperation, President Herbert C. Hoover, and Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson, bore in their minds that Japan was at fault; as Stimson recorded, the Kwantung Army was defying the Washington Conference order by resorting to rash action. It was imperative, therefore, to call upon the Japanese Government to renounce such acts of aggression on the part of the military and agree to peaceful settlement of whatever dispute they had with China. Stimson's diplomatic initiatives for three months after 18 September were undertaken with such objectives in mind. He did not hesitate to work closely with the League of Nations to which the Chinese Government had taken the case. Stimson sent an observer to the council meetings, kept in close touch with League officials, and actively pushed for some League action that would provide the basis for terminating the hostilities. The League's adoption of a resolution, calling upon China and Japan to desist from further fighting and return to the *status quo*, was in line with the American Government's desires.²

Great Britain, France and other nations went along with the American initiatives. Britain, as a major imperialist power in Asia, was in basic agreement with the US that the framework of international cooperation must be maintained. London was more ready, however, to concede Japan's rights in Manchuria as one aspect of such cooperation. British officials at home and in the Far East tended to agree that Japan had legitimate complaints about Chinese nationalism, and that it was more desirable to keep Japan as a cooperative member of the world community by offering it concessions than by condemning its acts outright.³ Thus by late 1931 the US, Britain and the League were interested in solving the Manchurian crisis within the framework of international collaboration and without alienating Japan.⁴

The fact that Japan would remain part of the international endeavours to settle the dispute was less than the Chinese wanted, an immediate end to the fighting and a straightforward condemnation of Japan, forcing it to restore the *status quo ante*. Moreover, the Chinese were sensitive to the subtle balance between domestic and international affairs. The Nanjing Government under Jiang Jieshi had been steadily extending its authority to the rest of China and had launched various economic projects for modernization, but the crisis of Manchuria was forcing it to pay more attention to foreign issues. Too deep an involvement in a military struggle in Manchuria would drain resources away from economic rehabilitation at a time when floods and

¹ Coble, *Facing Japan*, 17-18

² "Republican China 1912-1949," *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.13, Part 2, 498-501.

³ W. Roger Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East, 1919-1939*, 171.

⁴ S. R. Smith, *The Manchurian Crisis*, 3.

famine were widespread. And above all, Jiang Jieshi was concerned lest foreign war encourage the Communists in China and other dissidents to emerge as champions of national liberation and undermine the authority of Nanjing Government. So long as the major powers, including Japan, were committed to an internationalist framework, it would suit Chinese purposes as the Nanjing Government would continue to work for regaining sovereign rights.¹

Nevertheless, Japan spurned all the offers of the League. After January 1932, the Kwantung Army occupied Chinchow and the navy landed marines in Shanghai. In the meantime, the Kwantung Army pushed toward the independence of Manchuria, assisted by various Japanese organizations in the region which had spearheaded the movement for unilateral solutions to pending issues. The independence of Manchuria would preserve the area's rich resources and strategic location for Japanese military use. It would also symbolize the ideal of Asian unity under Japanese leadership. Apologists for expansion accepted Ishihara's vision of turning Manchuria into a region of peace and stability where Chinese, Japanese, and others – "the five races" of East Asia – would live in harmony. This was presented as a more viable alternative to Western imperialism, Soviet Communism, or Chinese nationalism, which had poisoned Chinese-Japanese relations and served only to perpetuate Western influence in the East.²

1.1.2 Italy's attitude

Italy's policy towards such an international issue can be emphasized on two points: 1) determining weight (*peso determinante*) and the patience of waiting (*la pazienza di aspettare*); 2) verbal demonstrations of sympathy to China, but actual contribution to assist the action of Japan.

Soon after the Mukden Incident of 18 September 1931, Galeazzo Ciano³ reported to Mussolini about how the President Jiang Jieshi strived for mediation of Il Duce in the Sino-Japanese conflict.

Avendo stamane mostrato al Capo i telegrammi di Ciano da Shanghai dai quali si rileva come il Presidente Chang-kai-Tcheck aspiri alla mediazione di Mussolini nel conflitto cino-nipponico, il Capo si è messo a ridere e ha detto «a cose finite, faremo sapere questo desiderio cinese».⁴

On October 2, 1931, Foreign Minister, Dino Grandi submitted report about latest international events to the Grand Council of Fascism. One of three major issues discussed by the Council was

¹ "Republican China 1912-1949," *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.13, Part 2, 502.

² See Mark R. Peattie, *Ishihara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation with the West* (Princeton University Press, 1975).

³ In respect of Galeazzo Ciano, "Agli inizi della carriera, dopo un breve periodo trascorso come vice Console al Rio de Janeiro, Ciano era stato destinato nel maggio 1927 alla legazione di Pechino (allora retta da Daniele Varè), con titolo di segretario di Legazione. Dopo circa due anni e mezzo era stato richiamato a Roma e assegnato quale segretario dell'ambasciata presso la Città del Vaticano. Nei pochi mesi trascorsi a Roma conobbe e sposò Edda Mussolini. Nominato nell'ottobre del 1930 console di 2° classe, ottenne di ritornare in Cina con patenti di Console generale." Borsa, "Tentativi di penetrazione dell'Italia Fascista in Cina," 389-390.

⁴ *IDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XI, N.27, 40-41.

the Sino-Japanese conflict, releasing his concern on such an incident:

È superfluo dichiarare al Gran Consiglio che l'Italia, Potenza a interessi mondiali, non può mostrare di disinteressarsi di questa questione. Del resto Tien-Sin¹ non è gran che lontano da Mukden. La linea di condotta adottata è stata e sarà, nell'ulteriore corso degli avvenimenti, la seguente: dimostrazioni verbali di simpatia alla Cina, ma contributo effettivo ad aiutare l'azione di Giappone, tendente a liberarsi dalla procedura che il Consiglio della Società delle Nazioni intenderebbe di imporre ad esso per regolare il conflitto. La Cina, debole militarmente, domanda l'azione di Ginevra, il Giappone, forte militarmente, intende regolare il conflitto da sé. Noi abbiamo il precedente di Corfù. Potrebbe darsi che momenti non dissimili potessero presentarsi alla politica italiana in avvenire. Tutto quanto potremo dunque fare per evitare pericolosi precedenti di intervento della Società delle Nazioni sulla materia, sarà tanto di guadagnato nel futuro per noi. Ecco perché io ho aiutato ed aiuterò il Giappone. Non per il Giappone, beninteso, ma per noi.²

Apparently, Grandi compared the situation of Manchuria and Japan with that of Corfù and Italy; as a result, he suggested to help Japan with a view to benefit Italy, in addition to the consideration of Italian Concession of Tianjin. Moreover, Dino Grandi laid particular stress upon that,

Noi non siamo ancora i protagonisti della vita dell'Europa. Ma i protagonisti non possono fare senza di noi. L'Italia è chiamata, e lo sarà più il giorno in cui l'attrezzatura militare della Nazione sarà compiuta, a decidere della vittoria o della sconfitta. La politica dell'Italia è la politica del «peso determinante». [...] Quello che la politica fascista compie oggi nel terreno internazionale non è altro che fase di preparazione, marcia d'avvicinamento. Nulla più. Bisogna avere la forza, la pazienza di aspettare.³

As soon as the breakout of Manchurian conflict, National Government appealed immediately to the League of Nations in accordance with the Covenant, especially the Article 11 which was the great mediatory Article of the Covenant.⁴ In response to the urgent appeal of Chinese and Japanese Governments, as the document *Resolution Adopted by the League Council, September*

¹ Tianjin.

² *IDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XI, N.37, 64.

³ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴ According to the source of Geneva: "Even those closest to the League have appreciation of how often in the relatively few years since 1920 this Article has been called into play. Mr. Conwell-Evans records no less than twenty cases up to 1927: In eight hostilities or a resort to arms had, in fact, occurred, in four of which one of the parties itself had appealed under Article 11, in the others a party neutral to the dispute or the Council itself. Twelve other appeals not involving hostilities had also been made, four by one of the parties immediately concerned, two by Great Britain as an interested state, four by the Conference of Ambassadors representing Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan, and one by the Supreme Council. ... Indeed, Article 11 would seem to provide exactly that machinery of consultation and mediation which it is now generally recognised is the great lack of the Kellogg Pact, threatening to make that document a general declaration of international policy rather than a living force in international life. So important is Article 11 both in the powers it gave the Council in the Sino-Japanese affair under review and in its establishment of a new type of international jurisprudence where States, whether parties to a dispute or not, are free to bring it before an international tribunal without as heretofore being charged with unfriendly action, that it is worth quoting in full: «Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations. In case any such emergency should arise the Secretary-General shall on the request of any Member of the League forthwith summon a meeting of the Council.» «It is also declared to be the friendly right of each Member of the League to bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council any circumstance whatever affecting international relations which threatens to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations upon which peace depends.»" *The League and Manchuria, the First Phase of the Chinese-Japanese Conflict (September 18-30, 1931)*, Geneva Special Studies, Vol. II, No.10, October 1931 (Geneva: Geneva Research Information Committee), 9-10.

30th, 1931 declared, the Council firstly recognised the importance of the Japanese Government's statement that it had no territorial designs in Manchuria.

The Council, [...] (3) Notes the Japanese representative's statement that his Government will continue, as rapidly as possible, the withdrawal of its troops, which has already been begun, into the railway zone in proportion as the safety of the lives and property of Japanese nationals is effectively assured and that it hopes to carry out this intention in full as speedily as may be; (4) Notes the Chinese representative's statement that his Government will assume responsibility for the safety of the lives and property of Japanese nationals outside that zone as the withdrawal of the Japanese troops continues and the Chinese local authorities and police forces are re-established; (5) Being convinced that both Governments are anxious to avoid taking any action which might disturb the peace and good understanding between the two nations, notes that the Chinese and Japanese representatives have given assurances that their respective Governments will take all necessary steps to prevent any extension of the scope of the incident or any aggravation of the situation;¹

The *Resolution of October 24th, 1931* recalled the principle points of the previous *Resolution of September 30th*, especially relating to the evacuation, recommending the Chinese and Japanese Governments as soon as the evacuation is completed, to begin direct negotiations on questions outstanding between them, and in particular those arising out of recent incidents as well as those relating to existing difficulties due to the railway situation in Manchuria. For this purpose the Council suggested that the two Parties should set up a conciliation committee or some such permanent machinery.²

As the discussion in the League was ongoing, Japanese Government was actively selling its idea that Manchuria was a vital interest for Japan. According to the Memorandum of Italian General Directorate of America, Asia and Australia on October 9, 1931,

Il Consigliere dell'Ambasciata Giappone ha recentemente detto a questa Direzione Generale che la Manciuria è pel Giappone un punto così vitale quanto lo è la Jugoslavia per l'Italia, e come questa non permetterebbe l'intromissione di Ginevra o di altre Potenze in una vertenza con essa, così non v'è Governo giapponese che potrebbe permettere qualsiasi intromissione di tersi per la Manciuria.³

The Government of Tokyo proclaimed intransigently that "qualunque offerta di mediazione sarà respinta come qualsiasi Commissione mista d'inchiesta".⁴

On the Chinese request for mediation, Grandi noted,

L'adesione alla richiesta cinese evidentemente non può riuscire gradita al Governo giapponese (che anche a Ginevra ha fatto presente l'inutilità di inviati speciali avendo già le Potenze i loro rappresentanti consolari in Manciuria), e verrebbe d'altra parte a riportare di fatto la vertenza alla Società delle Nazioni, ciò che non appare per noi desiderabile.⁵

¹ "Resolution Adopted by the League Council," *Decision of the Executive Council of the League of Nations on the Eastern Case*, December 1931, 3-4.

² "Resolution of October 24th, 1931," *Decision of the Executive Council of the League of Nations on the Eastern Case*, 11-12.

³ *DDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XI, N.45, 82-84.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

However, the Embassy of Britain announced that British Government had proclaimed to French Government that, if the French Government was going to fulfil the Chinese request, the British Government would also accept it. Grandi believed that after the future acceptance of the French agreeing to send a representative in Manchuria, “un nostro rifiuto dopo l’avvenuta accettazione francese ad inviare una rappresentanza in Manciuuria, oltre a riuscire sfavorevole ai nostri rapporti con la Cina, ci metterebbe in una posizione di inferiorità nell’ulteriore svolgimento della vertenza e verrebbe interpretato come un rifiuto di collaborare con la Società delle Nazioni e per la causa della pace.”¹

Grandi suggested,

La mancanza di un vero e proprio esercito ha indotto la Cina ad un atteggiamento di remissività; e la sua fiducia nella Società delle Nazioni, il cui appoggio ha sollecitato anche a S. E. il Capo del Governo, l’ha indotta a rifiutare la proposta giapponese di deferire la vertenza ad una Commissione mista sino-nipponica.²

About the attitude of Washington, the *Consigliere* of Japanese Embassy implied that the Government of the United States, after the first moment of waiting with hope in which it seemed that Government of Tokyo gained the upper hand on military elements, had exercised through the path of London an action of detaining Geneva, perhaps fearing that Geneva could have further intervention to compel the Government of Tokyo to leave power to the military, and that would aggravate the situation even more. The Government of Moscow seemed to remain in a state of observation and of waiting; meanwhile, it incited the press to accuse of the imperialism in Japan. About that, even the Italian diplomat had realised. Giovanni Cesare Majoni, Italian Ambassador in Tokyo, reported on 25 September 1931 about the Sino-Japanese conflict:

Converrà pensare in un futuro non troppo remoto ad arginare la potenza in continuo aumento di questo Paese (il Giappone), piena di pericoli non solo per gli altri Paesi del Pacifico.³

In spite of that, Italian Foreign Ministry was drawn attention to British policy of appeasement towards Japan. Concerning the attitude of Britain, according to the report of Baron Giacomo Paulucci de’ Calboli, General Undersecretary of the League of Nations, on November 4, 1931,

Il Signor Sugimura mi ha poi accennato a certi interessanti scambi di idee che sarebbero avvenuti in questi ultimi tempi a Londra e forse anche a Ginevra stessa tra Giappone e Inghilterra. Sarebbe stato detto cioè al rappresentante del Giappone che fin dai tempi di Lord Grey il Governo Britannico aveva in certo modo riconosciuto gli “interessi speciali” del Giappone in Manciuuria accordandogli libertà di penetrazione pacifica. Questo riconoscimento inglese valeva tuttora e l’Inghilterra non si opponeva affatto a che il Giappone continuasse ad estendere la sua pacifica presa di possesso della Manciuuria. Quello che l’Inghilterra voleva evitare era la presa di possesso troppo apparente e rumorosa, compiuta manu militari, e implicante la necessità di mettere in moto il meccanismo della Lega. In altri termini l’Inghilterra non si opponeva in sostanza alla politica del Giappone, ma si vedeva costretta a intervenire soltanto per salvare il prestigio della Società delle Nazioni, per il quale l’occupazione violenta della Manciuuria era un pericoloso atto di sfida.⁴

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., footnote.

⁴ Ibid.

Likewise, Paulucci reported, “La Francia non sarebbe stata aliena, per levarsi d’impaccio, dall’ammettere simile idea, senonché si preoccupava che potesse costituire un precedente nei riguardi di casi analoghi che la toccassero più da vicino.”¹ The United States had sent to Manchuria their vice-consul in Harbin and a secretary of their Embassy in Tokyo. France would send naval and aeronautical attaché in China.

On Italy’s side, Paulucci advised that “La nostra rappresentanza in Manciuuria, per riuscire meno sgradita al Governo giapponese, potrebbe essere costituita oltre che dal R. addetto navale a Shanghai, come ha proposto il Conte Ciano, anche dal consigliere della R. Ambasciata a Tokio.”²

Briefly, the representatives of Italy in the Far East as well as in Geneva paid close attention to the development of situation in Manchuria and the attitudes of other major Powers. The Foreign Minister Grandi held little confidence in the League upon which the Chinese Government relied: Britain apparently preferred an appeasement towards Japan; France, lack of interest in this issue, took similar position as Britain; the United States might be the most active one, who attempted to internationalize this issue but without initiative at that moment. Therefore, sending inspector and waiting for the collective action seemed to be a favourable option for Italy. According to Ciano’s telegram of the date October 15, 1931, the diplomatic representatives sent by Great Powers in Manchuria were:

1) Un Segretario ed un interprete della Legazione di Francia; 2) un Segretario della Legazione inglese (Addetto militare) è già tornato Pechino; 3) Console Generale Spagna a Shanghai; 4) Console America e Segretario Ambasciata Tokio.³

As mentioned before, inclining towards Japan, Grandi bore in mind the similarity between Italy and Japan, which was also confronted with the League, i.e. Britain and France. Another important consideration of Italian Foreign Ministry was the actual strength of two countries. As Italian Ambassador in Tokyo, Majoni reported,

Aggiungo che conflitto, a prescindere dalle sue origini e sviluppi, deve essere, a mio avviso, considerato dalle Grandi Potenze e da Società delle Nazioni nell’ampio quadro degli interessi mondiali specialmente nell’attuale momento politico. Si deve cioè tener presente che contro Potenza costituente unico esponente ordine e civiltà in Estremo Oriente sta uno Stato in preda caos suscitante continuamente pericoli per la pace.

[...] È interesse generale quindi appoggiare discretamente il primo pur contenendone amore strapotere. Imprudente azione anti-giapponese della Società delle Nazioni troverebbe resistenza intera Nazione e potrebbe alla fine determinare persino ritiro Giappone dalla Società delle Nazioni con incontestabile pregiudizio per la stessa.⁴

Italian Ambassador in Paris, Count Gaetano Manzoni shared this point of view,

Mi permetta una osservazione al riguardo della questione giapponese cinese, nel senso dell’interesse che noi

¹ Ibid.

² *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XI, N.45, 82-84.

³ *APolitici 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 03, *Osservatore italiano in Manciuuria*, Telegramma in arrivo N.17, da Shanghai a Ginevra, 15/10/1931, Ciano a Grandi.

⁴ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XI, N.47, 85-86.

possiamo avere a ménager più il Giappone della Cina, sia per la forza di ordine che esso rappresenta in Estremo Oriente, sia per far capire alla Cina che deve dare meno fastidi al mondo col suo nazional-comunismo, brigantesco e distruttore di energie, sia per creare qualche preoccupazione al Bolscevismo Sovietico, sia perché vi è contrasto di vedute tra noi e Giappone in quella questione del disarmo che nel 1932 influenzerà tutta la politica mondiale, sia infine perché nell'incidente di Corfù il Giappone, nella Conferenza degli Ambasciatori, se non ci aiutò, non ci contrastò. Perciò direi di non dare motivo di doglianza alla Cina, ma essenzialmente ménager il Giappone. Scusi questa mia incursione in un terreno non mio. Ma il mondo oggi diventa più che mai collegato.¹

As a result, Grandi stated, “Per rendere meno sgradito al Giappone invio di una nostra rappresentanza in Manciuria, parmi opportuno che essa sia composta oltre che da codesto Regio Addetto Navale anche dal Consigliere della R. Ambasciata a Tokio [...] potrà comunicare Nanchino che siamo lieti di accogliere richiesta rivoltaci nella fiducia di contribuire alla soddisfacente pacifica soluzione dell'attuale vertenza.”² Console Neyrone and addetto Navale of Italy left for Manchuria on 18 October 1931.³

Japan insisted that only the direct negotiation could be accepted to solve the issue of Manchuria; on the contrary, the Chinese Government sounded very eager for the mediation and intervention of major Powers. Up to the end of 1931, there was no action of the League, China expressed its disappointment, as Ciano communicated,

Cina è disposta accettare soltanto amichevole mediazione osservatori stranieri che si trovano sul luogo intesa a evitare conflitto con forze giapponesi; ma che d'altra parte, essendosi Inghilterra Italia e Francia ed altre Potenze rifiutate prendere misure effettive per frenare aggressione Giappone, Cina non ha più alcun obbligo nè morale nè legale di attenersi ai termini della sua originale proposta e per conseguenza non ritirerà le sue truppe dalla zona di Chincoo.

Anche il dottor Wellington Koo avrebbe dichiarato che poichè nessuna garanzia Cina ha potuto ottenere dalla Lega delle Nazioni e dalle Potenze all'uopo interpellate, circa un effettivo arresto di operazioni militari da parte del Giappone, proposta di una zona neutra diviene inaccettabile.⁴

Nevertheless, it did not mean that the Nationalist Government would give up its confidence in the League and major Powers. In fact, Nanjing asked the Council to immediately take all necessary measures in view of the establishment of a neutral zone between the current positions of the Chinese and Japanese forces. The area would be occupied by English, French, Italian and other neutral countries' detachments, under the authority of League Council.⁵

In addition, the Chinese Government also sent message in particular to Fascist Regime with the aim of persuading Italy to participate. Ciano informed Foreign Ministry on 29 October 1931 that, “In nome del Governo cinese onoromi domandare che Governo Italiano designi rappresentanti coi quali autorità cinesi saranno liete di associarsi ai termini della risoluzione adottata dal Consiglio

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XI, N.49, 89-91.

² *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 03, *Osservatore italiano in Manciuria*, T.1087/174, Shanghai, 10/10/1931.

³ See *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 03, *Osservatore italiano in Manciuria*, T. 3267 R. S.E. Grandi, Ginevra, 16/10/1931; T.3322 R. R. Legazione Shanghai, Shanghai, 19/10/1931; T. 3452 R. R. Legazione Shanghai, R. Nave Libia, 29/10/1931; T.3909 R. Shanghai, 1/12/1931.

⁴ *A P 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 03, *Osservatore italiano in Manciuria*, T.3964 R. Shanghai, 5/12/1931.

⁵ *Ibid.*, T.3798 R. Parigi, 25/11/1931.

della Lega delle Nazioni”.¹ However, Grandi realised that without the consent of Japan, it was unlikely for Italy to make such appointment under the frame of the League. He replied to Ciano:

È evidente che nomina di rappresentanti nel senso della richiesta cinese non può essere fatta sulla base della risoluzione del Consiglio della Società delle Nazioni la quale non possiede per ora che valore di semplice raccomandazione non ancora accettata dal Giappone. Allo stato attuale delle cose tale nomina non potrebbe quindi essere fatta se non col consenso del Governo giapponese.²

While there had already been Italian officials in Manchuria, Grandi said, “che essi potranno eventualmente, al momento opportuno, essere designati in qualità di rappresentanti del R. Governo agli effetti desiderati da codesto Governo, quando naturalmente analoga decisione venga presa dai Governi delle altre Grandi Potenze.”³ The other Great Powers, however, were still waiting and seeing:

1. Legazione d’Inghilterra mantiene punti di vista da me già esposti.

2. Legazione Stati Uniti, salvo diverse istruzioni da Washington, è in principio sfavorevole aderire richiesta nella forma proposta. Non c’è da aspettarsi sua decisione prima che si siano pronunciate le altre Potenze.

3. Legazione di Francia, incerta se aderire alla richiesta per non pregiudicare posizione di fronte al Giappone. Signor Wibauden sarà a Nanchino domani o dopo domani e cercherà in un primo tempo accontentare Governo cinese dicendo che Addetto Militare francese ha avuto ordine di non muoversi da Mukden.⁴

Japan’s policy then was to delay the decision-making of the League and Great Powers, thus she could concentrate all efforts to military aggression in Northeastern China. More disturbing reports arrived in Geneva on November 9, 1931 from the Far East. Mukden was quiet, with the Chinese police reorganized by the Japanese, the aerodrome, arsenal and powerhouse controlled by the Japanese, and the emergency Chinese committee having declared independence of Nanjing. From Beijing there were first accounts of a serious outbreak at Tianjin, where a mob was said to have attacked Chinese police near the Japanese Concession.⁵ With the increasing tension at Qiqihar in November 1931, which was the capital of the Heilongjiang Province in northern Manchuria, Japanese envoys at Nanjing and Beijing called on the Chinese authorities to order all their soldiers seven miles away from Tianjin. Marshal Zhang Xueliang, the titular governor of Manchuria recognized by Nanjing, was reported to have telegraphed instructions to the chairman of the Heilongjiang administration urging him to refuse Japan’s demands and defend his territory to the last.⁶ On December 28, 1931, serious conflicts were reported in the direction of Chinchow, by a Mukden correspondent of the Paris; new Japanese contingents had arrived at Tianjin, and another brigade had been ordered from Korea to Manchuria.⁷

As regards the Italian officials sent by Fascist Government, the Chinese Government expressed thanks to Rome. Anfuso, representative in China, telegraphed on November 12, 1931,

¹ Ibid., T. 3453 R. R. Legazione Shanghai, R. Nave Libia, 29/10/1931.

² Ibid., T. 3502 R. R. Nave Libia, 3/11/1931.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *The League and Manchuria, the Third Phase of the Chinese-Japanese Conflict (October 25-December 31, 1931)*, Vol. II, No.12, December 1931, 24.

⁶ Ibid., 34.

⁷ Ibid., 86.

Dr. Wellington Koo, nella sua qualità di Presidente della Commissione reintegrazione provincia Nord Est, ha interessato officiosamente quest'Ufficio, per mezzo suo rappresentante, al fine sollecitare da R. Governo nomina rappresentanti Governo Italiano in Manciuria contemporaneamente nomina rappresentante altre Potenze. Dr. Koo vorrebbe anzi che il Governo Italiano fosse il primo effettuare atto amichevole.¹

By the end of 1931, the United States, Britain, France as well as Italy² had sent several military officials in Manchuria.³ Italian officials reported to Ciano on December 8, 1931, "Osservatori qui residenti oggi sono: due inglesi militari, uno inglese Console Generale, due americani militari, due francesi militari, due francesi diplomatici, un tedesco diplomatico."⁴ According to the report of Italian officials in Manchuria, "Nel corso di scambio di vedute avute con questi osservatori si è d'avviso che, essendo già eliminata la proposta della zona neutra, nostra ulteriore permanenza può dar a questi cinesi erronea impressione che la nostra presenza possa evitare eventuale azione Giappone."⁵ Besides, "osservatori francesi sono eccessivamente favorevoli ai cinesi e specialmente a Chiang-Hsueh-Liang. Anche inglesi e americani favorevoli ma meno parziali."⁶

1.2 PARTICIPATION IN COLLECTIVE ACTION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

1.2.1 Shanghai Incident

Up to the end of 1931, Japan had acquired the vast north-eastern region of China and was preparing for the puppet government, so-called Manchukuo. At the same time, Shanghai bristled with hostility between Chinese and Japanese during the entire latter half of 1931. Sporadic incidents of violence were perhaps unavoidable. The metropolis was the centre of both the anti-Japanese boycott and student movements,⁷ as well as Japanese presence in China proper. On

¹ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 03, *Osservatore italiano in Manciuria*, T.3665 R. Shanghai, 12/11/1931.

² Addetto militare of Italy in Tokyo, Leone Weill Schott arrived in Manchuria on 26 November 1931.

³ *APolitici 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 03, *Osservatore italiano in Manciuria*, T.3854 R. Shanghai, R. Nave Libia, 28/11/1931.

⁴ *Ibid.*, T.3994, Shanghai, 8/12/1931.

⁵ *Ibid.*, T.4045 R. Shanghai, 10/12/1931.

⁶ *Ibid.*, T.4058 R. Shanghai, 11/12/1931.

⁷ "Anti-Japanese boycott, in existence since July as result of Korean affair, intensified by occupation of Manchuria and stringently enforced, caused enormous damage to Japanese trade. The boycott, which was fostered by the anti-Japanese Boycott Association formed by various Chinese commercial organizations, included picketing of shops, seizure of Japanese goods, fining and imprisonment of Chinese using or dealing in such goods, and other illegal acts for which no redress could be obtained through the courts. A spirit of bitter hostility was consequently engendered against the Chinese. Student manifestations and demands by them for a declaration of war against

January 18, 1932, five Japanese, members of Nichiren monks (an ardently nationalist sect), were beaten by agitated Chinese civilians near San You Towel Factory in Shanghai. Two were injured and one died. In a few hours, a group of Japanese returned to the factory and attacked Chinese workers, injuring several and burnt down the factory. When the Shanghai Municipal Police arrived to quell the disorder, one policeman was killed and several more hurt.¹

Such a case caused an upsurge of anti-Japanese and anti-imperialist protests in the city and in the foreign concessions of Shanghai. Chinese civilians marched onto the streets and called for a boycott of Japanese-manufactured goods. The situation continued to deteriorate over the next few days. Rear Admiral Shiozawa Kōichi, Japanese naval commander at Shanghai, seized this disturbance as a pretext for presenting demands to the mayor of Shanghai. Acting in conjunction with the Japanese consulate, demanded complete suppression of the anti-Japanese movement and boycott activity, compensation for Japanese victims of the attack, and apology from Chinese authorities for both the factory incident and for a Chinese journal article that had allegedly insulted Emperor Hirohito. Chinese military units were also to evacuate 15 km from the Shanghai area. As a matter of fact, by 27 January, the Japanese military had already concentrated some 30 ships, 40 airplanes and nearly 7,000 troops around the shoreline of Shanghai, aiming to put down any resistance. The Japanese issued an ultimatum to the Shanghai Municipal Council demanding public condemnation and monetary compensation by the Chinese for any Japanese property damaged in the incident, and demanding that the Chinese Government take active steps to suppress further anti-Japanese protests in Shanghai. The Shanghai authority agreed to these demands on 28 January. However, at midnight of that day, Japanese carrier aircraft bombed Shanghai. Three thousand Japanese troops attacked targets and invaded in the city. The Chinese 19th Route Army stayed to put up a fierce resistance. The battles started from the district of International Settlement, spreading outwards much of Chinese-controlled Shanghai. The majority of the Concessions remained untouched by the conflict. On January 30, Jiang Jieshi even decided to temporarily relocate the capital from Nanjing to Luoyang, due to the proximity of Nanjing to Shanghai. The Shanghai fighting posed a grave financial threat to the Nanjing Government, devastating the economic life of the city which was the crucial source of funds for a regime already near bankruptcy.²

The 19th Route Army publicly vowed resistance to the death. Jiang Jieshi pledged support for the Shanghai defenders but was slow to send reinforcement. Only when the approach of Japanese new forces threatened to overwhelm the Chinese did Jiang order his units to the front. However

Japan intensified Chinese feeling against Japan. In this state of acute tension incidents of violence frequently occurred. There were in addition derogatory references by Chinese to Emperor of Japan which infuriated Japanese, and demands by Japanese to their Government to take direct action to put end to intolerable position became insistent.” Shanghai Committee, first report, 6 February 1932, *AP 1931-45 (Cina)*, B.11, sf.2, T.319/73-Riservato.

¹ At that time, nearly 30,000 Japanese resided in Shanghai. The political organization of Shanghai made it difficult for either side to limit tension. This city was divided into three zones, the International Settlement, the French Concession, and the Chinese municipality. The latter was separated in places by the foreign zones. Police in one area could not operate in others, necessitating complex extradition procedures. Law enforcement was therefore difficult. A lot of Japanese elements were also eager to provoke conflict. Japanese business and industrial leaders in Shanghai had been hurt by the boycott and pressured their military authorities to take action against the national salvation groups of China. Japanese marines often interfered with Chinese pickets and student demonstrators in Shanghai. The Kwantung Army was another element trying to provoke a conflict in this city, its special services section funneling money into the effort to create an incident. Kwantung Army’s leaders wanted to divert attention from their actions in establishing Manchukuo. Other Japanese ultranationalist groups also desire an incident, seeking a pretext for a military clash which would “teach the Chinese a lesson” in Shanghai. See Coble, *Facing Japan*, 39.

² See Edwin P. Hoyt, *Japan’s War: The Great Pacific Conflict* (Rowman&Littlefield, 2001); and Coble, *Facing Japan*, 39-46.

much Jiang sought to avoid conflict with the Japanese, he could not afford the political cost of simply abandoning the Chinese defenders.¹

As the strong resistance of the Chinese force, Japan suffered heavy losses, which were far more so than the campaign in Manchuria. Therefore the Japanese Government decided to settle the crisis quickly through military and diplomatic means. On January 24, 1932, the Japanese delegate in the League of Nations argued with other Powers as regards the sending of warships and reinforcements to Shanghai. He reminded the Council that all the Powers had warships stationed there and military and naval forces of all countries were at many points in China to protect their nationals.²

China also appealed to the League of Nations and declared Japan responsible for the conflict. Jiang Jieshi, representing the consensus at Nanjing, maintained the hope that the Western Powers and the League would somehow block Japanese aggression in China. He was pessimistic that China could depend on its military alone. The Western-trained diplomats of Nanjing were quite articulate in presenting China as a victim of Japanese aggression – outlawed by the League Covenant and numerous peace pacts of the recent 1920s. At Geneva Yan Huiqing (Yen Hui-ch'ing, 颜惠庆), ambassador to Washington, presented China's case to the League in the declaration on January 30.³ The British Government announced that the situation in Shanghai differed fundamentally from that in Manchuria. In Manchuria, the Japanese had legitimate reasons to act; but the move into Shanghai could be prelude to a Japanese attempt to control all of China.⁴ Thus this time Geneva reacted more quickly than the former case of Manchuria. Nevertheless, the Council agreed to proceed only as far as authorizing fact-finding by the “neutral” consuls general and *chargés d'affaires* on the scene at Shanghai, which were act on behalf of the League. Thus, in Shanghai, an ad hoc League Commission of Inquiry was quickly constituted, chaired by the consul of Italy, Ciano. There were representatives from France, Great Britain, Germany, Spain, Norway, and the non-member United States to report on what was occurring. The Western consuls in Shanghai met first at the British consulate with representatives of the belligerents to expedite a truce. Hopes rose when the team of diplomats arranged the cease-fire from January 30 to February. This did little more than provide Japanese consul and Mayor of Shanghai to seek instructions from their governments as to what could be offered to regain peace.⁵

On February 2, Grandi authorized Ciano to participate in the International Committee, which was appointed by the League on the basis of Article 15 of the Covenant to cope with the Shanghai incident; and he gave instructions:

intendiamo partecipare azione che altre Grandi Potenze svolgono in ordine conflitto, ma senza prendervi posizione nè parte preponderante e soprattutto senza pregiudicare nostre future decisioni ove conflitto stesso prendesse ulteriori sviluppi che potrebbero non solo coinvolgere i nostri interessi e la nostra situazione di Grande Potenza in Estremo Oriente, ma toccare anche direttamente o indirettamente i nostri interessi e la nostra situazione in Europa.⁶

¹ Coble, *Facing Japan*, 47.

² *The League and Shanghai, The Fourth Phase of the Chinese-Japanese Conflict (January 1-April 30, 1932)*, Vol.III, N.5 (Geneva: Geneva Research Center, May 1932), 18.

³ Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire the Shanghai War of 1932*, 73.

⁴ Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East*, 187.

⁵ Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire the Shanghai War of 1932*, 76-77.

⁶ *AP 1931-45 (Cina)*, B.11, sf.2, T.1466/143, Ministro Affari Esteri a R. Ambasciata Parigi, Londra, Washington,

Then the International Committee of Shanghai, chaired by Ciano submitted four reports to the League during the period from February 6 to March 4.¹ However, the last two report announced the failure of this phase of mediation:

Through the intermediary of neutral diplomatic representatives a suggestion for a meeting of Military Commanders on both sides was accepted with a view to discussion on the basis of mutual evacuation. [...] Hostilities continued [...]²

[...] It is important to make clear that all attempts to obtain an agreed armistice have hitherto failed. [...]³

In fact, between the Fascist Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the League, there was a communication regarding this issue, when the Committee was working on the reports with correction in detail or amplification of information. On 16 February, Grandi communicated to the Ambassadors in Berlin, London, Moscow, Paris, Tokyo, Washington, and the *Incaricato d'Affari* in Chinese Government, Ciano that, twelve members of the League of Nations Council secret session addressed an appeal of moderation, aiming at amicable pressure to the Japanese Government.⁴ The British delegate proposed, according to the Art.10 of the Treaty, to prevent against any violation to the territorial integrity or political independence of China, which would be recognized as valid by the other members of the League. A group of small countries' representatives argued that appeal did not have to be a decision of the Council on the bottom of the conflict but simply appeal to the spirit of equity, moderation of a great power. Italian delegate was in opposed tendency towards this 'strong tone'. According to the Italian delegate, the British proposal was advanced to give some satisfaction to the small countries' group, which drove the Council to act in the opposite sense against Japan. But Italian Ambassador in Tokyo reported to Grandi, the British Foreign Office would hand over the appeal of the League to Japan, which should not be considered as a menace. Yet this appeal raised profound irritation of public opinion in Japan and was viewed as unjustified humiliation directing only Japan. Italian delegate achieved an accord with his English colleague that he tried to muffle excessive susceptibility, negating the menace character of this appeal.⁵

On 26 February 1932, Geneva, the Secretary of State in Foreign Ministry of Britain, Sir John Simon asked Grandi that "whether the Italian Government had difficulty to adhere to another stride towards Tokyo and Nanjing for the purpose of persuading the two warring parties to a temporary suspension of hostilities." Grandi answered that he did not see any difficulty. Yet Grandi said, "Ad ogni buon fine ho telegrafato al nostro Ambasciatore a Tokio perché faccia presente al Governo giapponese l'opportunità che esso non dimentichi il mercato italiano nell'acquisto di armi e munizioni. Mi risulta infatti che ufficiali giapponesi incaricati di acquisti

Tokio, 2/2/1932. G6313

¹ AP 1931-45 (Cina), B.11, sf.2, T.319/73-Riservato, 6 February 1932, Shanghai Committee, first report; the second report see "Reports to the League of Nations by the Committee of Representatives at Shanghai of certain States Members of the League Council appointed to report on Events in Shanghai and neighbourhood," Shanghai, February 6 and 12, 1932 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1932); the third report was 20 February, and the fourth one was 4 March 1932.

² AP 1931-45 (Cina), B.11, sf.2, 20/2/1932, The Third Report of Shanghai Committee.

³ AP 1931-45 (Cina), B.11, sf.2, 4/3/1932, The Fourth Report of Shanghai Committee.

⁴ IDDI, Serie 7, Vol.XI, N.231, 404-405.

⁵ *The League and Shanghai, The Fourth Phase*, Vol.III, N.5, 18.

straordinari di materiale bellico si trovano a Londra e Parigi.”¹

Then Grandi reported to Mussolini,

Giornata di ieri dedicata quasi esclusivamente all’Estremo Oriente. Tentativo da parte di alcune piccole Potenze (Spagna) di contestare alle quattro grandi Potenze Gran Bretagna, Francia, Italia ed America interessate nel settlement internazionale di Shanghai il diritto di intervenire direttamente in nome dei propri interessi in questo tentativo (che non sarà l’ultimo) di pacificazione fra le parti in conflitto, lasciando da parte gli interessi vaghi e generici della... Società delle Nazioni. Le quattro grandi Potenze hanno dichiarato d’accordo che marciano per la loro strada. Questo il fondo dell’affare.²

Italy, in principle, was inclining to relish Japan in the Council of the League. For instance, Italian delegate of the Disarmament Conference, general director for the League of Nations, Augusto Rosso, communicated to Grandi on 9 March 1932,

Le dichiarazioni fatte lunedì scorso dall’Italia, Gran Bretagna, Francia e Germania sono naturalmente state criticate dalla grande maggioranza come mostranti eccessiva debolezza nei riguardi del Giappone: ciò che non era completamente esatto, perché alcune dichiarazioni (come la nostra) avevano tenuto – almeno mi sembra – la giusta via di mezzo. (Naturalmente le nostre dichiarazioni, confrontate con quelle violente di certe piccole Potenze, sono riuscite abbastanza gradite al Giappone ed il signor Yoshida ha tenuto ad esprimermi la sua riconoscenza con lettere personale).³

As a matter of fact, there were two trends in the League: on the one hand, the United States tried to create a united front against Japan, and “la Francia sarà al fianco dell’America sino in fondo”; on the other hand, the British Government gave no support for the American proposals because “il partito conservatore non dimentica l’antica solidarietà anglo-giapponese”.⁴

Grandi communicated to Mussolini on April 20, “In questo momento mi informano che i giapponesi hanno respinto l’ordine del giorno proposto dalla Commissione dei Diciannove circa le modalità dell’evacuazione della zona di Shanghai. Siamo dunque al punto di prima, se non peggio.”⁵

Later on June 4, Grandi sent message to the Italian Ambassador in Washington, Giacomo De Martino, saying that the point of view of US Government “è in via di massima in armonia con quello del Governo fascista.” Grandi mentioned about his telegraph to Italian Ambassador in Tokyo and stated that he was in favour a more active exchange of ideas between governments most affected in the Pacific; and “per altrettanto parmi necessario che, prima di addivenire alla convocazione di una conferenza si siano congruamente elaborate le questioni da discutersi per evitare di giungere a punti morti nel corso della conferenza ovvero di accrescere invece che comporre le divergenze.” Also, according to Grandi, Mussolini emphasized that Italy should communicate to Tokyo about her determined desire to establish a greater celerity in the exchange of views, without stiffening those exchanges in agreed proposals and responses. Grandi emphasized,

¹ *IDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XI, N.249, 432.

² (Archivio Grandi, *IL MINISTRO DEGLI ESTERI, GRANDI, AL CAPO DEL GOVERNO, MUSSOLINI*, Ginevra, 29 febbraio 1932) Cited in *IDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XI, N.254, 439-442.

³ *IDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XI, N.285, 475.

⁴ *IDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XII, N.21, 21-23.

⁵ *IDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XII, N.22, 23-24.

A prescindere poi da tali considerazioni, se l'accettare oggi la proposta giapponese di una conferenza solo per regolare la questione di Shanghai, indipendentemente e quasi ignorando quella mancata, sarebbe un prestarsi al giuoco del Governo di Tokio, il proporre d'altra parte senza preventivi approcci, una conferenza per regolare la vertenza cino-nipponico nella sua integrità, potrebbe provocare nel Giappone un atteggiamento che tutti abbiamo interesse ad evitare.

D'altra parte non si può prescindere dalle difficoltà che presenta la situazione interna giapponese, la quale esige da parte delle altre Potenze interessate nel Pacifico, nello stesso loro interesse, un atteggiamento che, soprattutto nella forma, non valga a provocare reazioni da parte degli elementi nazionalisti e militaristi.¹

This showed the ambiguous attitude of Fascist Foreign Minister: on the one hand, he told US Government that Fascist Italy support the US opinion, which in principle intended to hinder the aggressive Japan in Pacific region; and Grandi would like to intervene not only into the question of Shanghai, but also the Manchurian issue. On the other, Grandi bore in mind some potential sympathy for Japan, which had to confront the difficult situation presented by the other Powers as well as internal stress.

For the Shanghai Incident had been costly for both sides², by the indirect contacts channeled through the Western consuls, Japan and China finally achieved a truce agreement (in the presence of Ministers of Britain, America, France and Chargé d'Affaires for Italy in China, Galeazzo Ciano), in which the Japanese and Chinese authorities agreed that the cessation of hostilities is rendered definite as from May 5th, 1932. The situation in this respect would be ascertained by the representatives of the participating friendly Powers. The Chinese troops would remain in their present positions pending later arrangements upon the re-establishment of normal conditions in the areas dealt with by this Agreement. The Japanese troops would withdraw to the International Settlement and the extra-Settlement roads in the Hongkew district as before the incident of January 28th, 1932. Moreover, a Joint Commission, including members representing the participating friendly Powers, would be established to certify the mutual withdrawal. "The Joint Commission will be composed of 12 members, namely one civilian and one military representative of each of the following: the Chinese and Japanese Governments, and the American, British, French and Italian Heads of Mission in China, being the representatives of the friendly Powers assisting in the negotiations in accordance with the Resolution of the Assembly of the League of Nations of March 4th."³

On that occasion, Ciano received a warm telegram from the Duce who expressed his "compiacimento" and "elogio" for the work done "che ha visto aumentare indubbiamente il prestigio della nazione italiana".⁴

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XII, N.79, 105.

² Japan suffered 3,091 casualties, of whom 769 died. Chinese military casualties were approximately 14,000 of whom 4,086 died, heavy losses for a force of only 40,000 men. Roughly 65 percent of the casualties were incurred by the 19th Route Army, 35 percent by the 5th Army of Nationalist Revolutionary Army. Chinese civilian losses might have been as high as 10,000 to 20,000. Coble, *Facing Japan*, 48.

³ *AP 1931-45 (Cina)*, B.12, Accordo di Shanghai, maggio 1932.

⁴ *AP 1931-45 (Cina)*, B.11, sf.2, T.9076/158, 18/5/1932 (trasmette il telegramma del Duce), Grandi a Ciano.

1.2.2 Lytton Commission

As far as the issue of Manchuria was concerned, Japan knew beforehand that she had no case, so her statesmen were instructed to tread the shadier paths of diplomacy in order to delay the verdict, in which they were eminently successful. The sending of a Commission of Enquiry to the theatre of conflict was proposed by the Japanese Government to the League Council on November 21, 1931, but the verdict was not given until February 24, 1933. Thus the League was seized of the Sino-Japanese issue for a total period of seventeen months – eloquent testimony to Japan’s success in playing for time. But why has the delay robbed the verdict of its efficacy? Because the delay enabled the Japanese military, under the pretext of suppressing “the activities of bandits and lawless elements” to overthrow Chinese civil authority in the North-Eastern provinces, and to entrench and consolidate their position there – while the whole issue was still *sub judice*. The result is that the verdict, when at last given, was faced with a *fait accompli*, and nought is left of its sanction but the moral force that it gives. Japan has tendered her resignation from the League because the world fails to see eye to eye with her on the subject of her action in Manchuria, and because the world still refuses to insult its own intelligence and credulity by even subscribing to a half-hearted acceptance of Japan’s case.¹

Soon after the Incident of Mukden, on September 22, 1931, Chinese Delegate to the League Council, Dr. Shi Zhaoji (Sao-Ke Alfred Sz, 施肇基) indicated that China was prepared to agree to an enquiry being carried out by a Commission appointed by the League and to leave the matter in its hands. China could not agree to direct negotiations with a country “holding a large part of its territory in military occupation and having resorted to means other than diplomatic negotiation. [...] In any case, he repeated, China will abide by whatever decisions the League may take.”²

China’s desire for a neutral commission was well-known, Dr. Shi reiterated his preference for a commission of neutral observers in the several days later in the League Council, but, to be conciliatory, repeated his suggestion that the Council would aid the parties to come to an agreement on the spot. Also the League was intensely interested in an agreement being reached between the parties; nevertheless, “in all previous experience, it had always been left for the parties to come to an agreement if they could.”³

Dr. Shi insisted that, whatever might be the differences between Manchuria and other countries, the obligations that each country assumed under the League Covenant, the Paris Pact, the Nine Power Treaty, or any other treaty, entered into voluntarily without reservation, had to be carried out with no excuse. He regretted that other foreign troops than Japanese were still on Chinese soil, but they were not objectionable in the sense that they did not antagonize the people.⁴

On October 24, 1931, Dr. Shi, authorized by Chinese Government, addressed the following communication to Mr. Briand as its President, “China, like every Member of the League of Nations, is bound by the Covenant to ‘a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligation.’ The Chinese

¹ *The Puppet State of “Manchukuo”*, 29.

² *The League and Manchuria, the First Phase of the Chinese-Japanese Conflict (September 18-30, 1931)*, Vol. II, No.10, October 1931, 11.

³ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

Government for its part is determined loyally to fulfil all its obligations under the Covenant. It is prepared to give proofs of this intention by undertaking to settle all disputes with Japan as to treaty interpretation by arbitration or judicial settlement, as provided in Article 13 of the Covenant.”¹

To the charge of inaccuracy brought by the Japanese Government on November 14, 1931, the Chinese representative retorted that, while he maintained the accuracy of his reports, “[...] If the Japanese Government is disposed to question their correctness, he would say, as he has had occasion to say several times before, that his Government has desired that the actual conditions and events in Manchuria since September 18 should be observed and reported upon by a neutral commission appointed by the League, but to this reasonable proposition Japan has offered a persistent objection. So long as the Chinese Government asks for a third party and neutral judgment as to what is happening in Manchuria, and the Japanese Government refuses to allow this to be done, it may be safely left to the world’s opinion and to my colleagues upon the Council to judge as to the comparative accuracy of the Chinese and Japanese versions.”²

Finally, on the same day (November 14, 1931) the Chinese representative transmitted a long statement issued by the Fourth National Congress of the Guomindang party³ concerning the Chinese-Japanese conflict. He concluded: “This is a life and death issue for the Chinese Government which has staked its political existence on the policy of relying on the League. It is therefore bound to push this policy to its conclusion and test the competence of the League to the utmost. If the League fails, the Chinese Government will be forced to put the blame publicly where it belongs, namely, on the unwillingness of the Great Powers to lift a finger in defense of the Covenant which they are solemnly pledged to defend. The matter is therefore also a life and death issue for the League and for the Disarmament Conference.” In the face of news that Japan’s troops had reached Tsitsihar, her suggestion for a Commission of Enquiry centered on November 19, 1931, the attention of the Council members, together with the possibility of supplementing it by some arrangement for an armistice.⁴

Although it was hardly realized at the time, November 20, 1931, proved to be a turning point in Council negotiations, towards attempts to settle the dispute through investigation on the ground. Gravely disturbed by the Japanese occupation of Tsitsihar, following assurances which had been given that this step was not contemplated, Secretary Stimson had seen the Japanese Ambassador in Washington and, according to word reaching Paris, made strong representations as to Japan’s obligations under the Pact of Paris and the Nine Power Treaty of Washington. Ambassador Dawes paid an official visit to Mr. Briand at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was understood to have made it plain that the United States favored the project of a Commission of Enquiry in Manchuria and would be disposed to cooperate with it.

Furthermore, new instructions from Tokyo were reported to have reached the Japanese Embassy in Paris recommending a conciliatory attitude and approving a plan to appoint a Commission of Enquiry without advance recognition by China of all existing treaties. With the way thus apparently opening again for possible unanimous action under Article 11 as the mediatory instrument of the Covenant, the members of the Council continued their private meetings to discuss arrangements for the next public meeting, which they desired to set for the next day.⁵

¹ Ibid., 60.

² Ibid., 41.

³ Ibid., 89.

⁴ Ibid., 41-43.

⁵ Ibid., 44-45.

Certain differences of opinion were known to exist among members of the Council; the representatives of the Great Powers felt that dispatch of a commission was essential in order to allow tempers to cool and to endeavour to determine responsibility on both sides, while the representatives of some of the smaller states saw possible dangers in countenancing a prolonged occupation on the ground of security and advocated pressure for the immediate withdrawal of troops. The majority opinion, however, was that the appointment of a commission should be regarded as separate from any arrangement for evacuation of Manchurian territory; and this opinion was reinforced by the impression that the United States was not ready to define its attitude either for or against the use of measures to compel retirement of troops, beyond diplomatic insistence upon the obligation of the Pact of Paris. The great advantage of continuing action under Article 11, without recourse to other articles of the Covenant implying more drastic sanctions than the pressure of public opinion, was felt to be that it held out the hope of restoring unanimity within the Council by securing the consent of both disputants to a new resolution.¹

In the discussion about sending a commission in Manchuria, Italian delegate insisted that it should include Italian representation. The Council of the League used to consider that only three parties involved: Britain, France and American. Italian delegate proposed to Briand, “agivo personalmente, ma che ero certo interpretare pensiero Regio Governo e che assenza di un rappresentante italiano non sarebbe stata giustificata ed avrebbe prodotto in Italia spiacevole impressione.” Briand replied,

che nulla era ancora fatto, che egli pure era d'avviso Commissione avesse 5 membri ed uno fosse italiano e che questa opinione egli avrebbe sostenuta in Consiglio Società Nazioni.

Poiché tesi dei soli 3 membri quale sopra indicata sembra essere tesi Inghilterra suggerisce interessare d'urgenza codesto Ambasciatore d'Inghilterra a favore soluzione 5 membri di cui 1 italiano.²

Thus the representatives of Fascist Italy both in Geneva and in Paris, tried their best to persuade the British as well as the French to include an Italian member in the Commission of Manchuria, which was proved by the following archives:

Il Senatore Scialoja ha chiesto che vi partecipi anche un italiano. Briand con cui Scialoja ha parlato vi si è mostrato pienamente favorevole.

Scialoja ha parlato pure con delegazione inglese a Consiglio Società Nazioni [...]³

Scialoja si sta discretamente adoperando per inclusione di un membro italiano in commissione suddetta.⁴

Sir John Simon è stato durante l'intera giornata trattenuto Camera dei Comuni. Gli avevo fatto tuttavia illustrare a mezzo suoi collaboratori immediati punto di vista R. Governo circa partecipazione membro italiano Commissione Lega Nazioni per conflitto Cino-Giapponese.

¹ Ibid.

² *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 04, *Conflitto Cino-Giapponese-Commissione Lytton*, T.3771, Parigi, 23/11/1931.

³ Ibid., 1314/361 R. Londra, 27/11/1931.

⁴ Ibid., T.1284/200 P.R. Shanghai, 23/11/1931.

In questo momento Segretario di Stato per gli Affari Esteri mi fa pervenire assicurazione che condivide pienamente nostro punto di vista e che istruzioni in tal senso vengono inviate questa sera stessa Delegazione britannica Parigi.¹

The League said that the Japanese Government opposed to increase the number of members, according to the report from Geneva,

Capo Gabinetto Briand ha comunicato confidenzialmente a Pagliano che Delegato giapponese stamane gli aveva detto che il suo Governo era nettamente contrario all'aumento del numero dei membri della Commissione per la Cina e pertanto lo pregava di opporsi alla nostra richiesta e di persuadere anzi la Delegazione italiana a non formulare una richiesta in proposito. Capo di Gabinetto aggiunse di avergli risposto di non poterlo in nessun modo accontentare perchè Governo francese credeva invece che sarebbe stata molto opportuna partecipazione italiana alla Commissione, di avergli enumerato particolareggiatamente ragioni espostegli in memoriale consegnatogli giorni scorsi.

Delegato giapponese replicò che una Commissione troppo larga sarebbe stata umiliante e che ormai opinione pubblica del Giapponese si era abituata all'idea di avere una Commissione di soli tre membri.

Capo Gabinetto gli avrebbe fatto osservare che l'umiliazione in ogni caso sarebbe stata per la Cina e che l'opinione aveva avuto ben poco tempo per abituarsi a siffatta idea.

Delegato giapponese allora avrebbe replicato che si sarebbe incaricato di far presente direttamente il punto di vista giapponese alla Delegazione italiana.

[...] Governo britannico deve tener conto necessità fronte unico in Cina delle Potenze maggiormente interessate come pure della nostra attitudine nei suoi riguardi.

Stimo superfluo conferire con delegati giapponesi cui doppio gioco qui è continuo; è necessari o invece agire a Tokio, facendo presente atteggiamento finora tenuto da nostro Governo nell'attuale conflitto.²

And another report showed:

Drummond ha comunicato confidenzialmente Pagliano che unico ostacolo da superare per inclusione nostra nella nota Commissione è resistenza Giappone e che sarebbe utile che Governo Tokio facesse subito pervenire istruzioni suo Delegato Parigi nel senso desiderato. Cadogan ha comunicato pure a Pagliano che suo Governo non avrebbe nulla in contrario nostra inclusione.³

However, Japanese Government informed that she had proposed to the Secretariat of the League for adding a Japanese member and a Chinese, but the Secretariat had refused. Just as the Japanese Ambassador in Paris said, "che quindi le era difficile di prendere ora l'iniziativa per l'inclusione di un delegato italiano, ma che se una proposta in tal senso venisse fatta da altri non avrebbe mosso nessuna obiezione". Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs told the Italian Ambassador in Tokyo that "esservi da parte sua non solo nessuna obiezione di principio ma che Governo Giapponese avrebbe visto col massimo compiacimento partecipazione membri italiani commissione di cui si tratta in vista anche atteggiamento regio Governo fin dall'inizio."⁴

¹ Ibid., T.3842, Londra, 27/11/1931.

² Ibid., T.3858, Parigi, 28/11/1931.

³ Ibid., T. 1358/65 R. Tokio, 30/11/1931.

⁴ AP 1931-45(Cina), Busta 04, *Conflitto Cino-Giapponese-Commissione Lytton*, T. 3887 R. Tokio, 30/11/1931.

The representatives of Italy, who felt appreciated that “anche il Governo americano vedrebbe con piacere partecipazione italiana”, laid stress on:

Partecipazione italiana è garanzia in ogni caso di equità e moderazione come lo prova l’atteggiamento tenuto dall’Italia sin dall’inizio dell’attuale conflitto.¹

On November 30, 1931, Italian Foreign Ministry reiterated such an idea:

partecipazione italiana che finora, a quello che risulta è stata chiesta basandosi sull’interesse generale che anche l’Italia ha di prendere parte ad una questione che interesse la pace del mondo, resterebbe facilitata se apparisse l’utilità specifica di un quarto membro e perciò di un quarto gruppo di questioni da trattare. Allo stato degli atti non ho elementi su cui fondare sicuramente l’indicazione di questo quarto gruppo in questione. Penserei però che le questioni ferroviarie potrebbero prestarvisi, oppure questioni amministrative, a meno che, data importanza delle questioni commerciali, non si ritenesse avere due anziché un solo uomo di affari. Faccio presente tutto questo a titolo indicativo per l’uso migliore che, nel nostro interesse possa consigliare lo svolgimento della trattativa costi in corso. Per le questioni ferroviarie ritengo che competenza tecnici italiani sia indiscussa e così pure per questioni amministrative.²

In short, Italy expressed a desire to participate the collective action in Manchuria. Italian delegate in the League presented two reasons of participation: 1) Italy, as a Great Power had to take part in a question which concerned the peace of the world, which was a general interest; 2) given that the Sino-Japanese issue concerned the question of lending railways and the administrative question, on which the Italian technical competence is unquestioned.

The Commission in Manchuria was supposed to deal with six aspects: 1) economic; 2) politic; 3) financial; 4) customs; 5) railway; 6) military forces; “che quindi occorre non solo più delegati, data vastità materia di studio, ma che anche occorre non lasciare arbitro dei singoli argomenti un solo delegato.”³ Under this context, the Italian Foreign Ministry used to think about that Italian technical officials could play a role in these various fields, which was another reason to let Italy participate in. But later they realized that this Commission was of much political significance, it was not suitable to send a technical expert as a delegate. Then Foreign Ministry was considering to send a personality who knew China well:

Bisogna assolutamente tenere presente che Commissione ha un alto mandato politico ed è per questo, [...] Bisogna anche tenere presente che l’inchiesta deve compiersi in Cina e su problemi cinesi e che se si sceglierà come nostro rappresentante una persona che conosca a fondo quel paese, essa potrà fin dall’inizio prendere posizione in seno alla Commissione. Bisogna infine tenere presente quanto già comunicai che le altre grandi Potenze vi designeranno personalità di primo piano e che noi potremo effettivamente contare sulla Commissione se il nostro delegato per le sue alte capacità saprà farsi valere.

¹ Ibid., T.1343/513, Washington, 29/11/1931.

² Ibid., T.1349/600 R. Parigi, 30/11/1931.

³ Ibid., T.3893 R. Parigi, 30/11/1931.

Ho pertanto pensato che nostro possibile delegato potrebbe essere Cerruti che io conosco come persona molto seria, di volontà e di lunga esperienza diplomatica. Cerruti in più conosce molto bene la Cina dove è stato molti anni.¹

But later the Italian Government thought that Cerruti was “personalità di calibro troppo elevato, che produrrebbero sensazione di una nostra tendenza a dare carattere politico e preponderante a nostra partecipazione.” Consequently, to avoid this “sensazione,” “in vista incertezza e gravi difficoltà che attendono Commissione, ci convenga essere rappresentati da personalità di media grandezza, diligente e capace, che dia alla nostra partecipazione carattere in coerenza con tutto il nostro atteggiamento nel conflitto cino-giapponese, che è stato quello di non essere mai assenti pur cercando di evitare azioni troppo appariscenti.”²

As Italy was considering the candidate to send in Enquiry Commission, Japanese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs had a conversation with Majoni, Italian Ambassador in Tokyo, announcing that “Governo [giapponese] confida azione membro italiano Commissione si svolgerà in senso favorevole Giappone”. Majoni responded,

Ritengo che ciò corrisponda ai nostri fini generali e particolari essendo Italia e Giappone rappresentanti principio ordine rispettivamente in Europa ed in Asia e convenendoci sfruttare per qualsiasi eventualità amicizia di questo forte paese ora vivamente irritato contro Inghilterra e Francia per il loro atteggiamento. Dal punto di vista interessi mondiali non é da dimenticare che Giappone affermandosi saldamente continente asiatico costituirà barriera insormontabile dilagare bolscevismo in Cina.³

It can be seen that Majoni’s words represented two points of Fascist Italy’s consideration: 1) Japan had the strength to irritate against Britain and France; 2) Japan was an insurmountable barrier in Asia against Bolshevism in China. Italy should exploit, in any case, friendship of this strong country.

The Japanese Government, “in un primo momento desiderava che facessero parte della Commissione di studio solo le potenze maggiormente interessate in Cina (Francia, Inghilterra ed America), rappresentatevi da delegati di grande prestigio e ciò per rendere la Commissione molto autorevole ma nello stesso tempo agile e conclusiva.” But Fascist Regime reiterated,

1) Gli interessi italiani in Cina, 2) L'impossibilità per l'Italia di rimanere assente in un consesso in cui vi erano rappresentate le Grandi Potenze; 3) L'atteggiamento mantenuto dall'Italia nei riguardi del Giappone durante il presente conflitto; 4) L'identità di interessi col Giappone nella soluzione del conflitto in modo soddisfacente. [...] la partecipazione dell'Italia alla Commissione si dovevano aver presenti non solo i pur rilevanti ed in via di rapido sviluppo interessi italiani in Cina, ma altresì la posizione dell'Italia nel consesso Europeo e nella Società delle Nazioni.⁴

L'Incaricato d'Affari del Giappone said on December 4, 1931, “il Giappone pur desiderando evitare ad ogni costo la partecipazione della Germania alla Commissione, é ora favorevole alla

¹ Ibid., T.3907 R. Parigi, 1/12/1931.

² Ibid., T.1413/642 R. Parigi, 5/12/1931.

³ Ibid., T.3908 R. Tokio, 1/12/1931.

⁴ Ibid., Promemoria, T.252061, Roma, 4/12/1931.

partecipazione italiana.” And he announced the purpose of the Enquiry Commission was, in the opinion of Japanese Government,

di constatare l'incapacità della Cina a garantire la vita e la sicurezza degli interessi stranieri donde l'impossibilità ad essere trattata dalle altre potenze civili su di un piede di uguaglianza. Prima di pretendere un simile trattamento essa deve “metter in ordine la sua casa”, come pure essa deve convincersi che i trattati esistenti non possono cadere nel nulla per volontà di un solo dei due contraenti, e deve quindi riaffermare gli impegni da essa assunti verso il Giappone. Questo considera come affare interno della Cina il futuro assetto della Manciuria sia sotto forma autonoma o meno, ma non può in nessun caso rinunciare a far valere in tutta la loro efficacia i trattati vigenti tra la Cina e il Giappone. Ottenuto ciò, ma non prima (ciò, egli ha osservato, non possiamo certo dirlo al Consiglio della Società delle Nazioni) noi ci ritireremo dalle posizioni occupate.¹

Italy at that time also presented its concern over the Italian interests in Manchuria,

Per l'eventualità in cui, alla richiesta nomina di un Membro Italiano nella Commissione su indicata, venga opposto l'assenza d'interessi italiani in Manciuria, e quindi di competenze in materia, valga quanto segue:

La Compagnia Internazionale dei Vagoni-Letto ha ingenti interessi in Manciuria, consistenti nei servizi che essa esercisce sulla Ferrovia dell'Est Cinese, servizi purtroppo ridotti dell'Agosto scorso in seguito all'azione del Rappresentante sovietico nell'amministrazione di detta Ferrovia.

La Compagnia ha pure trattative molto avanzate per i servizi Pekino-Mukden, che attende di completare non appena la situazione in Manciuria si sia chiarita.

L'Italia è largamente interessata nella Compagnia Internazionale dei Vagoni-Letto. Infatti, il gruppo italiano (Banca Commerciale Italiana e Compagnie Italo-Belge pour Entreprises d'Electricité et d'Utilité Publique), che già deteneva il più grosso pacco di azioni della International Sleeping Car Share Trust Ltd, ha preso l'iniziativa del recente aumento di capitale della Compagnia, assumendone la direzione del relativo Sindacato.

La International Sleeping Car Share Trust Ltd detiene l'11 3/4 % delle azioni della Compagnia dei Vagoni-Letto ed il pacco che rimane al gruppo italiano nel surriferito aumento di capitale supera questa percentuale.²

Apparently, the Italian Government used to have the intention to search for an opportunity to penetrate in Manchuria, but it would be proved later that Manchuria as a whole was under the absolute control of Imperial Japan, thus leaving no space for Italy.

Manzoni reported to Foreign Ministry on 10 December 1931,

Consiglio della Società delle Nazioni ha approvato seduta pubblica risoluzione e dichiarazioni proposte da Comitato dei dodici. Costituzione Commissione sarà fatta da Presidente scegliendone membri fra candidati che gli saranno designati. [...]

Nostra inclusione, dopo assidui lavori questi giorni, essendoci stata promessa da parecchi membri Consiglio, può oggi considerarsi come sicura. Nondimeno ritengo necessario vigilare che posizione nostra attuale non subisca modificazioni dopo mia partenza.³

¹ Ibid.

² *A P 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 04, *Conflitto Cino-Giapponese-Commissione Lytton*, 8/12/1931.

³ Ibid., T.4044 R. Parigi, 10/12/1931.

The *Resolution* of 10 December 1931 re-affirmed that the Council “(2) Considering that events have assumed an even more serious aspect since the Council meeting of October 24th, notes that the two Parties undertake to adopt all measures necessary to avoid any further aggravation of the situation and to refrain from any initiative which may lead to further fighting and loss of life; [...] (5) Without prejudice to the carrying out of the above-mentioned measures and desiring, in view of the special circumstances of the case, to contribute towards a final and fundamental solution by the two Governments of the questions at issue between them, decides to appoint a Commission of five members to study on the spot and to report to the Council on any circumstances which, affecting international relations, threaten to disturb peace between China and Japan or the good understanding between them upon which peace depends. The Governments of China and Japan will each have the right to nominate one assessor to assist the Commission. The two Governments will afford the Commission all facilities to obtain on the spot whatever information it may require. It is understood that, should the two Parties initiate any negotiations, these would not fall within the scope of the terms of reference of the Commission, nor would it be within the competence of the Commission to interfere with the military arrangements of either party. The appointment and deliberations of the Commission shall not prejudice in any way the undertaking given by the Japanese Government in the resolution of September 30th as regards the withdrawal of Japanese troops within the railway zone”¹.

At the same day, the President of the League Council, Aristide Briand issued a statement at the public meeting of the Council. He noted that the *Resolution*² issued by the League Council provided action on two separate lines: (1) to put an end to the immediate threat to peace, and (2) to facilitate the final solution of the existing causes of the dispute between the two countries. Briand said, “The Council was glad to find during the present sittings that an enquiry into the circumstances which tend to disturb the relations between China and Japan, in itself desirable, would be acceptable to the Parties. The Council, therefore, welcomed the proposal to establish a Commission which was brought before it on November 21st.”³

Briand made certain comments on the *Resolution* of December 10th, paragraph by paragraph. He said, under paragraph 4, members of the Council, other than the Parties, were requested to continue to furnish the Council with information received from their representatives on the spot. “Such information having been proved of high value in the past, the Powers who have the possibility of sending such representatives to the localities, have agreed to all that is possible to continue and improve the present system. For this purpose these Powers will keep in touch with the two Parties so that the latter may, should they so desire, indicate to them the localities to which they would desire the despatch of such representatives.”⁴

As far as the paragraph 5 was concerned, Briand said, “This paragraph provides for the institution of a Commission of Enquiry. Subject to purely advisory character, the terms of reference of the Commission are wide in principle, and no question which it feels called upon to study will be excluded, provided the question relates to any circumstances which, affecting international relations, threaten to disturb peace between China and Japan or the good understanding between them upon which peace depends. Each of the two Governments will have

¹ “Resolution Adopted by the League Council,” *Decision of the Executive Council of the League of Nations on the Eastern Case*, December 10th, 1931, 1-2.

² *Ibid.*

³ “Statement Made by M. Briand, President of the League Council, at Its Public Meeting,” *Decision of the Executive Council of the League of Nations on the Eastern Case*, December 10th, 1931, 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

the right to request the Commission to consider any question the examination of which it particularly desires. The Commission will have full discretion to determine the questions upon which it will report to the Council and will have the power to make interim reports when desirable.” “If the undertaking given by the two Parties according to the Resolution of September 30th have not been carried out by the time of the arrival of the Commission, the Commission should, as speedily as possible, report to the Council on the situation.”¹

It was specially provided that, “should the two Parties initiate any negotiations, these would not fall within the scope of the terms of reference of the Commission, nor would it be within the competence of the Commission to interfere with the military arrangements of either party”. Briand indicated, “The latter provision does not limit in any way its faculty of investigation. It is also clear that the Commission will enjoy full liberty of movement in order to obtain information required for report.”²

As a reply, Yoshizawa, Japanese Delegate to the League Council issued a statement, saying thanks to the labours and tact of President Briand, “we have before us the draft Resolution furnishing us with the means of clarifying the situation”. Regarding paragraph 2 of the *Resolution*, Yoshizawa said, “I am happy to accept it on behalf of the Japanese Government on the understanding that this paragraph is not intended to preclude Japanese forces from taking such action as may be rendered necessary to provide directly for the protection of the lives and property of Japanese subjects in various parts of Manchuria. Such action is admittedly an exceptional measure called for by the special situation prevailing in Manchuria, and its necessity will be obviated when normal conditions are restored in that region. With these considerations I am happy to be able to declare that the Japanese Government accepts the draft Resolution now before us.”³

On the Chinese part, the Delegate of China to the League Council, Dr. Shi Zhaoji, stated, “My Government intends to discharge in good faith every obligation which it has assumed in agreeing to this Resolution as interpreted by the President of the Council. The entire arrangement being a practical one designed to meet the pending emergency, it becomes necessary in the interest of a complete understanding for me to place upon record certain observations and reservations in point of principle as follows:

1. China must and does reserve any and all rights, remedies and juridical position to which it is or may be entitled under and by virtue of the Covenant, under all the existing treaties to which China is a party, and under the accepted principles to which China is a party, and under the accepted principles of international law and practice.

2. The present arrangement evidenced by the Resolution and the Statement made by the President of the Council is regarded by China as a practical measure embodying four essential and inter-dependent elements: (A) Immediate cessation of hostilities. (B) Liquidation of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria within the shortest possible period of time. (C) Neutral observation and reporting upon all developments from now on. (D) A comprehensive inquiry into the entire Manchurian situation on the spot by a Commission appointed by the Council. The said arrangement being in effect and in spirit predicated upon these fundamental factors, its integrity

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ “Part of Statement Made by Mr. Yoshizawa, Japanese Delegate to the League Council, at Its Public Meeting,” *Decision of the Executive Council of the League of Nations on the Eastern Case*, December 10th, 1931, 7.

would be manifestly destroyed by the failure of one of them to materialise and be effectively realised as contemplated.

3. China understands and expects that the Commission provided for in the Resolution will, as its first duty, inquire into and report with its recommendations on the withdrawal of the Japanese forces if such withdrawal has not been completed when the Commission arrives on the ground.

4. China assumes that the said arrangement neither directly nor by implication affects the question of reparation and damage to China and its nationals growing out of the present events in Manchuria and makes specific reservation in that respect.

5. In accepting the Resolution laid before us, China appreciates the efforts of the Council to prevent further fighting and bloodshed by enjoining both China and Japan to avoid any initiative which may lead to further fighting or any other action likely to aggravate the situation. It must be clearly pointed out that this injunction should not be violated under the pretext of the existence of lawlessness caused by a state of affairs which it is the very purpose of the Resolution to do away with. It is to be observed that much of the lawlessness now prevalent in Manchuria is due to the interruption of the normal life caused by the invasion of the Japanese forces. The only sure way of restoring the normal peaceful life is to hasten the withdrawal of Japanese troops and allow the Chinese authorities to assume the responsibility for the maintenance of peace and order. China cannot tolerate the invasion and occupation of her territory by the troops of any foreign country; far less can she permit these troops to usurp the police functions of the Chinese authorities.

6. China notes with satisfaction the purpose to continue and improve the present system of neutral observation and reporting through the representatives of other Powers and China will from time to time, as occasion requires, indicate the localities to which it seems desirable to despatch such representatives.

7. It should be understood that in agreeing to this Resolution which provides for the withdrawal of Japanese forces to the railway zone. China in no way recedes from the position it has always taken with respect to the maintenance of military forces in such railway zone.

8. China would regard any attempt by Japan to bring about complications of a political character affecting China's territorial or administrative integrity (such as promoting the so-called independence movement or utilizing disorderly elements for such purpose) as an obvious violation of the undertaking to avoid any further aggravation of the situation."¹

Concerning the membership of the Commission, there was still discussion. Representatives of Norway, Spain and others among the smaller nations desired to have one place assigned to a small disinterested state; but it was generally assumed that the main Commission would be made up of men from France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and the United States. The task was obviously to be very complicated, which would make the work of any larger Commission more difficult. It would have to represent the weight of international interests in the endeavour to settle a conflict resulting from long-standing antagonisms between one nation of 60 million people and another of some 400 million people, involving the peace of Asia and possibly of the world.²

The Far Eastern Enquiry Commission was finally constituted with Lord Lytton of Great Britain, as its prospective chairman, General Claudel of France, Dr. Schnee of Germany, Count Aldovrandi

¹ "Statement Made by Dr. Sao-Ke Alfred Sze, Chinese Delegate to the League Council, at Its Public Meeting," *Decision of the Executive Council of the League of Nations on the Eastern Case*, December 10th, 1931, 8-10.

² *The League and Manchuria, the Third Phase of the Chinese-Japanese Conflict (October 25-December 31, 1931)*, Vol. II, No.12, December 1931, 64.

of Italy and General McCoy of the United States, as its members. Mr. Robert Haas, Director of the Communications and Transit Section of the League Secretariat, on a mission in China, as its Secretary-General; and MM. Charrère, Partouchoff and Pelt of the League Secretariat as members of staff. Some criticism was expressed that the membership of the Commission included no representative of the smaller nations, although the explanation was added that Japan would not have agreed to a commission comprising representatives of countries not possessing considerable special interests in China. They arrived at Shanghai on March 14, 1932.¹

Japan's position was defined by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Parliament on the January 21, 1932, as follows: "Japan harbours no territorial designs in Manchuria and she will uphold the principles of the Open Door and equal opportunity as well as existing treaties relating to that territory. What Japan desires is only to secure peace and order for Manchuria and to make that region safe both for Chinese and foreigners and open to all for economic development."² Thus the Japanese Government had taken an initiative in proposing the Commission of Enquiry, and the future would show whether its investigations in China and Manchuria would be favorable to Japan's case or not. "It would provide a very important report for the settlement of the dispute."³

Following procedure already adopted at Paris in November and December, the members of the Council other than the representatives of China and Japan began, on January 26, 1932, to hold meetings in a committee of twelve for exchange of views in regard to advisable lines of policy. The question of speeding up the departure of the Commission of Enquiry was a matter of major concern to all the members, yet it was desired to respect its authority and to follow out the lines of the Council's resolution passed unanimously on December 10, 1931. Opinions were understood to be divided as to the responsibilities of China and Japan in the situation that had developed. Certain influential members felt a need to declare that there could be no recognition for violation of the political or territorial integrity of China, while others felt that any statement which could not secure unanimity in the Council would only create more complication and danger. It was, however, suggested that the President of the Council might make a statement along these lines, substantially supporting the policy announced by the United States.⁴

On the evening of January 26, 1932, M. Boncour for France, together with the British, German and Italian members as representatives of states forming the Commission of Enquiry, received both the Chinese and Japanese delegates.⁵

The Lytton Report was published simultaneously in Geneva, Nanking, Tokyo and Washington on October 2, 1932. In the research documents of Geneva, the publication of Lytton Report was deemed to give an opportunity to governments and public opinion throughout the world to study the positions they would take when the whole question came before the League and the United States for consideration. Furthermore, "In the comprehensiveness of its examination, in the selection and balance of its materials, in its clarity of presentation and in the boldness and impartiality of its recommendations, the Lytton Report will undoubtedly set a high standard for all future international commissions of enquiry. The press of the world was almost universal in its praise of the Report in these respects. It was only regretted that the enquiry could not have been

¹ *The League and Shanghai, The Fourth Phase of the Chinese-Japanese Conflict (January 1-April 30, 1932)*, Geneva Special Studies, Vol.III, N.5 (Geneva: Geneva Research Center, May 1932), 7.

² *Ibid.*, 18.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*

made sooner and such a strikingly valuable report made available earlier in order to facilitate a final settlement.”¹

The Lytton Report in 150 pages (with 14 maps and 400 pages of annexes in addition) approached the problem both in its historical and in its contemporaneous aspects. The historical chapters dealt with the principal events in the developments during the 19th century in China, and particularly with the increasingly difficult Japanese relations during the early decades of 20th century. From the point of view of Geneva, in this Report, “The disorganised conditions in China incident to her evolution toward a republic were fully accounted for, and the sufferings imposed on other countries, particularly on Japan as China’s nearest neighbor, from the lawless conditions recently prevailing in China were fully admitted. The Commission, however, believed that considerable progress had in fact been made towards stability in China. It recalled once again that the Powers at the Washington Conference in 1922, though confronted with a dissentient China, did not undertake to control her.”²

The special position of Manchuria and its relation to the rest of China, as well as to Soviet Russia and Japan, was surveyed. The Report concluded that Manchuria was unalterably Chinese and in spite of its wars and periods of independence had always remained an integral part of China.³

In fact, at the same time of Lytton Commission’s inquiry, Manchuria declared independence in March 1932. The new Foreign Minister of Japan, Uchida Yasuya, had succeeded Shidehara on the Kwantung Army’s recommendation, and did not hesitate to advocate the recognition of Manchukuo. It came on 15 September 1932, more than two weeks before the report of the League commission of inquiry. The Lytton report contained many passages conciliatory to Japan. But the publication of report infuriated Japanese officials and publicists.⁴

On November 5, 1932, there held a meeting about the Far East presided by Fulvio Suvich (sottosegretario di Stato agli Esteri dal 20 luglio 1932), in which attended:⁵

Pompeo Aloisi, Baron, Ambassador in Angora, from 22 July 1932 Head of Cabinet of Foreign Minister;

Bernardo Attolico, Ambassador in Moscow;

Giovanni Cesare Majoni, Ambassador in Tokyo;

Luigi Aldrovandi-Marescotti, Count of Viano, Ambassador, member of Commission of Investigation of the League of Nations for the Manchuria;

Augusto Biancheri Chiappori, Extrordinary Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary, Appointed official of rearrangement in Political Archives of Foreign Ministry;

¹ *The League and the Lytton Report, The Fifth Phase of the Chinese-Japanese Conflict (May 1-December 31, 1932)*, Vol.III, No.10 (Geneva: Geneva Research Center; Boston, Mass.: World Peace Foundation, 1932), 21-22.

² *Ibid.*, 22.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ “Republican China 1912-1949,” *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.13, Part 2, 503.

⁵ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XII, N.394, 507-510.

Gino Buti, Extraordinary Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary on duty at the General Directorate for the affairs of the League of Nations, from 3 November 1932 General Director of Political Affairs (inviato straordinario e ministro plenipotenziario in servizio presso la Direzione Generale per gli Affari della Società delle Nazioni, dal 3 novembre 1932 direttore generale degli Affari Politici);

Giovanni Balsamo, Head of the First Office of the General Directorate in charge of American, Asian and Australian affairs (capo dell'Ufficio I della Direzione Generale America, Asia e Australia);

Leonardo Vitetti, Head of the Second Office of the General Directorate in charge of the League of Nations's affairs (capo dell'Ufficio II della direzione generale Società delle Nazioni);

Alberto Mellini Ponce de Leon, Secretary of the First Office of the General Directorate in charge of European, Eastern and African affairs (segretario dell'Ufficio I della direzione generale Europa, Levante ed Africa).

The purpose of the meeting was discussing the question: “a Ginevra converrà prendere posizione per la Cina o per il Giappone?” In the meeting, Count Aldrovandi made extensive summary of the work of the Commission of the League of Nations in Japan, China and Manchuria, outlining how he had found between the thesis of French member General Claudel, who was decisively in favour of Japan and the thesis of Lord Lytton, seconded by the American member McCoy, who was in favour of exposing the conclusions without euphemism, in which the Commission had arrived without worrying if that would displease Japan.

The two most important points, on which the discussion mainly dealt with, were:

- a) stabilire se l'attacco giapponese iniziato il 18 settembre 1931 che ha dato poi luogo all'occupazione della Manciuria fosse stato determinato da legittima difesa;
- b) stabilire se la costituzione dello Stato mancese fosse effetto dell'autodeterminazione del popolo mancese o non piuttosto una creazione vera e propria del Giappone.¹

In essence, the Commission had been able to convince in an undoubted manner that the attack of 18 September had not been determined by the motives of legitimate defense and that the establishment of Manchukuo was not the result of self-determination of the Manchu people. Aldrovandi suggested that the Lytton Report was anti-Japanese. He continued:

La forza però è dalla parte del Giappone. O noi desideriamo contribuire al disfacimento della Cina e allora in tal caso dovremmo sostenere a Ginevra il Giappone, o noi non vogliamo il disfacimento completo della Cina ed allora ci conviene appoggiare la tesi antigiapponese del Rapporto, magari pattuendo con la Cina questo nostro atteggiamento.

O pure, pur non considerando in linea di massima il disfacimento della Cina, possiamo essere indotti ad appoggiare il Giappone da eventuali vantaggi che potremmo ottenere per questo nostro appoggio.

¹ Ibid.

Per quanto riguarda la Lega delle Nazioni solo una linea transazionale può salvarne la «faccia». Forse una Conferenza internazionale tra Cina e Giappone direttamente, sotto gli auspici della Lega delle Nazioni potrebbe salvare la «faccia» delle due Nazioni contendenti e mantenere il prestigio della Società delle Nazioni.¹

Based on the information offered by Aldrovandi, those attendees expressed their ideas about the issue of the Far East. Majoni noted that it was opportune to consider the issue both from a political point of view and an economic one.

Da un punto di vista politico c'è da domandarsi se ci convenga appoggiare uno Stato che rappresenta il disordine di fronte ad uno Stato che rappresenta ordine e progresso.

Da un punto di vista economico mentre i nostri rapporti commerciali con il Giappone, pur suscettibili di miglioramento, sono per ora insignificanti, sono invece notevoli, quelli con la Cina.

È opportuno però tener presente come un nostro atteggiamento favorevole alla Manciuria potrebbe facilitare un nostro invio di merci e di consiglieri tecnici in Manciuria.²

Obviously, Majoni inclined to support Japan. Attolico argued “Nessuna grande Nazione in questo momento intende rischiare una guerra con il Giappone.” France and England would be decidedly favourable to Japan at the next meeting in Geneva. “Quindi lo sforzo delle Potenze a Ginevra tenderà a dare ragione al Giappone salvando la faccia della Lega delle Nazioni.” “Si tratterebbe ora di trovare una piattaforma per lo sviluppo della tesi giapponese tale che sia favorevole ai nostri interessi.”³

Attolico also advised to favour Japan, “per favorire il Giappone, si avanzerà la teoria del disordine cinese ciò costituisca un vantaggio per l'Italia che in tale disordine ha tutto da guadagnare.” Besides, he believed that it was impossible “allo stato attuale delle cose che il Giappone ceda ed ammetta quella specie di internazionalizzazione della Manciuria che consiglia il rapporto della Commissione.” Majoni instead stated that Japan might be content with the Lytton Report, because such a report “che infatti rappresenta già per il Giappone un notevole vantaggio è di occupare in sostanza la Manciuria.”⁴

Comm. Vitetti suggested that it was opportune to select a solution that covered the entire general situation of China, “il Giappone non vorrà discutere a Ginevra la questione mancese isolata dalla questione generale del problema cinese. [...] il rapporto Lytton non coinvolga solo la Manciuria ma tutta la situazione cinese ivi compreso la extraterritorialità, il regime delle concessioni e la cooperazione internazionale in genere alla ricostituzione della Cina.”⁵

Buti pointed out the line of Italian policy towards this issue,

sinora l'Italia ed anche il membro italiano nella Commissione abbiano mantenuto un atteggiamento di equilibrio e di attesa senza mai sbilanciarsi né in un senso né nell'altro. Si tratta di vedere se sia il caso di continuare in tale linea di condotta e di studiare se un'eventuale presa di posizione in un senso o nell'altro abbia possibilità di avere un'influenza determinante tale da permetterci di negoziare il nostro atteggiamento.⁶

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Actually, in Geneva, Comm. Vitetti was convinced “non vi sia stato tra le Grandi Potenze diversificazioni di atteggiamento verso i due contendenti. Ma che la diversificazione si è solo manifestata tra le Grandi Potenze da una parte e le Piccole Potenze, ostili al Giappone per principio e per la sua stessa qualità di Grande Potenza, dall'altra.”¹

The intervention of the League, according to Buti, was ineffective, and “l'azione moderatrice delle Grandi Potenze si sarebbe svolta ugualmente anche senza esistenza di Ginevra”. Aldrovandi emphasized that Italian interests in China “sono abbastanza notevoli come basterebbe a provarlo il successo della linea celere recentemente istituita tra l'Italia e Shangai e le cifre stesse della nostra esportazione per la Cina.” “È qui il caso di ripetere, aggiunge il *Conte Aldrovandi*, come «porta aperta» significhi per i giapponesi, come è stato detto argutamente dai cinesi «porta aperta» perché gli altri possano uscire.”²

Attolico considered the question “se l'Italia possa prendere occasione della situazione attuale per chiedere di essere inclusa nel Trattato a Quattro per le isole e i domini insulari del Pacifico dal quale fu esclusa a Washington nel 1921.”³

As a conclusion, Suvich stated that for Italy,

Il rinviare il tutto ad una Conferenza della Cina e del Giappone o ad una Conferenza internazionale o ad una nuova Commissione della Società delle Nazioni, o il rendere permanente per uno studio di tutta la questione l'attuale Commissione Lytton o qualunque altra soluzione che prolunghi il conflitto, evitando ogni aggravarsi della situazione militare ed evitando ogni complicazione internazionale, giova all'Italia che non ha alcun interesse a vedere una netta prevalenza che rafforzi la già forte situazione del Giappone come Grande Potenza nel mondo od un successo della Cina tale che rinfocoli il suo nazionalismo e la sua xenofobia.

Senza tener conto che l'incapacità della Società delle Nazioni a portare il conflitto ad una pronta e definitiva soluzione ne risulta una volta di più confermata.⁴

In other words, to postpone any permanent solution and to prolong the conflict without military aggravation and international complication would benefit Italy, as Suvich said. He reiterated this line in the telegram sent to Ciano on November 14, 1932.

È stato riesaminato in questi giorni atteggiamento italiano nei riguardi del conflitto cino-giapponese insieme col nostro rappresentante nel comitato Lytton. Sulla base degli elementi in possesso di questo ministero e sentiti il R.ambasciatore a Tokio ed anche il R.ambasciatore a Mosca qui presenti si è venuti in massima a questa conclusione e cioè che se non sopravvivono elementi che consiglino di mutare tale avviso convenga di sostenere opportunamente rapporto commissione Lytton continuando nella posizione di equilibrio e di moderazione finora assunta dal R.Governo nella intera questione e di cui la posizione della Cina nel conflitto ha potuto più volte avvantaggiarsi. Questo atteggiamento è stato anche mantenuto dal delegato italiano nella commissione ed ha influito sulla redazione del rapporto.⁵

Furthermore, Suvich mentioned employment of the remaining Boxers Indemnity and consolidation of debts, which were “le più importanti questioni,” “questioni queste che se pure

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XII, N.422, 541.

vanno tenute presenti non potrebbero rappresentare un interesse di tale rilievo da essere un motivo determinante per il nostro atteggiamento, ma si è dovuto altresì valutare atteggiamento delle altre grandi Potenze e la portata pratica di una diversa politica da parte italiana.”¹

On 19 November 1932, Ciano reported to Mussolini arguing for maintaining Italian policy towards China, and stemming the Japanese exclusive invasion. He wrote,

Indipendentemente da condizioni politiche generali, e limitando invece mio giudizio all’esame dei nostri interessi in Cina, devo concludere che la linea di condotta fino ad ora seguita è per noi la più vantaggiosa. Governo e popolo cinese considerano atteggiamento italiano aperto e amichevole. Ciò è valso a richiamare sul nostro paese una simpatica attenzione, ha molto contribuito a determinare il rapido incremento che si è verificato nei nostri interessi e servitù certamente ad aumentare larghe possibilità di espansione cui V.E. fa cenno nel suo telegramma sopra indicato.

Nostro cambiamento di atteggiamento produrrebbe qui una reazione sensibile e dannosa per le nostre attività che sono ora in periodo di delicato sviluppo. [...] D’altra parte, a mio modo di vedere e limitando anche in tale questione l’esame alla Cina, a noi converrebbe arginare per quanto è possibile invadenza giapponese che nel suo assoluto esclusivismo, tende a stroncare ogni possibilità di espansione straniera su questi vastissimi mercati.²

Ciano mentioned the issues of artificial silk export and Manchurian market:

[...] quanto si sta verificando per la nostra esportazione della seta artificiale: un identico fenomeno, che appare molto impressionante, sarebbe destinato a riprodursi e ad intensificarsi rapidamente in ogni campo se al Giappone fossero lasciate mani libere.

Allo stato delle cose mercato mancese, fino dove almeno si estende controllo del cosiddetto Manciukuo, è aperto soltanto al commercio giapponese; le altre Potenze vi hanno perduto quasi totalmente ogni possibilità di penetrazione, essendo state poste in condizione di evidente inferiorità.

Nostro console Harbin mi segnala infatti, in data 10 novembre, che «in generale tutti i prodotti nipponici riescono ad arrivare sul mercato mancese, senza pagare dogana».

Per quanto poi più direttamente ci riguarda, competizione Giappone appare in particolar modo pericolosa: per la natura delle economie dell’Italia e del Giappone sotto alcuni aspetti similari (importazione materie prime e esportazione prodotti manufatti) i prodotti dei due paesi sono sventuratamente destinati a farsi la concorrenza.

Incalcolabile potenziamento del Giappone e lo sviluppo successivo delle sue industrie, malgrado suo più o meno diretto dominio sulla Manciuria (che è la più ricca regione Asia) e il conseguente controllo su tutto il nord della Cina, produrrebbero ben presto effetti di grandissima portata che verrebbero risentiti dal nostro commercio, non solo sul mercato cinese, ma anche su tutti gli altri, compresi quelli ben più vicini all’Italia e sotto la sua naturale influenza.³

As far as the Boxers Indemnity and consolidation of debts were concerned, Ciano advised,

Per quanto riguarda poi azione dei nostri delegati Ginevra, potrebbe forse esser utile che essi, qualora lo ritengano essere opportuno, facessero presente, nella forma debita, ai delegati cinesi valore aiuto dato dall’Italia

¹ Ibid.

² *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XII, N.441, 558-559.

³ Ibid.

alla Cina, fin dall'inizio conflitto, e rammentassero loro che il Governo fascista attende con legittimo interesse soluzione delle due importanti questioni dell'indennità boxers e del consolidamento prestiti. Ritengo che simile pressione potrebbe facilitare trattative in corso con questo Governo, trattative che ora procedono lentamente a causa della riluttanza che alcuni di questi uomini di Governo mostrano ad affrontare, in questo momento, una questione delicata e di larga risonanza anche nei rapporti tra la Cina e le altre nazioni.¹

Briefly, Ciano was in favour of penetration policy in China, considered that it was such a vast market. While the market of Manchuria, it was proved that Italy had little opportunity to obtain a share. Because Manchukuo was opened only to Japan.

On November 28, 1932, Pompeo Aloisi (dal 22 luglio 1932 capo gabinetto del ministro degli Esteri), reported to Mussolini about the Session of Council – (November 1932, XI). The conflict in the Far East, especially the intransigence of Japan had provoked a “dangerous” debate in the League. The fact that “la politica cinese tendeva all’Assemblea e quella giapponese era invece imperniata sulla resistenza in sede di Consiglio,” would benefit Italy. Aloisi stated,

Comunque, ai fini degli interessi italiani, mi sembra che la piega delle cose sia da considerarsi piuttosto soddisfacente. Lo sviluppo presumibile della questione porterà infatti in un primo tempo ad un dibattito a carattere parlamentare dinanzi all’Assemblea, il quale non potrà non dare mostra ancora una volta della incapacità e della inconcludenza del massimo organo rappresentativo della Lega, e in un secondo tempo alla probabile nomina di una Commissione di Conciliazione, che ci permetterà di avere buona voce in capitolo nelle faccende dell’Estremo Oriente. Infine – last not least – è presumibile che lo stato dei fatti resti inalterato, il che per la stessa ragione per cui è nocivo per coloro che prima del conflitto cino-giapponese avevano laggiù una situazione di monopolio, può rivelarsi favorevole per noi che non ne avevamo alcuna.²

Ending its action on the dispute between China and Japan, in six meetings between November 21 and 28, 1932, the League of Nations Council received the Lytton Report on the conflict, heard statements from the Japanese and Chinese delegations, and from Lord Lytton, Chairman of the Commission of Enquiry, and turned the case over to the Assembly for settlement under Article XV of the Covenant.³

Mussolini gave instruction on 7 December, “seguire la cosa senza prendere iniziative”.⁴ Aloisi interpreted the instruction of Mussolini as two points:

- 1) non alienarci né l’uno né l’altro contendente con un parteggiamento deciso, ma insieme non perdere nemmeno di vista la realtà di fatto della situazione mancata e la fatalità dell’espansione giapponese;
- 2) tendere a ottenere un secondo e più significativo riconoscimento del diritto dell’Italia a esser presente nel regolamento delle questioni politiche dell’Estremo Oriente. Nella commissione Lytton, in sede di inchiesta, si poté avere un rappresentante dell’Italia. In questa nuova commissione da formarsi, in sede non più inquirente ma esecutiva, in quanto dovrebbe controllare l’applicazione degli accordi, e cooperarvi, si avrebbe di nuovo un

¹ Ibid.

² *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XII, N.481, 594-595.

³ *The League and the Lytton Report, The Fifth Phase of the Chinese-Japanese Conflict (May 1-December 31, 1932)*, Vol.III, No.10, 27.

⁴ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XII, N.519, 629.

rappresentante dell'Italia. Con che resterebbe ribadito il nostro diritto ad aver voce in capitolo nella politica del Pacifico.¹

¹ *IDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XII, N.543, 651-653.

2 COOPERATION BETWEEN FASCIST ITALY AND NATIONALIST CHINA

2.1 COOPERATION BETWEEN THE LEAGUE AND CHINA

2.1.1 The cooperation before 1931

The League's programme of technical cooperation with China was launched in the early 1920s, when Japan took the initiative to involve the League of Nations in matters of the Far Eastern public health. On 19 August 1922 the Japanese representative on the Health Committee of the League, Dr Miyajima Mikinosuke, proposed the dispatch of a small commission to the Far East to collect information regarding the incidence of epidemic diseases, especially those of international importance, in important ports, and the measures taken to prevent the transmission of these diseases to other ports.¹ In November 1922 Dr. F. Norman White, Chief Commissioner of the Epidemic Commission, arrived at Penang to begin a tour through South and East Asia; in spring 1923 he conducted a survey of health conditions in Chinese ports (including ports in Manchurian).

The highest ranking medical official of the League, Dr. Ludwik Rajchman visited Japan upon an invitation by the Japanese Government in the fall of 1925. On his way back to Europe in early 1926, Rajchman undertook a side-trip to Beijing and called on the Chinese Minister of the Interior, Gong Xinzhan². Rajchman assured him that the League were prepared to help China with the establishment of a quarantine service, with which China could formally request such assistance through a written communication addressed to the Secretary-General, while the Minister displayed little enthusiasm. Rajchman then ended his first trip to Beijing. Rajchman was viewed as "a Polish doctor with a revolutionary past, a sympathy for left-wing movements of all kinds, unwearied energy and extraordinary intelligence"³ and "the driving spirit behind technical co-operation between the League of Nations and China"⁴.

Not until the formation of the Nationalist Government at Nanjing did contacts between China

¹ League of Nations. Health Committee, *Minutes of the Fourth Session Held at Geneva, August 4th to 21st, 1922* (Off. No.C.555.M.337.1922.III), 35. As quoted in Jürgen Osterhammel, " 'Technical Co-operation' between the League of Nations and China," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.13, No.4 (1979): 663.

² Gong Xinzhan, (龚心湛, Wade-Giles: Kung Hsin-chan) 1871-1943, a politician at the end of Qing Dynasty and in the early Republic of China, a finance expert in the Beijing Government, temporarily served as acting Premier of the Republic from June to September 1919.

³ Francis Paul Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 330.

⁴ Osterhammel, " 'Technical Co-operation' between the League of Nations and China," 664.

and the League's technical organizations really get under way. Guomindang was pledged to Sun Zhongshan's programme of "national reconstruction" and modernization. "Although anti-imperialist rhetoric abounded, it seemed almost certain that such a task would not be successfully accomplished without assistance granted by the advanced industrial nations of the West."¹ Joseph Avenol, the Deputy Secretary-General of the League, travelled to China at the end of 1928 in order to establish contacts with the new administration. Yet technical cooperation during the initial years remained restricted to matters of health and hygiene.

Following a formal request from the Chinese Government to the Secretary-General, Rajchman was sent off on his first official mission to China, arriving on 9 November 1929. Two main results of his sojourn: 1) to impress upon the Chinese Government the bright prospects of an extended cooperation with the League; 2) to organize a National Quarantine Service, which was inaugurated under the Ministry of Health in July 1930. Thus, Rajchman helped the Chinese to recover one field of administrative sovereignty and to reduce the functions of the Chinese Maritime Customs. This did not endear him to those in the treaty port who were already exasperated by the new regime's assault on extraterritoriality and foreign tariff privileges.²

2.1.2 The "golden age"(1931-35) of cooperation and the participation of Italy

Although the Chinese Government had requested and secured the services of certain technical experts of the League of Nations Health Section as early as December 1929, the general system of cooperation between the League of Nations and China was set up in 1931 with the establishment of the National Economic Council of China.³ The effectiveness of the early collaboration between the Health Section and the National Health Administration of China caused the Chinese Government to seek some way to enlarge the field of cooperation and to place it on a permanent basis. In order to work out a plan that would meet with the approval of the League, Chinese Government invited three important officers of the League to come to China: Dr. Ludwig Rajchman, Director of the Health Section; Sir Arthur Salter, Director of the Economic and

¹ Osterhammel, " 'Technical Co-operation' between the League of Nations and China," 665.

² Ibid.

³ From April 1931 to December 1937, this National Economic Council (全国经济委员会) was the highest institutions of the country to co-ordinate economic affairs. It was first affiliated to the Executive Yuan, Jiang Jieshi as Chairman. The ministers of internal affairs, railways, transportation, industry, education and other economic construction-related central authorities were its members. In May 1932, the Central Committee of the Nationalist Party adopted the *Regulations of the National Economic Council* to stipulate that the purpose of this Council was to "promote economic construction, improve people's life and regulate national finance". In September 1933, the NEC started to be administered directly by the National Government, with Wang Jingwei, Song Ziwen, Sun Ke, etc. as steering committee. See the archives named "National Economic Council" in Archives of Institute of Modern History (Taipei); and "Technical Co-operation between the League of Nations and China," *Monthly Summary of the League of Nations*, Vol. XIV (February, 1934), 35.

Financial Section; Mr. Robert Haas, Director of the Communications and Transit Section.¹

A note by the Secretary-General of the League was submitted to the Council of the League on 19 May 1931:

The Council, as its session in January, 1931, received a telegram from the National Government of China expressing its appreciation of the prompt arrival of the Director of the League of Nations Health Section, and inviting the Director of the Economic and Financial Section, and the Director of the Transit and Communications Section, to visit China, in order respectively to discuss the effect of the present world depression on China's economic activities and also certain problems regarding inland waterways and the reclaiming of land. The Chinese Government expressed the hope that as the result of this preliminary consultation, practical co-operation with the several technical organs and experts of the League might on examination be found feasible.²

On Chinese part, Song Ziwen (Wade-Giles: Soong Tse Ven, or T. V. Soong, 宋子文), then the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Yuan, telegraphed to Sir Eric Drummond on 19 May 1931 about the result of the negotiations with representatives of the League. He informed that China established a National Economic Council (NEC)³, which was, incidentally, the brainchild of Sir Arthur Salter, and asked the League to delegate technical experts to act as advisers to that newly created entity. Drummond recommended approval, and the majority of the delegates concurred except Japanese, who were worried and indicated that "China might sometimes desire to initiate League action in some sphere in which international co-operation of the policy of a number of countries might be required in order to remove some obstacle to China's development."⁴ Rajchman was to recall a few years later, "Yoshizawa, the Japanese representative on the Council at that time, tried to block this movement, but he was instructed in unequivocal terms by Shidehara to support it"⁵.

The note of the Secretary-General on 19 May 1931 mentioned:

On April 25th, the Chinese Government sent a further telegram, referring to the January invitation and the subsequent conversation in China with the three Directors of the technical organizations. This telegram, which is attached, announces the setting up of a National Economic Council and asks that the Technical Organizations of the League be continuously available for advice to the Government and the Economic Council in connection with its plan of reconstruction.⁶

A competent organization to co-ordinate reconstruction plans in China seemed to be a necessity for Chinese Government to guarantee efficient administration of reconstruction work. The telegram sent by Chinese Government to the Secretary-General of the League on 25 April 1931 presented a plan of technical cooperation with six points:

¹ Porter, *Technical Co-operation*, 1-2.

² "Communication from the Chinese Government with regard to Co-operation with the League as regards Technical Questions," *League of Nations – Official Journal*, Vol. XII (July 1931), Annex 1284, C.326.1931., 1172.

³ National Economic Council, 全国经济委员会 (quanguo jingji weiyuanhui).

⁴ League of Nations, Council, Minutes of the Sessions, 1931, 1173. As quoted in Osterhammel, 666.

⁵ Gilbert (Geneva) to Hull, 13 July 1934, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1934, III, 399, reporting a conversation with Rajchman. As quoted in Osterhammel, 666.

⁶ "Communication from the Chinese Government with regard to Co-operation with the League as regards Technical Questions," 1172.

First in the stage of first planning and organization the League might be able to send someone as it has already done in the special domain of health work for such limited period as might be practicable and convenient to the Government in order to help with his advice both as to the plan itself and as to any subsequent methods by which the League could assist it.

Secondly in the execution of particular projects the League might at the request of the Government send or propose officers representatives or experts who apart from their own competence could be in contact with the relevant technical organization in Geneva.

Thirdly in appropriate special cases a League Committee whether a standing committee or one appointed ad hoc might at the request of the Government help to frame or improve some particular scheme.

Fourthly the League might in several ways help in the training of China's own officers who will be required for the more extended work of later years. In the domain of health the League has already been able to arrange for technical education in practical work in other countries sometimes with the aid of Fellowships.

And in addition the League might help the Government to find advisers to assist the development of the Chinese educational system and facilitate the intercourse between the centres of intellectual activity in China and abroad.

Lastly China might sometimes desire to initiate League action in some sphere in which international co-operation or the co-ordination of the policy of a number of countries might be required in order to remove some obstacle to China's development.¹

In May 1931, the Council of the League accepted the general plan proposed by the Chinese Government and adopted a resolution to appropriate 480,000 francs to cover the expenses of the various experts sent to China. If the appropriation was not sufficient, the Secretary-General was authorized to use part of the arrears which the Chinese Government would pay in 1931.²

In early September 1931, Rajchman took up his assignment as a liaison officer between the National Economic Council and the technical organizations of the League. The outbreak of the Manchurian crisis upset his plans and entangled him in the web of Far Eastern diplomacy. According to the Japanese point of view, on the morning of 19 September the Chinese Government was prepared to enter into direct negotiations with the Japanese Minister to China over a settlement of the Mukden Incident; whereas in the afternoon Rajchman took Song Ziwen aside and persuaded him to drop the project of direct negotiations and to appeal to Geneva.³ Although the Japanese accusation seemed to unlikely true, it was certain that Rajchman did encourage the Chinese to appeal to the League and offered his connections and expert advice. One of the consequences of the Manchurian crisis and the subsequent confusion in Chinese internal politics the National Economic Council became virtually defunct. It continued to lead a nominal existence, but failed to function as the central planning agency for the social and political reconstruction of Nationalist China.⁴

Under this context, League experts participated in flood relief and the prevention of epidemics after the devastating Yangtze River floods from July to September 1931. And in general, the work of League advisers during 1931 and 1932 was mainly in the nature of survey and research. For

¹ "Communication from the Chinese Government with regard to Co-operation with the League as regards Technical Questions," *League of Nations – Official Journal*, Vol.XII (July 1931), Annex 1284, C.326.1931., 1173.

² "Communication from the Chinese Government with regard to Co-operation with the League as regards Technical Questions," *League of Nations – Official Journal*, Vol.XII (July 1931), 2806, 1081.

³ J. Avenol, Memo of conversation with Yokoyama, Japanese Consular-General at Geneva, 1 May 1934, F. O.371/18098 (F2700). As quoted in Osterhammel, 666.

⁴ Osterhammel, 667.

instance, a commission of educational specialists headed by Professor Carl Becker, the former Prussian Minister of Education, and including among its members Professor Richard H. Tawney, who wrote a work on China's socio-economic crisis with first-hand experience and material¹, toured the country from September to December 1931. Their report released concern at "the remarkable, not to say alarming influence of the American model on Chinese education"². They urged not to imitate Western models without regard for cultural differences and for the real needs of China.

As the programme of technical cooperation between the League and China was proceeding, the Italian delegate in the League asked for participation in this programme. Particularly, with regard to the cooperation of the Consultative and Technical Commission for Communications and Transit with the Chinese Government, Italian delegate to the Commission "esprime il parere di ritenere utile di interessare la nostra Rappresentanza diplomatica in Cina a raccogliere le informazioni possibili sull'opera esplicata dai tre Esperti della Società delle Nazioni colà recatisi, sui consigli dati e sulle eventuali conclusioni pratiche avvenute con quel Governo"³. The League replied in the letter to Italian Foreign Ministry, on August 4, 1932:

Quanto all'invio in Cina di un esperto italiano in materia di comunicazioni e transito, la questione sembra per ora pregiudicata e occorrerà attendere il ritorno del Direttore di Sezione, Signor Haas, dalla Cina (settembre prossimo) nonchè gli orientamenti della prossima sessione dell'Assemblea, per vedere se vi sia modo di fare qualche cosa.⁴

The League explained the current situation of cooperation with China in detail, emphasizing the complicated circumstances in China:

La situazione si presenta nel modo seguente: nello scorso gennaio vennero mandati in Cina tre esperti: uno francese (il signor Perrier); uno tedesco (il signor Sieveking); uno inglese (il signor Coode). Questi tre esperti dovevano esaminare sul posto l'attuabilità di certi piani preparati dal Governo cinese per la sistemazione dei porti, la costruzione di strade, e la regolarizzazione di alcuni corsi d'acqua; essi tornarono a Ginevra dopo tre mesi di permanenza in Estremo Oriente (se non sbaglio, marzo-aprile scorso); nè si prevede per ora, data la generale situazione politica, economica e finanziaria della Cina, e gli sviluppi del conflitto col Giappone, una ripresa immediata di simili missioni ed un inizio di attuazione dei proposti lavori.

Contemporaneamente partivano per la Cina due Ingegneri inviati dall'organizzazione delle comunicazioni e del transito; il polacco Signor Okenschi, e l'olandese Signor Bourdrez. Questi due signori hanno avuto un contratto di un anno che scade al 31 dicembre 1932; e che potrà essere rinnovato essi hanno l'incarico di studiare il problema riguardante, nei suoi aspetti pratici, la formazione di un corpo di ingegneri cinesi capaci di assumere la direzione dei proposti lavori pubblici. I Signori Okenschi e Bourdrez hanno inoltre una posizione singolarissima nei confronti del noto "consiglio economico nazionale" fondato in Cina per iniziativa di Haas, Rajchman, Salter ecc.; essi sono infatti membri di collegamento del consiglio economico nazionale cinese con l'organizzazione delle comunicazioni e del transito della S.d.N.

[...] per assicurare meglio il suo collegamento con Cina, due comitati consultivi destinati a riunirsi a Ginevra, e la cui sfera di attività, dapprima limitata ai problemi cinesi, è venuta poi ad addentellarsi con quella della

¹ See Richard Henry Tawney, *Land and Labour in China* (London: G. Allen&Unwin Ltd., 1932); and Ross Terrill, *R. H. Tawney and His Time. Socialism as Fellowship* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 61-71.

² C. H. Becker, M. Falski, P. Langevin, and R.H. Tawney, *The Reorganization of Education in China* (Paris: League of Nations Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, 1932), 25.

³ AP 31-45(Cina), Busta 30, Collaborazione tecnica tra la Cina e la S.d.N., T.230675/74, Shanghai, 11/10/1932.

⁴ Ibid., T.321 Ris., Ginevra, 4/8/1932.

Commissione europea, e conseguentemente ad estendersi a tutte le questioni – senza restrizioni geografiche – che si riferiscono all’attuazione di grandi lavori pubblici.¹

The Italian delegate in the League argued as follows:

Ora, in occasione della diciassettesima sessione della Commissione, fra le comunicazioni fatte dal Presidente (Francese) sul suo operato durante il periodo in cui rimasse in carica, vi fu quella riguardante la nomina di alcuni tecnici (un francese, un inglese ed un tedesco) col mandato di andare sul posto, in Cina, per lo studio dei nuovi lavori e per sentire le intenzioni di quel Governo. Fra tali tecnici notato che nessun italiano era compreso [...]

Mi era sembrato che, dovendosi nominare un esperto giapponese nel Comitato per la formazione di un corpo di ingegneri civili, non vi dovessero essere difficoltà ad aggiungere un membro italiano al Comitato dei tre esperti destinati ad intendersi col Governo cinese per i lavori fluviali, portuali e stradali, se questo Comitato doveva ancora esplicare opera ulteriore.

[...] se è bene che nei Comitati di cui è parola, il nostro Paese sia rappresentante, meglio, forse, sarebbe stato che anche nel sopralluogo e nei colloqui col Governo cinese un nostro esperto fosse stato presente, perchè, nel caso non improbabile di intese per ottenere l’ausilio di tecnici europei o assegnare lavori a grandi imprese pure europee, potessero essere indicati anche tecnici o imprese italiane.

E anche indipendentemente da ciò, parmi che la presenza di un rappresentante italiano sarebbe stata opportuna per evidenti ragioni di prestigio, trattandosi di questione di singolare importanza. Finora non si sanno i risultati della missione compiuta, ma i tre esperti sopraccitati faranno certamente rapporto su tale missione, e su tale rapporto non mancherò di richiamare l’attenzione di codesto On.le Ministero.

Tuttavia, se mi è permesso di esprimere un modesto parere, tenuto conto che del citato rapporto la comunicazione non avverrà troppo presto, riterrei utile di interessare la nostra Rappresentanza diplomatica in Cina a raccogliere le informazioni possibili sull’opera esplicata dai tre esperti colà recatisi, sui consigli dati e sulle eventuali conclusioni pratiche avvenute con quel Governo.²

On September 3, 1932, the report from Geneva to the Foreign Ministry of Italy communicated that the Secretary-General of the League “a farsi che fra gli esperti da mandare sul posto fosse compreso un tecnico italiano, e ne ebbi promessa, essendomi stato dichiarato che egli vi aveva già pensato, sapendo che in Italia sono in corso grandi lavori di bonifica, per cui riteneva facile trovare un tecnico competente in tale genere di lavoro.”³

As a matter of fact, an active collaboration between the National Economic Council of China and the Economic and Financial Section of the League started in the summer of 1932 when the Chinese Government requested the League to appoint an expert on agricultural questions to China. Then Sig. Carlo Dragoni, an Italian professor, former Secretary-General of the International Institute of Agriculture, to carry out this mission.⁴

Professor Dragoni, before he reached China, had begun to collect information and made plans for his studies in China while he was still in Europe. He realised that it was a tremendous task to accomplish if he was to offer worthwhile suggestions on agricultural reform and development. In

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ “Technical Co-operation between the League of Nations and China,” *Monthly Summary of the League of Nations*, Vol. XIV (February, 1934), 39.

his report to the Chinese Government he stated,

My mission was for a period of about six months to be spent in China. In view of the shortness of the period and of the magnitude of the task to be accomplished, I subsequently succeeded, through the good offices of the League of Nations, the International Institute of Agriculture in Rome and the Chinese Government, in securing the assistance of Dr. G. Perris, of the Rome Institute. The arrangement proved most useful, Dr. Perris being of great help to me in many ways besides that of carrying out his special duties of collecting and arranging materials from Chinese sources.

[...] While fully aware of the necessity of refraining from arriving at any definite conclusions before my visit to China, I spent some months gathering information from all the sources at my disposal. This preliminary work enabled me, upon my arrival in China at the beginning of October, 1932, to present at once to the Chairman, Dr. T. V. Soong, and Secretary, Mr. Chin Fen, of the National Economic Council, a definite plan for my immediate activities in China.¹

Professor Dragoni started his investigation in China with a period of consultations with persons and institutions carrying out research work and other activities in connection with the economic and social aspects of agriculture, such as the Universities of Nanking, Nankai and Yenching, the China International Faming Relief Commission, and the Mass Education Movement.² After these preliminary studies and consultations, Dragoni made excursions into the provinces of the Lower and Middle Yangtze Valley. Based on these investigations and his previous work Dragoni outlined a plan for an agricultural policy to the National Economic Council. His report dealt with various aspects, such as agricultural statistics and economic inquiries, agricultural credit and rural co-operation, etc. Besides, as the National Economic Council requested him to offer suggestions on the marketing of tea, Professor Dragoni also gave several advices. Before the end of stay in China, on the urgent appeal of the Chinese Government, Dragoni studied the regulations concerning land reconstruction and agricultural development in regions recovered from the Communists.³ Due to financial difficulties and the need for immediate action in certain areas, the National Economic Council of China selected particular provinces for general reconstruction work. Sir Arthur Salter studied national and provincial finance while stayed in China. One of his conclusion was the financial structure of China needed bolstering with foreign capital. He analyzed,

If the political situation and the public finances are improving, an inflow of foreign capital on a considerable scale should be possible. It should not be necessary, nor is it desirable, to wait until political stability has been completely achieved and budget equilibrium definitely assured. If progress is being made in both directions the economic development which will be made possible by additional capital resources would facilitate it and ensure its success. Neither complete political stability, nor a reduction of military expenditure to the level at which it would represent a normal proportion of revenues of the country, nor assured budget equilibrium, can be expected at once, or without a simultaneous improvement of economic conditions. The investor may reasonably be expected to co-operate in the efforts to build up the foundations of permanent economic development and not merely to participate in the development if and when these foundations have been established, with much

¹ Carlo Dragoni, *Agricultural Reform and Development in China* (Shanghai: North-China Daily News and Herald, 1934), 1.

² Ibid., 1-2.

³ Ibid., 31-54.

greater difficulty, without the contribution which he can make. Granting progress then in these directions, and appropriate measures to restore China's external credit the most promising field in which to begin is to be found in the railway situation. [...] The inflow of new capital of this kind, apart from its direct result in promoting economic development based on the improvement of the best form of communications, would attract further capital for investment in other enterprises, would help to correct the adverse balance of payments, stop the drain on silver, and so relieve the general currency situation.¹

Besides, Dragoni investigated into the state of Chinese agriculture, mainly carried out in areas reconquered from the "communist bandits". He admonished the Chinese not to yield to foreign influence, namely the influence of bolshevism. The report he published in 1933 was perfectly in line with the agricultural policies of Guomindang.²

Those reports of experts submitted to the National Economic Council of China only presented general plans for economic reconstruction with little attempt to give detailed recommendations on specific phases of the various problems, but they to some extent did exert influence on the policy of Chinese Government at that time. For instance, almost all the experts mentioned rural co-operatives in their programs. As a result of this common emphasis on the practicality of such enterprises, the Chinese Government, "being convinced of the utility and the necessity of agricultural co-operatives, 'decided to obtain the advice of a highly qualified expert, and asked the League's assistance.'"³

The desire of Italy's participation was declared again to the League, to the Advisory and Technical Committee of Communications and Transit, the Italian delegate Comm. Sinigaglia referred in June 1933, that

Si rileva da questo sopra che nessun tecnico italiano è stato sinora chiamato a partecipare sopra luogo a tale importante attività della S.d.N., e pertanto confermo l'opportunità di insistere presso la Organizzazione delle Comunicazioni e del Transito (che delle destinazioni si occupa in gran parte al di sopra e all'infuori del Comitato) perchè anche all'Italia sia data una adeguata partecipazione alla iniziativa, sia per le materie sinora interessate, sia per altre cui la iniziativa sia per estendersi, tanto più se l'Italia ritenga di avere interesse agli attuali sviluppi delle questioni cinesi.

Ciò che, comunque, non potrebbe ammettere è che nel fare appello alla collaborazione di esperti o di organismi di lavoro per l'opera di ricostruzione in Cina non si segua un criterio di giustizia distributiva nè si tenga conto degli interessi dell'Italia colà e soprattutto delle specializzazione tecnica italiana in lavori di bonifica e di costruzioni stradali nei quali consiste essenzialmente il programma di riorganizzazione della Cina e nei quali lavori i tecnici e le maestranze italiane non temono il confronto con quelli di alcuno altro Paese.⁴

Furthermore, the Italian expert working for the technical section of the League contributed to persuading them to let Italy in cooperation programme. The Ing. Buttini, Italian expert in the Committee of Public Works, told the Foreign Ministry about his activity in this regard:

Ho ritenuto opportuno far conoscere personalmente in conversazione privata al Sig. Haas, nella sua qualità di Direttore della Sezione Comunicazioni e Transito, la sfavorevole impressione riportata in Italia pel fatto che

¹ Arthur Salter, *China and Silver* (New York: Economic Forum, Inc., 1934), 111-112.

² Osterhammel, " 'Technical Co-operation' between the League of Nations and China," 668.

³ Information Section, *The League from Year to Year, 1936* (League of Nations Publication, 1936), 221.

⁴ AP 31-45(Cina), Busta 30, Collaborazione tecnica tra la Cina e la S.d.N., T.217603/C.

nessun italiano sia compreso tra le persone inviate. Il Sig. Haas ha obiettato la solita nota lista, dalla quale risulterebbe che nel complesso della collaborazione in Cina l'Italia è numericamente rappresentata più di qualsiasi altra nazione, pure sempre dichiarando che: ove si presenti la necessità, specialmente in materia di bonifica, non mancherà di tenere presente la opportunità di ricorrere all'opera di esperti italiani. [...] l'Italia possa attendersi di essere tenuta presente anche per altre attività tecniche nelle quali non ha minori titoli di competenza, come nel stradale, idraulico generale, e portuale.

...nessun concreto affidamento ho tuttavia potuto rilevare, cosicchè resta sempre la opportunità di ulteriore azione per ottenere qualche nostra partecipazione, sempre tenendosi preparati a contrabattere la solita obiezione, che io ritengo ingiustificata, che già l'Italia per il complesso della partecipazione in Cina possa considerarsi soddisfatta.¹

As for the Chinese, up to early 1933, the Nanjing Government found itself in a many-sided predicament. Above all, internally the Red Army of Chinese Communists proved to be a much more formidable opponent than Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi had anticipated. Four "Campaigns of Encirclement and Extermination" against the Soviet Areas in South of China had failed to overcome the resistance of the Chinese Communists but succeeded in draining off the meagre financial resources at the disposal of the central government. Furthermore, Japanese occupation in Manchuria aggravated the Nanjing Government's financial straits for loss of the Manchurian Customs and Salt Gabelle revenues. In February 1932 the government declared its inability to honour its internal loan obligations. Creditors were pressed to accept a "readjustment" of the public debt on terms somewhat disadvantageous to the interests of money that had been supporting the regime since its onslaught on the left in April 1927. The effects of public bankruptcy and the resulting sluggishness of the internal bond market were enhanced by the repercussions of the monetary crisis that came to bear upon the Chinese economy from late 1931 onward. A sharp increase in the purchasing power of silver caused a general fall in the Chinese price level, which in turn led to severe deflationary conditions and to disruptions and business contractions in all sectors of the economy.²

A mounting invasion of Japan in the North China, made this rough situation worse. Early 1933 the Kwantung Army was preparing for the annexation the province of Re'he. In mid-February Song Ziwen rushed north to join Marshal Zhang Xueliang, in organizing military resistance and urging the merchants of North China to contribute to the national war chest. In an appeal circulated to the armed forces Song endeavoured to rally the defenders to the flag: "The whole nation has now realized that the only way to deal with the enemy is by force. For this reason we are now stationed at the front lines."³ This effort, however, did not stop the Japanese advance, one reason was that Generalissimo Jiang was then engaged in conducting the Fourth Extermination Campaign against the Chinese Communists' Army. On March 4, 1933 Japanese troops occupied Jehol, encountering little more than a token resistance. The abortive campaign in Re'he led to the withdrawal of Song Ziwen from the front line of Chinese domestic politics, at least for the time being. Song acted with greater aptitude and success on the international stage.

Song Ziwen with an American education background, had always been regarded as the least "oriental" of Chinese leaders, enjoying a high reputation among diplomats and bankers in the West.

¹ AP 31-45(Cina), Busta 30, Collaborazione tecnica tra la Cina e la S.d.N., T.219206/C, Ginevra, 23/6/1933.

² China. Ministry of Industries, Silver and Prices in China. Report of the Committee for the Study of Silver Values and Commodity Prices (Shanghai, 1935), 12, and *passim*. As quoted in Osterhammel, 669.

³ *North China Herald*, 22 February 1933, 283. As quoted in Osterhammel, 669-670.

During 1933, he emerged as the chief spokesman for the Chinese Government in international affairs, outshining the Foreign Minister, Luo Wengan¹. April of this year, Song sailed for the United States where he concluded the 50 million dollar Cotton and Wheat Loan, which relieved America of much of her agricultural surplus stocks and upset the Chinese cotton and wheat markets for months to come. Later in June he attended to the Monetary and Economic Conference in London, during which Song addressed that China would offer good services in absorbing the excess capital that congested the world's capital markets. He made it abundantly clear that Chinese Government would not take any action to close the open door.²

Still staying in London, Song dispatched telegram to the Secretary-General at Geneva, reviewing the past achievements of reconstruction and technical cooperation with the League, announcing the start of a new phase:

I have the honour to inform the Council that, the preliminary work of survey having been made, the National Government, in view of the resources at its disposal, has decided as a beginning to carry into practice its national reconstruction work in a few provinces, which will serve as models for the rest of the country.³

Then Song proposed the nomination of a Technical Officer to be accredited to the National Government and its National Economic Council. In order to deal with this request, the Council decided to set up a special committee on technical cooperation between the League and China. This committee was convened in Paris on 18 July 1933 for its inaugural session in the presence of a representative of the American Embassy, J. T. Marriner. The terms of assignment for a Technical Agent were agreed upon, and Dr. Rajchman was appointed to this post. In October 1933 Dr. Rajchman embarked upon his third and last official mission to China and stayed throughout the following year until his withdrawal from the programme in late 1934.⁴

From the point of view of Song Ziwen, the extension of technical cooperation with the League was based on perfectly sound arguments. First, China would secure foreign technical – and, it was hoped, financial – assistance without surrendering her national sovereignty to control of foreign Powers. Second, Japan had excluded herself from the League and therefore was in a bad position to condemn the League programme as promoting intervention in China on behalf of third power. Third, through concentrating on selected fields of economic reconstruction, technical cooperation would be enlisted to carry out a strategy of routing Communism by means of economic improvement and administrative reform.⁵

In 1933 the technical cooperation between the League and China took on more significance due to certain steps taken by the Chinese Government and the Council of the League. First, on 28 June 1933, the Chinese Government made a request to the Council of the League for arranging for an expert to go to China with a view to promoting and facilitating the technical collaboration.⁶ The Council of the League discussed China's request at its meeting on July 3, deciding to set up a

¹ Luo Wengan, 罗文幹, Lo Wen-kan. See A. R. Burt, J. B. Powell and Carl Crow, eds., *Biographies of Prominent Chinese* (Shanghai: Biographical Publishing Company Inc., 1925), 43.

² *Journal of the Monetary and Economic Conference*, No.6, 16 June 1933, 34. As quoted in Osterhammel, 670.

³ League of Nations, *Official Journal* (September 1933), 1064. As quoted in Osterhammel, 670.

⁴ Osterhammel, “‘Technical Co-operation’ between the League of Nations and China,” 671.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Supplementary Report on the Work of the League since the Thirteenth Session of the Assembly*, League of Nations Publication, A.6 (a).1933, 59.

special committee to take the necessary measures. The Council asked its President and the representatives of the United Kingdom, China, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, and Spain to act on the Special Committee.¹

On July 18, 1933, the Committee met in Paris and took steps to carry out the measures already designated.² Taking into account the requests of the Chinese Government and the attitudes expressed at the Council meeting, the Committee adopted a resolution as follows:

The appointment of the technical agent requested by the Chinese Government is of a purely technical and entirely non-political character. In view of this fundamental principle, it is understood that the technical agent shall act as a technical liaison officer with the National Economic Council of China for the purpose of technical co-operation with the competent organs of the League of Nations.

He shall hold office for one year. His salary and his travelling and subsistence expenses shall be defrayed by the Chinese Government.

The duties of the technical agent shall be:

1) To supply information on the working of the technical organizations of the League and on the manner in which these organizations may be utilized for the purpose of co-operation in the reconstruction of China;

2) To transmit to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, for submission to the competent organization or organizations, any request for technical co-operation which he may receive from the Chinese Government;

3) To afford the Chinese Government such assistance as it may desire with a view to securing the co-operation of such experts as that Government might wish to engage for a technical service connected with the work of reconstruction;

4) To assist the National Economic Council in co-ordinating on the spot the activities of the experts of the League's technical organizations.³

At this meeting the Committee appointed Dr. Ludwig Rajchman, Director of the Health Section of the Secretariat, to the post of "liaison" officer with the National Economic Council of China.

Meanwhile, the Government of China put the NEC on a sound and permanent footing. Since the definitive organization of the NEC was inaugurated in November 1933,

the machinery of the Council has greatly expanded. The Council is now placed directly under the control of the National Government. It is composed of about forty members including the principal Ministers of the Government, leading bankers, industrialists, and private individuals selected not because of the position they hold but because of their personal qualities and ability in various fields of activity. These private persons are invited to help the Government in planning and executing an urgent development programme. The Council as a whole is thus an advisory board, but as far as the Ministerial members of the Council accept policies proposed

¹ Porter, *Technical Co-operation*, 6.

² During this meeting, there was a talk between Song Ziwen and Italian delegate Sig. Biancheri. The latter reported to the Foreign Ministry: "Vice Presidente Consiglio cinese mi ha ripetutamente manifestata sua ammirazione per il Duce e l'opera di Lui riaffermando suo desiderio di collaborare attivamente con l'Italia. Al riguardo ho conferito poi con dottor Rajchman il quale mi ha dato larghe assicurazioni. Egli spiegherà suo programma più diffusamente a Scaduto ed esaminerà con lui praticamente sfere e misura della nostra partecipazione e verrà a Roma prima di imbarcarsi per la Cina." AP 31-45(Cina), Busta 30, Collaborazione tecnica tra la Cina e la S.d.N., T.3213 R., Parigi, 19/7/1933.

³ AP 31-45 (Cina), Busta 30, Collaborazione tecnica tra la Cina e la SdN, T.223803/C, Roma, 7/8/1933; *Supplementary Report on the Work of the League since the Thirteenth Session of the Assembly*, League of Nations Publication, A.6 (a).1933, 59-60.

they will be, as members of the Government, in a position to give immediate executive affect to them. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman gave way to a Standing Committee composed of Mr. Wang Ching-wei, Dr. Sun Fo, Dr. T. V. Soong, and since December, 1933, Marshal Chiang Kai-shek, and Dr. H. H. Kung. This Standing Committee is the policy-determining and governing body of the Council. Subject to its instructions is a Secretary-General who has a general responsibility for administrative work.

The old administrative units of the Council were revised and enlarged and new ones created. They included: 1) Secretariat, 2) Bureau of Roads, 3) Bureau of Hydraulic Engineering, 4) Central Research Bureau, 7) Cotton Industry Commission, 8) Sericulture and Filature Improvement Commission, and 9) Co-operative Commission. These units are still functioning at present, with the exception of the Bureau of Agriculture and the Co-operative Commission, which were transferred to the Ministry of Industries in July, 1936.

In addition to these administrative units, there is a Standing Advisory Committee to which all the important technical plans of the Council are referred for its expert opinion.¹

The powers of the National Economic Council after the reorganization were very extensive. An enumeration of these powers showed that the Council was established a) to plan, examine, and approve projects for economic reconstruction or development; b) to examine and approve the necessary expenditure required for the execution of projects for economic reconstruction or development; c) to supervise and direct projects for economic reconstruction or development; d) to execute directly special projects for economic reconstruction or development.² The Chinese Government stated,

This enumeration of powers does not mean that the Council is to embark on such a full programme of work immediately; it is rather an indication of the role that is intended for the Council to play eventually. In the exercise of its powers, the Council must take into special consideration the following factors: 1) the vast area over which national responsibility extends; 2) the fact that economic reconstruction has to proceed hand in hand with political consolidation; 3) the powers of the Council are designed not so much to help a gradual evolution of economic policy, or the mere adaptation of the country's economic structure to the new conditions, as to facilitating an urgent task of reconstruction and transformation.³

Under that plan of technical cooperation between the League and China in 1933, various methods were employed to carry out the necessary measures of collaboration. Those technical organizations of the League co-operated with the authorities working under the auspices of the NEC. This collaboration took several forms:

- 1) the dispatch to China, for a long period of liaison with the National Economic Council, of representatives of the Technical Organizations of the League;
- 2) the dispatch to China of committees of experts appointed by the competent Technical Organization of the League (or by an institution placed under the League's direction) to give an opinion on a specific problem (Committee of Educational Experts appointed by the Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, and Committee of Experts on Hydraulic Questions sent by the Communications and Transit Organization);
- 3) the appointment by the competent Technical Organizations of experts for the purpose of making a report to

¹ Chin Fen, ed., *Annual Report of the National Economic Council, 1936* (Nanjing: National Economic Council of China, 1937), 42.

² *Ibid.*, 1-2.

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

the Chinese National Economic Council on a given question;

4) the appointment by the competent Organization of the League of experts engaged by the Chinese Government to co-operate in the organization of its service [...] In certain cases appointments have been made by the Secretary-General.¹

At the request of the Chinese Government and upon his appointment by the Economic Committee of the League, Sig. Benito Mari, former Chairman of the Italian Association of Sericulture, investigated the Chinese silk industry, beginning in 1933.² The enquiries of Sig. Mari extended over the provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Guangdong, Shandong and Sichuan (lay far up the Yangtze Valley in the remote west).³ He attributed the decline in the Chinese silk trade mainly to a deterioration in the quality of silk produced:

Faulty methods of mulberry-tree cultivation; the degeneration, due to improper selection, of the silkworm eggs; primitive and haphazard rearing of silkworms, and their improper feeding; the spoiling of cocoons in the drying process; indifferent management of the filatures and the lack of favourable financial backing; all have played their part in bringing about the present decay. One cause is especially potent. In the cocoon market, there is no attempt to grade the cocoons, good and bad alike being purchased by the filatures, and in consequence, Chinese silk is of very variable quality.⁴

In his report, Sig. Mari devoted special attention to the last cause – the lack of standards in the collection of cocoons, commenting:

Strictly speaking, there is no organized cocoon market, as in Europe, on which the farmer can sell his products at competitive prices. The silk filatures decide in advance at what average price they will purchase cocoons from the farmers, and send out collectors, who buy up the crops at a uniform price. The buying agents' technical knowledge is often negligible; they are either unable or unwilling to distinguish good products from bad, while the farmer, aware that the price which he can obtain is not determined by the quality of his cocoons, does not take enough care of his rearings and sometimes keeps back the best part of his crop and hands over the worst to the collectors. The existence of this pernicious system very largely explains the farmer's indifference to improved methods of production.⁵

Salvation for the sick Chinese silk industry, according to Sig. Mari, was in government intervention and technical and industrial improvements. He advised the Chinese Government to organize the silk industry on a rational basis. His recommendations for state control of the industry including:

The Chinese Government should establish a State monopoly for the control of everything pertaining to the cultivation of mulberry trees, to the preparation of silkworm eggs, to the rearing of silkworms and cocoons, and

¹ "Technical Co-operation between the League of Nations and China," *Monthly Summary of the League of Nations*, Vol. XIV (February, 1934), 35-36.

² *Ibid.*, 39.

³ L. Rajchman, *Report of the Technical Agent of the Council on his Mission in China*, Council Committee on Technical Co-operation between the League of Nations and China, League of Nations Publication, C.157.M.66.1934.1, 31.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Benito Mari, *Summary Report on an Inquiry on the Reorganization of Chinese Sericulture* (Shanghai: North-China Daily News and Herald, 1934), 6.

to the price and sale of cocoons.¹

The creation of eighty sericultural districts, each under the direction of a chief demonstrator representing the Monopoly and with a staff of trained assistants, was a primary point in the silk expert's proposed plan. Sig. Mari also proposed the establishment of a state egg production station at a cost of \$900,000.² To administer of the Government program of sericultural improvement, Mari stated:

A Central Sericultural Bureau should be created under the National Economic Council for the purpose of co-ordinating the commercial and industrial organizations of sericulture and the activities of the numerous sericultural institutions scattered throughout the country.³

The Chinese Government created a Sericulture and Filature Improvement Commission in 1933. In conjunction with the above studies⁴, Mari initiated a series of sericulture experiments in order to determine whether improved results could be obtained by the crossing of Chinese silkworms with Italian varieties. Results obtained indicated that the adoption of certain crossings being used at that time in the Japanese and Italian silk industries would be of great benefit to the Chinese industry.⁵ The studies of Mari later contributed to the project of economic cooperation between Italy and China, which will be discussed in next section.

As the Italian experts Dragoni and Mari had done excellent work, the head of the cooperation programme of the League, Dr. Rajchman expressed his appreciation to the Foreign Ministry of Italy. Italian delegate reported on August 9, 1933:

Egli [Rajchman] mi ha esposto in riassunto l'opera svolta dal 1931 in qua dai tecnici inviati dalla S.d.N. in Cina nel campo dell'igiene, delle comunicazioni, dell'educazione e dell'agricoltura; mi ha detto che tale opera aveva dato buoni frutti ma che occorreva coordinarla per meglio svilupparla; ha avuto parole di elogio per gli studi fatti in Cina dai tecnici italiani, specialmente Dragoni (agricoltura) e Mari (sericoltura).

[...] Ho detto al Sig. Rajchman che l'Italia desiderava continuare a partecipare, anche tramite la S.d.N, alla cooperazione per la riorganizzazione tecnica della Cina mediante l'invio di esperti; che, in seguito agli elogi da lui fatti di Dragoni e Mari, non dubitavo che egli avrebbe proposto al Segretario Generale l'invio in Cina di tecnici italiani e che l'Italia avrebbe potuto fornire specialmente: tecnici agricoli; ingegneri civili, idraulici e bonificatori; nonché medici, in particolare malariologia.

Il Sig. Rajchman mi ha assicurato che egli apprezza molto la collaborazione italiana e che conta di proporre la nomina di tecnici agricoli e ingegneri civili italiani; per il resto, vedrà in un secondo tempo.

Il Sig. Rajchman mi ha detto poi che si propone di passare da Roma prima di recarsi in Cina e che anche colà si terrà in contatto con le RR. Autorità.⁶

Likewise, as for the Italy's participation in the cooperation programme of the League, the

¹ Ibid., 4.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ More suggestions of Mari on technical and industrial improvements see *Summary Report on an Inquiry on the Reorganization of Chinese Sericulture*, 4-5.

⁵ Mari, *Summary Report*, 7-8.

⁶ AP 31-45(Cina), Busta 30, Collaborazione tecnica tra la Cina e la S.d.N., T.223997/C, Roma, 9/8/1933, appunto unito.

representative of the Chinese Government made a comment of appreciation. The Italian Ambassador in Moscow, Attolico communicated on 21 August 1933, about his conversation with Chinese Ambassador in Moscow:

In una conversazione con l'Ambasciatore di Cina a Mosca, Signor Yen, questi – dopo essersi congratulato con me dell'impresa Balbo – mi ha accennato con compiacimento al desiderio di S. E. il Capo del Governo di prendere una “prominent part” nel lavoro ricostruttivo della Cina.

Ne ho tratto motivo per dirgli che vedevo con piacere che gli intendimenti di S. E. Mussolini nei riguardi della Cina fossero apprezzati e visti con simpatia, ma occorreva che anche il Governo Cinese facesse da parte sua il necessario perché questa cooperazione italiana voluta dal Capo del Governo si svolgesse ampiamente e proficuamente. Nell'occasione, lamentai la nomina del Giannini¹, scelto all'infuori di ogni consultazione col R. Governo e con i circoli bancari italiani, e che non è altro che una *longa manus* (lunga mano) in Italia del Signor Monnet.²

Dr. Rajchman, before leaving Europe for China, went to Rome and had a talk with the official of Italian Government about the economic reorganization of China and his mission. The minute of Foreign Ministry communicated on 18 September 1933:

Prima d'imbarcarsi a Brindisi per Shanghai il Signor Rajchman ha tenuto a presentarsi a questo Ministero per confermare il suo intendimento di avvalersi della collaborazione di tecnici italiani nell'opera di ricostruzione in Cina.

[...] Parlando delle attività che intende promuovere in Cina, il Sig. Rajchman mi ha detto che inizialmente tutti i suoi sforzi saranno diretti ad avviare verso la più soddisfacente soluzione tre questioni ch'egli considera fondamentali per lo svolgimento di un razionale programma di ricostruzione e precisamente: a) mettere il Comitato Economico Nazionale in grado di funzionare in piano; b) dare alle due provincie alle quali è limitata per ora l'opera di ricostruzione economica un'adeguata organizzazione amministrativa; c) costituire gli uffici alla dipendenza degli esperti stranieri che già sono in Cina.

Preveduto a queste prime esigenze, egli passerà in America e di là in Europa per interessare quei Governi alla collaborazione tecnica con la Cina.

I problemi che intende affrontare concernono: 1) il miglioramento agricolo; 2) il miglioramento delle comunicazioni; 3) il riordinamento amministrativo.

[...] Il Sig. Rajchman pensa che nelle due provincie delle quali si occuperà la S.d.N., si potrebbero continuare delle “équipes” di tecnici italiani che potrebbero occuparsi con concetti organici di questioni idroelettriche, questioni di agricoltura, questioni di bonifiche. Egli si riserva di parlarne al Governo cinese dopo di che ci farà sapere qualche cosa.

Sull'argomento egli desiderbbe avere la collaborazione tecnica dell'Ing. Angelo Omodeo col quale intende avviare diretti contatti. Nell'accennare alle varie possibilità che si presentano alla iniziativa italiana ha insistito sulla convenienza per l'Italia che ha oggi le più rapide comunicazioni con l'Estremo Oriente, di stabilire a complemento delle linee marittime una linea aerea.³

¹ Francesco Giannini: ex funzionario del R. Ministero degli Affari Esteri. Attualmente Rappresentante per l'Italia del gruppo Blair; dipende dal Monnet. (Comm. Dr. Francesco Giannini, had acted as Financial Advisor to Chinese Government up to 24 July 1933.) Jean Monnet: non è il Governatore della Banca di Francia (Moret). Il Sig. Monnet è stato Segretario Generale aggiunto della S.d.N. Attualmente è il Rappresentante per l'Europa del gruppo bancario anglo-americano Blair. See *AP 31-45 (Cina)*, Busta 30, Collaborazione tecnica tra la Cina e la SdN.

² *AP31-45 (Cina)*, Busta 30, Progetto di collaborazione, T.03567/1731, Mosca, 21/8/1933.

³ *Ibid.*, T.227859/C, Roma, 18/9/1933.

In response to the plan of Rajchman, Italian Government informed him that in the conversation with Mr. Song Ziwen, Italy had declared “la nostra buona volontà e il nostro interesse a partecipare in primo piano assieme con gli altri maggiori Paesi al movimento per lo sviluppo economico della Cina.”¹ Both Monnet and Rajchman released a message to Italy that “in Cina ci sarà un largo campo per i tecnici italiani per i problemi dell’agricoltura, delle bonifiche, delle strade, delle elettrificazioni. In Cina ci è tutto da fare.”² As a result, on the scene of cooperation programme of the League for reconstruction of China, some Italian experts played significant role.

The urgent need for efficient flood control, water conservation, and transportation facilities caused the Chinese Government to include such measures in a first programme of national development. The National Economic Council, set up to administer the national program, asked the Communications and Transit Section of the League for “expert co-operation in establishing a final plan for the works of the River Hwai, the river system of North China (Tien-Tsin), and the development of the port in the district of Greater Shanghai”³⁴

On 13 June 1931, the League’s Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit voted to collaborate with the Chinese Government. A commission of three experts was accordingly sent to China, consisting of Mr. A. T. Coode, a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers of the United Kingdom; M. L. Perrier, Inspector-General of Roads and Bridges at Paris; and M. W. Sieveking, Director of Constructions at the port of Hamburg.⁵ The Commission arrived in China at the beginning of January 1932 and stayed about three months.⁶ At the same time, experts on hydraulic questions were placed at the disposal of the National Economic Council as representative of the Communications and Transit Organization for investigation in China.

After a year of activity on various hydraulic projects the National Economic Council asked the League for further assistance. Thus the Advisory Committee for Communications and Transit responded by sending to China a group of experts consisting of:

Mr. A. T. Coode, of Messrs. Coode, Wilson, Mitchell and Vaughan-Lee, London, Consulting Engineers to the Crown Agents for the Colonies, Member of Committee of Experts on Hydraulic Questions sent to China by the Communications and Transit Organization in 1932;

Mr. L. Coursin, Chief Engineer of Roads and Bridges, Director of Public Works in Madagascar;

Mr. G. P. Nijhoff, Consulting Engineer, Rapporteur to the Committee of Enquiry on Questions relating to

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ “Il territorio amministrato dalla Municipalità cinese della ‘Greater Shanghai’ è delimitato in modo da formare insieme con le due Concessioni straniere quella che dovrebbe costituire, a mente dei cinesi, la grande metropoli commerciale e industriale della Repubblica. Presentemente, non avendo controllo sulla zona della Concessioni straniere, esso non presenta nessuna continuità topografica, risultando separata in due zone tra le quali le Concessioni stesse sono incuneate.” *AP 1931-45 (Cina)*, B.11, sf.2., Regia Legazione d’Italia in Cina, Allegato, N.185, 19/4/1932, 6.

⁴ “Communications and Transit, Sixteenth Session of the Advisory Committee,” *Monthly Summary of the League of Nations*, Vol. XI (June, 1931), 160.

⁵ *Report of the Secretary-General of the Committee on the Development of Co-operation between the National Government of China and the Communications and Transit Organization*, Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit, Records of the Work of the Eighteenth Session, League of Nations Publication, C.98.m.33.1934.VIII.8, Annex 14, C.C.T.538., C.C.T./T.P.O.N.40, 73.

⁶ L. Rajchman, Report of the Technical Agent of the Council on his Mission in China, Council Committee on Technical Co-operation between the League of Nations and China, League of Nations Publication, C.157.M.66.1934.1, 37.

Public Works and National Technical Equipment of the Communications and Transit Organization;

Mr. Angelo Omodeo, Consulting Engineer, Rapporteur to the Committee of Enquiry on Questions relating to Public Works and National Technical Equipment of the Communications and Transit Organization.¹

Before departing for China, the group did some preliminary work on the basis of reports from China, in cooperation with M. Watier, Director of Maritime Ports and Navigable Waterways at the French Ministry of Public Works, and in consultation with Mr. Daniel Mead, Consulting Engineer at Madison, Wisconsin, and Professor Engels of Dresden.²

Upon the arrival of the experts in China, study immediately began on the improvement of the plain drained by the Yellow River (Huang He) against floods.³ After studying the various possible remedies for each of the direct and indirect causes of catastrophes on the Yellow River, the Mission of the League summarized its findings:

This study points to the conclusion that it is certainly possible to limit the floods and reduce their frequency very greatly, and that the best and most expeditious means to this end would be the improvement of the defensive dykes in the plains. It has further been shown, that, for the purpose of carrying out this great undertaking, China possesses abundant skilled labour and the necessary material. The sums spent in financing these works would remain almost entirely in circulation within the Chinese national economy, and would primarily benefit the riparian population, from which the workers would be recruited.

In spite of its magnitude, this operation could be carried out in a relatively short time. Like all other works of man, however, it would have its weaknesses and imperfections, and would therefore have to be completed by more protracted operations, the preliminary investigations for which have scarcely been begun.⁴

The Mission of experts during its stay in China inspected the hydraulic system for irrigation under construction in Shensi Province (陝西), with purpose of determining the effectiveness of the system and the durability of its various sections.

Engineer Angelo Omodeo⁵ (with assistance of another Italian Engineer Marcello⁶) investigated the situation in Suiyuan Province with regard to irrigation problems. His study of the Hetao Plain

¹ *Report by the Committee of Experts on Hydraulic and Road Questions in China*, League of Nations Publication, C.91.M.34.1936.VIII.4, 5.

² "Technical Co-operation between the League of Nations and China," *Monthly Summary of the League of Nations*, Vol. XIV (November 1934), 268.

³ *Report by the Committee of Experts on Hydraulic and Road Questions in China*, 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵ As for the mission of Omodeo, Dr. Rajchman told Italian representative in China (Anfuso) that "Governo cinese mostra molto interesse eventuale venuta Ing. Omodeo e che T. V. Soong ha espresso desiderio che eminente tecnico si rechi a compiere periodo studi preparatori in Cina. Secondo quanto Rajchman mi disse, in un primo tempo converrebbe di affidare ad Ing. Omodeo studio possibili impianti idraulici di una determinata provincia della Cina nell'intento futuro di avviare nella stessa regione un numeroso gruppo di tecnici italiani che potrebbero stabilirvisi per un lungo periodo di tempo. Dr. Rajchman si mostra intento subito disposto a compiere paesi necessari presso l'Ufficio competente della S.d.N. affinché Ing. Omodeo venga nominato Delegato tecnico della Lega delle Nazioni presso il Governo cinese ed in tale qualità egli venga in Cina alle condizioni fatte agli altri Delegati, anche italiani, che hanno ricevute lo stesso incarico presso il Governo cinese, cioè a dare tremila franchi svizzeri mensili più spese di viaggio." *AP 31-45(Cina)*, Busta 30, Collaborazione tecnica tra la Cina e la SdN, T.9408 P.R., Shanghai, 7/10/1933.

⁶ Foreign Ministry Aloisi communicated "Ing. Omodeo mentre conferma che è disposto a venire nel gennaio prossimo in Cina con Ing. Marcello per compiere studi preliminari su programma di sistemazione idraulica, è lieto di apprendere prospettivo che si presentano di sviluppare ulteriormente collaborazione tecnica italiana. Evidentemente l'interesse precipuo dell'Ing. Omodeo è di concretare sul luogo possibilità di un proficuo lavoro e tanto condizioni relative al compenso per il primo sopralluogo lasciano sempre possibilità di un accomodamento." *AP 31-45(Cina)*, Busta 30, Collaborazione tecnica tra la Cina e la SdN, T.10680/248 P.R., Roma, 11/10/1933.

(河套平原) irrigation system resulted in the planning of a programme of investigations to be undertaken by Chinese engineers. Eng. Omodeo suggested some essential measures to be taken, such as proper construction of intakes, regulation of the Wang Lu Hao, and general improvement of the irrigation system, etc.¹

Eng. Omodeo completed his studies in Suiyuan Province with a brief survey of the irrigation works of the Saratsi Plain. He concluded his research as follows:

1) In present circumstances, the Saratsi system does not irrigate the land and the works executed must be regarded as useless.

2) To restart the system itself, while possible from a purely technical standpoint, would undoubtedly be very expensive; its advisability should therefore be studied and must be decided in the light, not only of technical, but also – and mainly – of agricultural, economic, social and political considerations.

3) The restoration of the irrigation system, if found advisable, can neither be carried out in stages simultaneously within the economic development of the district or can even be restricted in extent and in utility.²

On the other hand, the Communications and Transit Section of the League helped the National Economic Council to increase the knowledge of Chinese engineers by arranging visit in Western European countries and placing them in various foreign administrations. For instance the Chief Engineer of the Huai River Commission visited Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy of six months duration in 1936-1937, with a view to studying hydraulic works in general, the regularisation and canalisation of rivers, flood protection and the construction of river ports in particular.³

It came to China's assistance for reorganizing educational system that the Intellectual Cooperation Organization sent a mission to China, consisting of Mr. Becker, ordinary professor of Berlin University, former Prussian Minister of Education; Mr. Falski, Professor of Philology and Director of the Polish Ministry of Education; Mr. Langevin, Professor at the *College de France*; and Mr. Tawney, Professor at London University.⁴ The mission arrived in Shanghai on September 30, 1931, and remained there three months.⁵

Toward the end of the educational mission's stay in China, an Italian representative of the International Educational Cinema-tographic Institute, Sig. Alessandro Sardi joined it to study the possibilities of producing educational films in China. Following the recommendation of the Chinese authorities, Sardi approached the question from a threefold aspect:

a) new facilities to be introduced into education (films illustrating professional training, health measures, agriculture, the teaching of sciences, documentary films, etc.); b) collaboration in the work of reform undertaken in China by making it known and understood within the country; c) means of interesting foreign

¹ *Report by the Committee of Experts on Hydraulic and Road Questions in China*, 107-109.

² *Ibid.*, 116.

³ *Report on the Work of the League of Nations, 1936/37*, Part 1, League of Nations Publication, A.6.1937.3, 146-147.

⁴ "Work of the Plenary Committee on Intellectual Co-operation, Collaboration with the Chinese Government," *Monthly Summary of the League of Nations*, Vol. XI (July 1931), 181-182.

⁵ *League of Nations' Mission of Educationists, The Reorganisation of Education in China* (Paris: League of Nations' Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, 1932), 12.

countries in China.¹

In order to bring out the usefulness of educational films, Sig. Sardi showed several reels of documentary films to groups of Chinese educational leaders in some major cities. He also lectured on various situations in which educational films might be helpful in China.²

In conformity with the recommendations of the educational experts of the League, Chinese Government sent a group of Chinese educationalists to Europe to study the public school administration, teaching methods, and principal cultural centres of several countries.³ The members of the mission to Europe were C. P. Cheng, Director of the Nanking Teachers College; S. M. Lee, Dean of the School of Engineering, Hanchow National University; Y. S. Yang, Professor of Education at the Peking National University; Y. S. Kuo, Director of Higher Education in the Ministry of Public Education; C. S. Lee of Jena University (Germany); and Hoshien Chen, former Kiangsu Commissioner of Education.⁴ They arrived in Europe toward the end of August, 1932, starting their inquiry in Poland (remained from September 3 to 28). Then they proceeded to Germany, where they stayed from October 1 to November 8 (during an interval between October 4 and 11, they paid a visit to Denmark). When they stayed in Germany, the educational mission of China studied the organization of small autonomous educational bodies, particularly at Lubeck and Hamburg. They visited schools of horticulture, vocational schools and handicraft schools, elementary schools and modern secondary schools, mining, engineering and health schools, etc. Lectures were organized with a view to explaining the system of administration of public education in the various German states and the organization of the administrative services.⁵

Then they went to France and remained from November 10 to December 5. After that, the mission passed to England, where they remained until the end of December. On leaving England the educational mission visited Italy for a fortnight. The program drawn up for this Chinese mission included not only visits to school establishments, but also a summary examination of the artistic treasures of the past and of the educational and political institutions of the new Italy, acquaintance with which seemed essential to an understanding of the system of public education. The mission visited the Polytechnic University of Milan, several primary schools, including a new school whose teaching was based on the Pizzigorni method, various scientific research institutes, rural schools, architectural schools, schools for agriculture and commerce, etc.⁶

After visit in Italy, they went on to Vienna, and then the Chinese educational experts ended their tour with a short visit to Russia for first few days of February 1933. The mission left Moscow on February 18 and returned to China.⁷

Dr. Rajchman was brought down in the summer of 1934. The immediate reason was a change at the top of the League of Nations. With Sir Eric Drummond's departure from office, "cet 'âge d'or"

¹ *Intellectual Co-operation during the year 1932* (Paris: League of Nations' Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, 1933), 43.

² "Educational Reform in China," *Monthly Summary of the League of Nations*, Vol. XII (July 1932), 231-232.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ "Mission of Chinese Educationists to Europe," *Monthly Summary of the League of Nations*, Vol. XII (August and September 1932), 255.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

⁷ "Educational Reform in China," *Information Bulletin on Intellectual Co-operation*, Vol. I (February to April 1933): 294-295.

des Commissions et Organisations techniques prit brutalement fin”.¹ Under Joseph Avenol, the new Secretary-General, the principle of control replaced that of autonomy; the organization of the League Secretariat was remolded along lines of French-type centralization. Avenol in particular disliked Rajchman’s unbridled activities in China. Moreover Avenol was known to hold strong anti-Chinese opinions, to be in favour of the Japanese cause and to welcome a possible return of Japan into the League.²

Small wonder that Avenol should be susceptible to Japanese pressure. This pressure was brought to bear in April 1934 when Japanese representatives at Paris and Geneva protested against Rajchman’s allegedly anti-Japanese machinations. On 17 April Amai Eiji made his celebrated statement³, declaring “any joint operations undertaken by foreign powers even in the name of technical or financial assistance at this particular moment after the Manchurian and Shanghai incidents are bound to acquire political significance”.⁴ In August Avenol posed the alternative to Rajchman of either returning to China as an adviser to the National Government or retaining his position in the League Secretariat. Rajchman elected to remain at Geneva. Prentiss Gilbert, the American Consular-General at Geneva, observed that this decision “was not a voluntary one on the part of Dr. Rajchman”.⁵

As it turned out, the Chinese on their part had also lost their interest in maintaining the programme. When Robert Haas, the Secretary of the Council Committee and Director of the Section for Communications and Transit, stayed in China from January to May 1935 on “a temporary mission for the maintenance of contact and liaison with the members of the Chinese Government and those at the head of the Chinese public organizations engaged in the work of reconstruction”⁶, he met with wide-spread indifference.

At that time, changes were taking place in China’s politics which diminished the League’s importance to the ruling circles at Nanjing.⁷ Diplomatically, China entered a period of appeasement towards Japan that culminated in the Ho-Umezu Agreement of 6 July 1935 (exposing the Beijing and Tianjin area to the Japanese Kwantung Army) and was to last up to the

¹ Osterhammel, “ ‘Technical Co-operation’ between the League of Nations and China,” 677-678.

² James Barros, *Betrayal from Within, Joseph Avenol, Secretary-General of the League of Nations 1933-1940* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), 44.

³ Amai Doctrine, formulated around 1934, was that Japan reserved the right to act unilaterally in order to “preserve peace and order in East Asia.” The context was the depression of the 30s, when Japan lost a substantial amount of its trade as a result of international trade barriers. The Doctrine was chiefly intended to convert the then feeble China into a client state and to establish Japan as the dominant power in the Pacific while containing Russia, resurgent then as now. For Japan, China was the main source of raw materials, as well as possessing tremendous strategic importance in its struggle with Russia. In the Amai Doctrine, Japan also declared that China does not have the right to seek foreign assistance or to resist Japan in establishing a new order under the aegis of an East Asian League and furthermore, that any third parties involved in China would have to consult Japan. In addition, the Amai Doctrine directly challenged the so-called Open Door policy, under which many other powers, including Britain and United States, enjoyed special economic privileges in China. Britain’s China Lobby formulated what was to become England’s China policy in the Far East, which was that the government would safeguard Britain’s economic interests in China, enter into cooperation and competition with Japan and try to establish a China-Japan Detente. During the 30s, Britain and France wished above all to avoid confrontation with Germany, which lead them to be forbearing with Japan, even in the face of its aggression. Moreover, at a time of global depression many of the big powers wanted to refrain from actions that could injure trade relations with Japan. See website: <https://www.politact.com/asia-pacific/the-japanese-amai-doctrine.html>

⁴ *Documents on International Affairs 1934* (London, 1935), 472. As quoted in Osterhammel, 678.

⁵ Gilbert to Hull, 1 September 1934, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1934*, III, 410. As quoted in Osterhammel, 678.

⁶ League of Nations, *Report Submitted to the Secretary-General by the Director of the Section for Communications and Transit, Secretary of the Council Committee, on His Mission to China* (Geneva, 1935), Off.No.C.410.M.206.1935, 5. As quoted in Osterhammel, 679.

⁷ Osterhammel, 679.

Xi'an Incident of December 1936. "Sino-Japanese Economic Cooperation" was being practiced in North China, and rumours were going around that Japanese advisers might replace the few remaining League experts. Chinese foreign policy began to emphasize bilateral contacts with the major powers: Sir Frederick Leith-Ross of the British Treasury was well received when he arrived in September 1935, while China drew closer to Germany and relations with the Soviet Union were slowly improving.

The year 1935 also marked the beginning of a new economic policy in China. Owing to the aggravation of the silver crisis, the Chinese economy touched the nadir of depression during the first quarter of that year. In autumn Nanjing Administration reacted by nationalizing the silver reserves, introducing a managed currency and reorganizing the banking system. Thus a monetary control over the economy handled by the three big government banks. Already in April 1935 another powerful rival to the National Economic Council had arisen – the National Defence Planning Commission was reorganized as the National Resources Commission under the Military Council of Guomindang and put in exclusive charge of the construction of China's heavy industries and the control over the country's tungsten and antimony resources. In June 1936 the regulation of the cotton, silk and tea industries was transferred from the National Economic Council to the Ministry of Industries.¹ Therefore, the sphere of technical cooperation was constantly narrowed down. Finally, sometime in the third quarter of 1935 the National Economic Council gave up its former practice of making regular reports to Geneva.² By the end of 1935 there was no one left to keep technical cooperation between the League and China going.

2.2 PROJECT OF ITALO-CHINESE ECONOMIC COOPERATION

2.2.1 Visit of Kong Xiangxi January 1933

January 1933, a Chinese delegation, sent to the United States and Europe by Nanjing Government for studying the main industrial and commercial organizations and making purchases of aviation and machinery material and agricultural implements, arrived in Italy. Mr. Kong

¹ Chen Guofu, *The Co-operative Movement in China* (Nanjing: China Co-operators' Union, 1933), 24.

² Johnson to Hull, 25 September 1935, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1935*, III, 623. As quoted in Osterhammel, 680.

Xiangxi¹ as the head of the delegation visited Aloisi, the Head of Cabinet in Foreign Ministry, and desired to obtain an audience with Mussolini. Kong expressed his admiration for Mussolini. Aloisi advised that Italy could offer a good program and a good organization of visit not only to Italian manufacturing plants of aviation material and agricultural machinery, but also to the great work which recorded the progress of the country in the field of agriculture. It was estimated that this could greatly contribute to the development of the trading of Italian industrial products in China.

Mussolini accepted Kong's request and had a conversation with him on February 10.² As it was reported by Marchese Theodoli to Suvich on February 17, 1933 from Geneva, the delegation headed by Minister Kong had officially the task of ascertaining which of the various countries they visited could offer the best resources and the best conditions for a possible China's industrial reorganization. Indeed, the delegation had never hidden the fact that only the manufacture of war materials interested them.

Minister Kong aspired to be received by the Duce, who never hesitated to lead the way in the clear and precise manner for the people to get through the difficulties of post-war. And it was up to the Duce who never ceased to argue that there would be no peace or stability if the arrangement of a continent continued to rest on treaties imposed by force. From the point of view of Kong, the peace in the Pacific should not be threatened by an arrangement of Manchuria imposed by force, too. Kong required Mussolini to study and suggest on a comprehensive plan of intellectual and industrial cooperation, exchanging Chinese students, Italian teachers and technicians, purchases, contracts for road works, etc. The audience granted by the Duce might rather disillusioned Kong, according to Theodoli, but the Head of Government had at each instant taken the initiative and the conduct of conversation. Kong in too many occasions insisted the fact that the meeting with the Duce had been marked by the greatest cordiality. Theodoli believed that was because the conversations which took place a week ago between Kong and Mr. MacDonald (the US) and Sir John Simon (Great Britain) were very encouraging, Kong would not be completely silent on the positive aspects of exchange of ideas with the Duce. Kong strived to make the Italian delegate understand that it was not surprising if one country at a critical moment, which China was currently going through, China "preferisca passare ordinazioni urgenti a quei paesi di cui i Governi svolgono azione diplomatica favorevole".³

Theodoli accompanied Kong to visit various industrial establishments, in which Kong appeared to be lack of interest. Instead the Kong's mission showed quite special interest in aviation, therefore Theodoli advised the Minister Kong to fly on some of the equipments which were already purchased in China and about to be shipped to China this time. It would be the first time that a Chinese statesman flew on equipment ordered but not yet delivered. Theodoli did this in order to convince Kong the utility to send in Italy a small semi-permanent technical Commission, responsible for making purchases and proceeding to tests in Italy, thus avoiding the endless intermediaries of dubious morality that infest the Chinese coast. Only in this way, protecting as

¹ Kong Xiangxi: (孔祥熙, Wade-Giles: Kung Hsiang-Hsi, 1881-1967) often known as Dr. H. H. Kung, was a wealthy Chinese banker and politician in the early 20th century. He married his second wife Song Ailing (宋蔼龄), the eldest of the Song sisters; the other two Song sisters, Song Qingling (宋庆龄) married Sun Zhongshan (孙中山, Sun Yat-sen), Song Meiling (宋美龄, known as Madame Chiang Kai-shek) married Jiang Jieshi (蒋介石); one of the brother of the Song sisters was Song Ziwen (宋子文, T. V. Soong). Kong served as the Minister of Industry and Commerce from 1928 to 1931 in Nanjing Government, and later as the Minister of Finance 1933-1944. He was Governor of the Central Bank of China 1933-1945.

² Annotation of Mussolini in the margin: 'Yes'. We do not find the minutes of the meeting between Mussolini and Kung. *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XIII, N.40, 45-46.

³ *API931-45(Cina)*, B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, Ginevra, 17/2/1933, 3.

much as possible the interests of the Chinese Government, it would perhaps, in Theodoli's opinion, clear the effect of fifteen years, during which Italian supplies gave repeatedly, in general, little satisfaction. Moreover, since the efficiency of delicate material was in function by rational use and good maintenance, the responsibility of purchases made and tested in Italy would weigh especially on Chinese Technical Commission.

In summary, Theodoli drew three conclusions as regards the visit and the long conversations with the Chinese mission¹:

- 1) The Chinese elites were convinced that they could not cope with the Japanese irresistible push and simultaneously continue the ultra-nationalist policy of the past twelve years (abolition of extra-territoriality, revision of clauses of the unilateral treaty; withdrawal of concessions, etc.). It was therefore to be expected at least a more or less long period, during which the above-mentioned claims would be made "in slow motion", the period during which China could perhaps expect a more scrupulous observance of their commitments. (About this it should be added that in matters of Boxers Indemnity² and former Austrian debt, Mr. Kong said it was declared completely dark of any negotiation in this regard).
- 2) However, Theodoli believed that the visit of Chinese mission to Italy was not useless. Despite the insinuation done that the contracts for supplies were made to depend on the attitude of the various governments in the Sino-Japanese conflict, the mission was able to consist the perfection of the equipment of the major companies visited as well as the great confidence that the Royal Government had in the same companies for the amount of ongoing orders. The mission did not hide that for some specialties at least the material they are interested, the prices in Italy appeared to them as a whole favorable. Moreover the fact that communications between China and Italy were much more rapid, in the eyes of the mission was an element worthy of the greatest consideration.
- 3) Within all the war material, to which they are interested, the specialties that had caught their most attention were the bomber units and weapons of lightest repetition. An offer made by the Company Caproni seemed worthy of being mentioned. If the Chinese Government complimented the purchase of a unit CA.111, in order to form an entire squadron, the Engineer Caproni offered formally to make freely available to the Chinese Government with five other units, for a period of time in which sending adequate number of mechanical, motorists, etc. together with the Col. Mario De Bernardi³ were necessary.

¹ Ibid.

² The secret agreement signed in July 1933 between the Minister of Finance Guido Jung and Kong Xiangxi recognized the amount of 70,000,000 lire to be paid to the Italian Government, and discounted the Chinese Government more than 340,000,000 lire it still owed, under the implicit covenant that part of this money would have been used for the purchase of Italian goods. The resolution of this financial controversy provided a stronger financial basis to carry on negotiations for further military supplies. See *AP (Cina) 1931-45*, B. 30, F.1-Rapporti politici. As quoted in Serri, "Fascist Imperialism and the Italian Arms Trade," 443.

³ At the turn of 1930s Mario De Bernardi joined the Caproni company at Taliedo (near Milano), serving as a test pilot and technical consultant. "la Caproni decise di inviare egualmente il de Bernardi in Cina per propagandare i suoi aerei. Il de Bernardi giunse a Shanghai ai primi di gennaio 1934 portandosi un CA 113 al seguito e con questo compì il 7 aprile due esibizioni dinanzi ad un'«immensa folla che ha gremito l'aerodromo, trascinata ai più vivi entusiasmi», come annunciava sotto il titolo «Voli italiani nel cielo di Shanghai» il *Giornale d'Italia* dell'8 aprile. (In realtà, il CA 113 ebbe un incidente meccanico e la manifestazione, programmata per una data precedente, dov'è essere rinviata). Il de Bernardi non si limitò ad esibirsi, ma insieme al Baj, rappresentante della Caproni, si diede ad intrigare con le autorità cinesi per ottenere ordini alla sua ditta, senza altro esito che di suscitare l'irritazione del Col. Lordi, dell'Ambasciata e degli stessi cinesi, che non sapevano più con chi dovessero trattare." See Borsa, "Tentativi di penetrazione dell'Italia Fascista in Cina: 1932-1937," 402.

This offer had not failed to be taken into account by Mr. Kong seemed to be worthy of being communicated to the Royal Minister in China, as the sending of Col. De Bernardi could form the nucleus of a specialized consultancy and certain source of some other ordinations. Needless to add the impression that Mr. Kong had derived from this visit that allowed him to see the unimaginable progress of a country that he had not visited since 1907.

In relation to the visit of Kong Xiangxi, Italian Foreign Ministry prepared a note for the Chief of Cabinet to summarize the main issues currently pending between Italy and China.¹ Four issues were noted:

1) Debts for naval supplies recognized pre-war by China in pound sterling (*Lire sterline*) 3,324,000 towards the Italian bearers of Chinese goods (mostly in the hands of the *Cantieri Riuniti Adriatic* and of *Cosulich*).

2) *Reliquato Boxers* (difference in alteration of gold-card of the last annual Boxers indemnity) about 24 million US gold dollars from ought to be spent partly in Italy. Last year, the Head of the Government allow the Chinese to demand of the monthly (become extinct in 1949), related to *reliquato* from February 1932 to February 1933 (about 30 million Italian lire) would not continue to accumulate but were used in purchases in Italy.

In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs believed that it was easily foreseeable that for the expiry of the term China would ask another year of extension and that the payments were used in purchases in Italy, extending by one year (1950) the deadline for payments for *reliquato* Boxers. The acceptance of this request, “evidentemente assicurerebbe alle nostre industrie ordinativi se poco rilevanti (circa 30 milioni di lire) non però trascurabili data l’attuale crisi e dato che potrebbero meglio affermare la nostra industria sul mercato cinese.”² However, it would delay the accumulation of the monthly *reliquato* which guaranteed by the Chinese Customs, Italy had repeatedly attempted to allocate the payment of credits, without a guarantee of Italian holders of Chinese goods.

3) The Italian religious Missions in China had suffered substantial damage in people and belongings as a result of China’s domestic situation. The Chinese government had not yet granted any compensation for such damages.

4) The Mission of Chinese educators who recently came to Italy had made more alive the issue of sending Chinese students to Italian universities. In Paris there were two-thousand Chinese students, while in Rome just over fifty and only in ecclesiastical schools.

In conclusion, “I rapporti politici ed economici italo-cinesi si sono recentemente sviluppati in seguito sia all’atteggiamento amichevole assunto da noi nei riguardi della Cina durante il presente conflitto sino-nipponico, che all’apertura di una via di navigazione italiana con l’Estremo Oriente, sia infine in seguito ad una maggiore attività da noi esplicata in Cina.”³

¹ AP 31-45 (*Cina*), B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione, appunto per S. E. Il Capo di Gabinetto, Roma, 5/2/1933.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

2.2.2 Visit of Song Ziwen July 1933 and preliminary project of Italo-Chinese cooperation

On July 13, 1933, the Head of Italian Government Benito Mussolini received Song Ziwen, head of the Chinese delegation to the London World Economic Conference. Song, Vice President of Executive Yuan and Minister of Finance arrived at Rome from Paris. He was greeted by the Vice Minister of Finance and the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as General Zhang Xueliang, at the station. The same day afternoon, Mussolini met with Song at Palazzo Venezia and personally presented him with the insignia of the Grand Cross Order of Saint Maurice Lazarus, which had been bestowed on him by King Emanuel. After that, they had a long cordial conversation.¹

According to the newspaper report at that time, Mussolini gave a dinner at that night in honor of Song, Marshal Zhang Xueliang, being one of the guests. In a speech welcoming Mr. Song, Mussolini recalled that China was the pioneer of Eastern civilization, as was Italy in Western civilization, and that both civilizations had met through an Italian, Marco Polo. Mr. Song, in replying, said that Italy, under the leadership of *Il Duce*, had secured harmony at home and respect abroad. He declared that the Fascist experiment should constitute a spur to China, which, through sacrifice and united efforts, might regain her rightful place among the nations.²

The Note of Foreign Ministry³ suggested that Song came to Rome to pay tribute to the Head of Italian Government (Mussolini). Also He is happy on this occasion to express his admiration for fascism. Mussolini thanked for the homage and declared to see with fondness the development of China. For China, Mussolini said, that obtaining the unity in the command of the country was the first condition. To this end the Chinese had to make every other effort. The second condition, also essential, was to create an army well organized and disciplined.

Song was in complete agreement with the idea of the Head of Government. He observed, however, that the success of Fascism was determined, not only by the idea, but also by men. Then what were lacking in China were mainly men.

Mussolini noted that some men were already there, and others would rise gradually that China will find a better order. He then asked about the relations between China and Japan. Song said that relations with the Japanese were regulated by the Treaty of Armistice, but the Japanese, however, had a still ample program to play, which intended to extend their control, with the exclusion of any other, throughout the Far East. Such a programme would, in Song's opinion, arouse the opposition, not only from China but also from the Western countries. Significantly, Song saw the possibility of closer cooperation between Italy and China and exposed the lines of a programme. Mussolini promised to examine with interest the proposals and would introduce his ideas about it.

Song demonstrated intention to recruit Italian pilots and mechanics who should frame militarily Chinese elements, making themselves as formation parts. Italy would prepare a secret understanding with China offering the required pilots and mechanics. Furthermore, China

¹ AP 31-45 (Cina), B. 30, Viaggio di T.V. Soong in Europa, Traduzione dal giornale "Tokio Asahi" del 15 luglio 1933, XI, (pubblicato anche da altri giornali); and extractions from *Japan Times*, July 14, 1933, XI.

² AP1931-45(Cina), B. 30, Viaggio di T.V. Soong in Europa, extractions from *Tokio Asahi*, July 16, 1933, XI.

³ IDDI, Serie 7, Vol. XIII, N.982, 1036-1037.

intended to purchase equipments of aviation and the aircrafts from Fiat.

As for the possibility of closer cooperation between Italy and China, Mussolini replied that he would examine with interest the proposals and would introduce his ideas about it¹.

Earlier on July 14, 1933, Song Ziwen was received by Mussolini for the second time, and the two had a friendly conversation on current political and economic questions. In the afternoon of that day the Chinese Financial Minister left Rome for Geneva by train.

At the same day of Song's departure, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs communicated note with three important attachments² to the other ministries as far as the proposal of Italo-Chinese cooperation was concerned. The first attachment was a memorandum, handed over to the Chief of Italian Government by the Chinese Minister of Finance, in which China pronounced that in the international cooperation for the economic development of China, Italy would probably find "greatest interest" in these four aspects:

- a) Construction of hydroelectric plants, reclamation of land, and supply of the necessary machinery therefore; i.e. "two fields, in which Italian technique and mechanical industry have proven best excellent."³
- b) Supply of mercantile steamers for coastwise and river traffic.
- c) Supply of aeroplanes and small motor torpedo boats.
- d) Counteract, for certain products chiefly artificial silk yarns, natural silk yarns, cotton yarn and textiles, in China and in the Near and Far Eastern markets, the Japanese dumping, through the transfer of certain industrial units from Italy to China.

The Chinese Government intended, according to the memorandum, "to intervene to supply direct capital goods, to construct hydroelectric plants, to reclaim land, in order to increase rapidly the production in China and, as a consequence, to increase the standard of life and the purchasing power of the masses of the Chinese population." At the same time, China intended "to reorganise and re-equip the Chinese Army and Navy, in order to preserve the territorial and political integrity of China and proceed to the internal administrative reorganisation. In military reorganization also we have chosen two weapons where Italy leads."⁴

Furthermore, in respect of the issue of credit, Government of China expressed two important opinions in the memorandum:

- 1) This plan, in relation to its urgency, i.e. at the moment in which it is most needed, the economic fact of a greater absorption from the Chinese masses, can be put into execution, in Italy as well as in the other countries,

¹ See as Giacinto Auriti [Plenipotentiary Minister in Vienna until 20 January 1933] wrote with R. n. 666/395 of 18 July:

«Che i giapponesi siano gente sospettosa e taciturna lo abbiamo, per così dire, appreso a scuola, e ogni collega estero qui lo conferma. Tuttavia ho l'impressione che possa esservi un po' più di diffidenza nei nostri riguardi. Il Consigliere Weill Schott, il quale è qui da lungo ed è stato a lungo Incaricato d'Affari, mi dice che un tempo i giapponesi erano con lui più espansivi (se questo aggettivo possa accoppiarsi con quel sostantivo), e ch'egli aveva notato negli ultimi mesi della sua reggenza un chiaro e notevole mutamento. Forse non sono stati soddisfatti di noi a Ginevra, e forse non sono soddisfatti a causa della nostra presente politica verso la Cina. A ogni modo la muraglia cinese è ora in Giappone. Si direbbe la lumaca che, toccata nelle corna, le ritira nel guscio e ve le tiene con diffidente e perseverante prudenza». *IDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XIII, N.982, footnote.

² *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, Roma, 14/7/1933.

³ *Ibid.*, allegato I, part 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, part 2.

only with the concession of credits to the Chinese Government and in relation to the amount of such credits.

For the supply under b) and c) 10 years credits are necessary, it being understood that, for the first three annuities, the Chinese Government would deliver bills in such form as to render, eventually, possible their discount with banks or financial institutions. Moreover, it might be arranged that the period of 10 years would be shortened, in relation to the situation and possibilities of the Chinese budget.

For the hydroelectric construction, reclamation of land and the necessary machinery, the funding of the credits might be done, eventually, through issues in the international markets. A scheme to that effect is in preparation. For the transfer of industrial units from Italy to China no credit will probably be necessary. In this last case, as generally in the execution of this plan, the Chinese Government will give all the assistance and support, which is in its power. It will arrange that the hydroelectric and reclamation activity is concentrated in regions, more similar, for their characteristics, to Italy. It will assist the Italian nucleus, which will be formed in China for the work of construction and in order to render easier the use of the capital goods supplied.

Finally, the Chinese Government will use in Italy an organization, specially formed and largely Italian, which will act as Buying Agents and representative of the Chinese Government for the execution of this plan. To act through a unitary channel, means better control from the part of the Italian and Chinese Governments, greater rapidity and, finally, a quicker and better instrument for international liaison, the Italian being a part of an international programme.

2) The Chinese Government is of the opinion that credits up to the total figure of 500 million lire, in a period of three years, ought to be made available in Italy for supplies to China and for hydroelectric construction, reclamation of land, to be done by Italian organizations in China. Such sum will be repaid by the Chinese Government in 10 years or earlier, in relation to the possibilities of its budget, and in relation moreover, to the possibilities of funding the credits, used for hydroelectric construction and reclamation of land and the relative machinery, through issues of bonds in the international markets.¹

In the execution of the primary project, China promised that “if an agreement, in principle, will be possible on the points of this memorandum, the Buying Agents in Italy, in conjunction with the direct representatives of the Chinese Government, will proceed at once to the discussion and to the conclusion of a detailed agreement.”²

With respect to the sum of 500 million lire, mentioned in the part 4 of memorandum, “as the amount approximately necessary to put into execution the Italian-Chinese economic programme, would represent a loan, which the Italian Government and the Italian industries would make direct to the Chinese Government and would represent a direct and unconditional obligation of the last one.”³ To be particular, five points of rights and obligations were regulated:

1) That sum would be spent in buying italian products or in constructing hydroelectric works or to reclaim land in China. That sum, furthermore, would be spent in a period of 3 years. It is difficult, at the present moment, to give a precise indication of the part which will be spent in the purchase of products or in construction, and the distribution of the 500 million in the 3 years, but on those two points the Chinese Government will act in consultation with the Italian Government and the Italian organisations interested.

¹ Ibid., part 3 and 4.

² Ibid., part 5.

³ *API931-45(Cina)*, B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, Roma, 14/7/1933, allegato III, part 1.

2) Three tenths of the purchase money for the Italian products or machines and three tenths of any payment for the constructions will be paid by the Chinese Government direct to the suppliers or to the contractors with notes or other suitable paper, which the suppliers or the contractors might discount with banks or financial institutions. Therefore 150 million lire will represent a debt of the Chinese Government towards Italian suppliers or contractors.

3) Any credit, utilised in the construction of hydroelectric plants or for reclamation of land and the machines necessary thereto, might be funded through issues of bonds of the International Corporation for China, for which negotiations are proceeding now in London and which it is hoped to form shortly. Such Corporation will be opened to Italian participation.

4) The Chinese Government will have the option of repaying the 500 millions lire, in part or in total, at any moment, and will, no doubt, avail themselves of this right, immediately the budget will render it possible. The Chinese Minister of Finance, in asking for a ten years credit, has followed the line of the greatest prudence and it is confident to be able to repay the loan in a shorter period of time.

5) The loan ought to be payable in ten equal annuities, inclusive of interest and amortisation, and carry an interest of 1% over the Bank of Italy rate, i.e. 5%.¹

To represent an almost ancient Italian industry aspiration, according to the note of Foreign Ministry of Italy, the project could largely take place in China basically for two reasons: 1) The possibilities of the Chinese market were unlimited, given the low level of life and the enormous mass of the population. 2) Unlike the other countries, there were still the first-order positions in China, not gained by anyone, and which could assure Italy.²

Up to 1933, the problem of economic communication between Italy and China was apparent. Supplies from Italy to the Chinese Government had been accomplished so far, to a limited extent, sporadically, through intermediaries largely unsatisfactory, with credit payments, which in some cases had not brought good end. Thus what was then the Chinese government proposed was, “*avanti tutto, di rendere tali forniture più vaste, più continue, più sicure, e, per quanto riguarda il pagamento, non aleatorie.*”³ Moreover, the Chinese government intended to concentrate its purchases of products that Italy had the dual economic and political interest to sell: merchant ships, warships, airplanes. These were supplies that could allow a standardized production, involving emigration of technicians and workers to ensure the perfect use. It followed, therefore, also a creation in China of active Italian nucleus, which could help assure Italy of future supplies, when the Chinese government would continue its purchases on normal payment terms. On the other, the political interest was that in the next three years exceptional purchases of Chinese Government might assure some fundamental Italian industries, such as yards and factories of engines and airplanes, of a safer march at a time of low order and when it was doubly prudent to close or to slacken.

With regard to the hydroelectric construction and reclamation of land, Italian industry and technology should also be assigned to the place of fundamental importance. The note of Foreign Ministry declared:

¹ Ibid., part 2 to 6.

² *AP1931-45(Cina)*, B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, Roma, 14/7/1933, allegato II, part 1.

³ Ibid., part 2.

C'è ormai una tecnica italiana universalmente riconosciuta, che può battere quella di ogni altro paese in questi due campi; c'è nello stesso tempo una sovrabbondanza di produzione di attrezzamenti e di macchinari necessari sia alle costruzioni che all'esercizio idroelettrico ed alle bonifiche, produzione che occorre smaltire altrove. Infine, c'è pleora di ingegneri, tecnici e operai di costruzioni elettriche e di bonifiche, adesso che, per la prima, l'attività è interamente sospesa e per la seconda una larga parte del programma è praticamente compiuta.

Costruzioni idroelettriche e bonifiche non significano, del resto, anch'esse solo una esportazione di macchinari, ma un'emigrazione organica di uomini e la formazione di nuclei attivi, che continueranno, anche a costruzioni avvenute, ad operare in Cina. ¹

Three considerations were important in this respect:

1) The fundamental character of these two activities (hydroelectric construction and reclamation of land) for the country life, allowing them of wide developments of economic activity.

2) The fact that the Chinese Government offered to concentrate these Italian activities in regions where the general conditions and technical problems to be solved would more resemble to those Italians, where, therefore, it would necessarily to create large areas of Italian activities, in similar conditions that those engineering constructors would find workers there.

3) Finally, the very fact of concentrating the Italian activities in a region was the best guarantee of the credits, which would be granted to the Chinese Government, inasmuch as the complete construction could be better protected and defended from both internal difficulties and foreign dangers.²

As for the transport of industrial units in China, it might, finally, constitute an important element for the work of liquidation and re-balance of the national economy. There were industrial companies, which did not have at that time more chances to find outlets for their products within domestic market and export. These were units that, in relation to the needs of the Chinese market, obtainable lower costs of production in China, the same opportunities of export of Chinese production to other markets, could be usefully transplanted from Italy into China. This was especially true for those Italian industries, which already exported to the Chinese market and other Asian markets and had been beaten by the invasion of Japanese products, and that was, above all, yarn and fabrics of cotton, which Japan had come to import in the same Italian colonies. It would, therefore, to carry idle machinery, which weighed on the Italian economy and Italian industrial production costs, and skilled workers, currently unemployed, from Italy in China. The transport of industrial units, made according to a precise general plan, gradually concentrated in that area, which would be left to Italy for hydropower exploitation and reclamation would constitute a doubly profitable deal.

The fact of concentrating the transfer of these industrial units in the areas allocated to Italy, could have a double value:

a) First of all, the industrial units transported would find, with the electricity produced and the

¹ Ibid., part 3.

² Ibid.

nucleus of Italian formed around such plants, a key element of support.

b) The same economic risks would be reduced when these Italian activities were concentrated compactly in the same region, and therefore defensible in the face of all the Chinese excess and every danger outside.¹

Then the note analyzed the wide possibility of economic progress in China: even if such progress were to represent, for inhabitant, a small fraction; a lot of possibilities of development in extent and in time, the fact that it would be here not only export, but to establish and maintain permanently a large influence, and not only economic, in a wide area, which gave a capital value to the Italo-Chinese cooperation programme. In addition, this influence would be achieved with the Chinese capital, as the Chinese Government proposed to pay for it herself, ultimately, for goods, constructions, machines, and so forth. The concentration of Italian activities in an area would eliminate, as mentioned above, not only the risks of this activity, but the same risk of granted credits. An area of the sea, definitely open to communications with Italy, with the addition, in a progressive and reasonable way, of options, rights, privileges, priorities, would increase the importance of the program and would reduce the risks.²

The note also placed stress on the issue of purchase. In general, the regulation of Italian economic activity would be entrusted to an Italian organization, which would act as an agent of the Chinese government in Italy. This would allow, with a principle action, to avoid confusion and errors, and to move all this exceptional Italian-Chinese activities in accordance with a comprehensive plan.³

Last but not the least, the Foreign Ministry believed what had to be clarified were the nature and the true limits of the credits required by the Chinese government, i.e. four clarifications:

1) Si tratterebbe, avanti tutto, di un prestito che l'Italia, Governo ed organizzazioni industriali, aprirebbe al Governo cinese e del quale questo assumerebbe la responsabilità diretta ad incondizionata. Il prestito dovrebbe essere ripagato in 10 annualità eguali, comprensive di interesse e di ammortamento.

2) Per 3/10 di ogni somma, dovuta dal Governo cinese ad industrie o a costruttori italiani, questo rilascerebbe della carta adatta, eventualmente, ad essere scontata con banche od organizzazioni finanziarie. Questa carta potrebbe essere accettata a parziale pagamento da fornitori e costruttori e verrebbe a ridurre così la massa totale del credito a 350 milioni.

3) I crediti destinati a costruzioni idroelettriche e bonifiche, una volta compiute le costruzioni e le bonifiche ed iniziate l'esercizio, potrebbero essere consolidati con emissioni di obbligazioni della Compagnia finanziaria internazionale per la Cina, la costituzione della quale è negoziata in questi giorni a Londra. Nel programma totale di 500 milioni non meno della metà dovrebbe essere riservata alle costruzioni idroelettriche ed alle bonifiche, pertanto, ciò potrebbe ridurre a meno di 175 milioni i crediti, quando il consolidamento con il mezzo suddetto fosse possibile. Poiché le obbligazioni da emettere dalla Compagnia Finanziaria internazionale per la Cina avrebbero oltre le garanzie reali delle opere, la garanzia del Governo cinese, la possibilità delle emissioni stesse è probabile a non lunga scadenza.

¹ AP1931-45(Cina), B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, Roma, 14/7/1933, allegato II, part 4.

² Ibid., part 5.

³ Ibid., part 6.

4) Infine é fondata speranza del Ministro delle Finanze Cinesi di poter ripagare con le disponibilità di bilancio i crediti ottenuti avanti il periodo di 10 anni stabilito con margine di prudenza.¹

One of interesting facts was that among the abundant diplomatic telegrams, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs kept in particular a few Japanese newspaper clippings, which paid close attention to Song's visit in Rome, especially following with interest the issue of purchase military airplanes and Italy's assistance to the development of Chinese aviation.

For instance, the Japanese newspaper *Tokio Asahi* of July 15, 1933, reported that according to the informations from Shanghai, Chinese Minister of Finance Song Ziwen visited Rome for discussion of loans and trade between Italy and China. In particular, through the visit two decisions of significance were made as follows: 1) China would purchase a large amount of military airplanes; 2) Mr. De Bernardi would be invited to China to assist the development of aviation. With the departure from Rome, "Mr. Song will visit later in Berlin and Brussels. It seems that Mr. Song said that from January 1 of the next year a regulation on marks of the place of production will come into force, which will limit the import of Japanese products and has recommended to the various countries to conclude an agreement to facilitate the import of goods from Europe and America."²

Another Japanese newspaper *Osaka Asahi* reported on 17 July, that "After the failure of the conference for disarmament and the economic conference, which took place on the initiative of the League of Nations, a movement has been started in recent times for the conquest of new markets in the world and for the industrial development of various countries." Italy, to form a closer friendship with China, had recently sold 70 airplanes to China. And moreover, as for the former warlord of Manchuria Zhang Xueliang, who stayed in Italy at that time, Italy treated him as a national guest.³

In addition, in view of the "great activity" of Chinese Minister Song Ziwen, Japanese newspaper *Tokio Nichi-Nichi* reported that the Foreign Minister of Japan, Count Uchida on July 17 sent instructions to the following effect to Japanese Ambassadors at Washington, London, Paris, Rome and Berlin:

While the Japanese Government is little concerned with the activity Mr. T. V. Soong is displaying in obtaining foreign loans, it is advisable that Japanese diplomatic representatives abroad take appropriate measures to remind government authorities, political parties, business leaders and financial groups of the Powers that the loans China is going to raise are apt to be misused for military purposes to oppose Japan and Manchoukuo, and that a promiscuous supply of loans to China will tend to disturb the peace of the Far East. The loans China is anxious to raise cannot be regarded as of a commercial nature, for they are used for the purchase of weapons and for the benefit of a certain faction.

Under the circumstances, Japanese diplomatic representatives abroad are asked to explain this well to the governments and financial groups of foreign countries, and call attention to the fact that the Japanese Government is determined to strictly deal with China as in the case of the Manchurian and Shanghai

¹ Ibid., part 7.

² *AP1931-45(Cina)*, B. 30, Viaggio di T.V. Soong in Europa, Traduzione dal giornale "Tokio Asahi" del 15 luglio 1933, XI.

³ *AP1931-45(Cina)*, B. 30, Viaggio di T.V. Soong in Europa, Traduzione dal giornale "Osaka Asahi," 17 luglio 1933, XI.

emergencies, in case China makes use of the foreign loans to again take measures to positively oppose Japan and Manchoukuo, and that the parties which in this way give aid to China shall be held as partly responsible for a recurrence of the Sino-Japanese trouble.

It will be noted that the Nanking finance head who is now visiting European countries, obtained an American wheat loan of \$50,000,000 recently, and also contracted for an arms loan of £5,000,000 in London. He is also said to have signed a contract for the purchase of arms in Italy, and is further trying to obtain loans in France and Germany.

It is understood that Mr. Soong is doing his utmost to obtain foreign loans with the intention of using them for fresh activities in opposition to Japan and Manchoukuo, and will take measures to curb the influence of Mr. Wang Chao-ming, Mr. Huang Fu and others who are friendly to Japan. This accounts for his activity in League circles to set the Powers against Japan.

Foreign Office authorities do not place faith in the reports that Mr. Soong has succeeded in obtaining many foreign loans, and are inclined to regard them as propaganda news circulated by brokers closely connected with Mr. Soong. Fearing that foreign businessmen and financial groups might be misled by China, Foreign Minister Count Uchida thought it advisable to give instructions to diplomatic representatives abroad.¹

Such a fact, to some extent, indicates that the Japanese did concern about the military purchase and assistance by foreign countries to China, which would constitute one of the considerations of its opposing policy towards foreign assistance in China. On the other hand, that is a fact, which indicates that Italian diplomats drew their attention to the Japanese attitude even at the very beginning of drafting the project of Italo-Chinese cooperation.

In conclusion, the project of cooperation included: 1) supplies of warships and merchant ships and aircraft equipment, as well as sending technical and specialized workers; 2) provision of the necessary machinery for the execution of a major land reclamation program and hydroelectric plants and their personnel; 3) transfer some complete industrial units to China. Italy saw this project of cooperation as a beneficial one which would offer immediate advantage to open the Italian economic activity in China, where Italy had so far not been able, or at least to a limited extent, to establish itself sporadically. Moreover, the same project, creating a strong complex of Italian interests in China, could, in the future, give rise to developments which would lead Italy in the forefront among the countries directly concerned in the Far Eastern problems.²

Since the Foreign Ministry of Italy had communicated the memorandum and note concerning the cooperation to several other Ministries or administrative offices, some of them expressed their opinions. *l'Amministrazione dei Lavori Pubblici*, for instance, noted that due to this *Amministrazione* was in charge of to direct and supervise the activities of manufacturers and distributors of electricity, even if restricted to the national territory, the argument involves *l'Amministrazione dei Lavori Pubblici* only with regard to the hydroelectric plants. In the current period, in Italy there was a large exuberance of electricity, produced by Italian own plants, so that it did not set up the construction of new large power plants:

ciò che farebbe ritenere conveniente di indirizzare le iniziative di ingegneri e di tecnici specializzati, di ditte industriali produttrici di materiale elettrico e di unità industriali, nel territorio cinese, giusta la profferta del Vice-Presidente del Consiglio Esecutivo e Ministro delle Finanze cinese T. V. Soong.

¹ AP1931-45(Cina), B. 30, Viaggio di T.V. Soong in Europa, "Tokio Nichi-Nichi," July 19, 1933, XI.

² AP1931-45(Cina), B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, T.222385/C, Roma, 23/7/1933.

A prescindere completamente dall'esame dell'argomento sotto l'aspetto finanziario, siccome è suggerito nel dispaccio cui rispondo, convengo nell'ammettere pienamente tutti quei vantaggi economici e politici dell'espansione italiana nell'Estremo Oriente, che sono efficacemente prospettati da codesto On. Ministero, che più di ogni altro è in grado di giudicare degli interessi italiani all'estero.

Naturalmente, i capitali, le forniture e le persone stesse che si dedicherebbero alla nuova intrapresa dovrebbero trovare adeguate garanzie di sicurezza e la nostra espansione in Cina dovrebbe essere contenuta in misura tale da non fuorviare iniziative e mezzi che potrebbero poi impiegarsi assai più utilmente nello stesso territorio nazionale, quando, superato l'attuale periodo di crisi economico-industriale, verrà a riprendersi il ritmo ascensionale delle costruzioni e delle applicazioni idroelettriche in Italia.¹

Apparently, as far as the issue of hydroelectric plant was concerned, the Italian administrative office in charge of the activities of manufacturers and distributors of electricity, agreed in fully admitting all the economic and political benefits of Italian expansion in the Far East, which were effectively projected by the Foreign Ministry, because it was more than anyone else able to judge the Italian interests abroad. Meanwhile, it was suggested by this administrative office that adequate security should be emphasized in the Italian expansion in China. If the initiatives and resources could be employed more usefully in national territory of Italy, the domestic need, of course, should take first priority over that in China, especially considering the current period of economic and industrial crisis.

Likewise the Ministry of Corporations took favourable attitude towards this project. The *Ispettore Generale* of *Ministero delle Corporazioni* Bagli prepared the answer in the following sense: "In massima favorevole: è infatti evidente che ogni tentativo di penetrazione nel mercato cinese, dove l'Italia è per ora scarsamente rappresentata, non può essere considerato che con favore, se ci sono le condizioni politiche e finanziarie necessarie."² Nevertheless, this *Ministero delle Corporazioni* reserved judgement on two aspects, which should be examined carefully: 1) the possibility of Italian industries' participation in the finance, which had to take time to consult the involved parties; 2) if it agreed to allow the transfer of industrial units in China, it should refer to industries without competing with the Italian industries or facilities; if Italy did not agree to transplant, the others would do.³

Later in a confidential letter sent by the Ministry of Corporations to Foreign Affairs, the value of Chinese market was fully affirmed. Thus any attempts to increase the Italian exports and activities of expansion, as mentioned in the Song's project, should be generally favoured, though there were still some essential details to examine. The letter noted:

Può affermarsi in linea di massima, che il mercato cinese solo in ristrettissima misura aperto alla penetrazione economica italiana, offre a quest'ultima, sotto tutti gli aspetti, un sì vasto e promettente campo di azione, che questo Ministero non può vedere se non col più grande favore ogni eventuale incremento delle nostre esportazioni e di tutte le attività accennate nel progetto del Ministro Soong verso il mercato stesso, semprechè beninteso dal punto di vista politico e finanziario, che esula dalla competenza dello scrivente e in rapporto al quale esso non può che rimettersi ai criteri ed alle decisioni che verranno prese dai Dicasteri competenti,

¹ Ibid.

² *AP1931-45(Cina)*, B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, 25/7/1933.

³ Ibid.

concorrano le condizioni indispensabili a siffatta forma di espansione.¹

Two reserved issues were:

1) With regard to the possible contribution of finance assumed by Italian national industry, the Ministry of Corporations needed more time to question the major exponents of national industrial activities;

2) As regards the possible transfer of some complex units of Italian industry in China, under this particular point of view, this Ministry “non può a meno di rilevare la necessità che si eviti in qualsiasi modo che vengano, eventualmente, turbate, mediante l’impianto di fabbriche italiane in Cina, le nostre attuali correnti di traffico verso quel mercato.”²

In other words, the products made by the Italian factories in China should not in competition with the products which Italy was exporting to China. This Ministry believed that it was worthy of time to consider this issue, “data la gradualità con la quale, evidentemente, si attuerebbero i progettati trasferimenti, non sarà difficile conciliare, nel miglior modo possibile, gli opposti interessi in causa.”³

The *Ministero del Lavori Pubblici* had every confidence in the decision made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which “più di ogni altro è in grado di giudicare degli interessi italiani all’Estero”; as a result, the *Ministero del Lavori Pubblici* was “nell’ammettere pienamente tutti quei vantaggi economici e politici dell’espansione italiana nell’Estremo Oriente, che sono efficacemente prospettati da codesto On.Ministro”.⁴

The *Ministero dell’Aeronautica* sent urgent confidential letter to Foreign Ministry, said that in view of the interest and value of Italian industrial penetration in China, this *Ministero* conducted in fact, more than a year, through the *Addetto Aeronautico* in Shanghai, an assiduous work to facilitate the penetration. As the Foreign Ministry had known, in effect, the negotiations with the Chinese Government, for some time, relative to sending an Italian Aeronautic Mission, to the installation of an airplane factory in China and finally to a supply of war and aeronautical materials valued at about 100 million lire, were ongoing.⁵

On the contrary, Minister of Finance, who received the information about this project of cooperation, the telegram from Foreign Ministry and the three attachments in particular, expressed a more prudent opinion. He doubted that Italy had the transferable availability of capital to enable it to invest money in construction of hydroelectric plants and land reclamation projects in China. Moreover, the supplies transferred could not be paid at once but in a number of years, which was undoubtedly a high-risk transference.

As a matter of fact, the Minister of Finance said, he had been informed of these three documents by the paper of Dr. Francesco Giannini on 16 July, who at that time had acted as Financial Advisor to Mr. Song. As for the first issue referred to construction of hydroelectric

¹ AP1931-45(Cina), B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, T.22929, 26/7/1933.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ AP1931-45(Cina), B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, T.20086, 25 /7/1933. G0555

⁵ Ibid., T.04984, 24 /7/1933. G0556

plants and reclamation in China – in fact, the Foreign Ministry referred only to the supply of the necessary material, which was not accurate – i.e. “ad un esborso di denaro italiano per lavori da eseguirsi in Cina con materiali a mano d’opera cinese, cosa che era di dubbio interesse per l’Italia.” In addition, Minister of Finance worried about the other issue referred to transport in China in weight of the Italian capital of Italian industrial units, “cioè di un problema estremamente complesso per i suoi riflessi sulle possibilità di lavoro del popolo italiano, di cui il Governo Fascista deve anzitutto preoccuparsi.”¹

As regards the financial issue of this project, the Minister of Finance said that he had asked Dr. Giannini what constituted the “International Corporation for China for which negotiations are proceeding now in London and which it is hoped to form shortly”. Giannini replied that this Corporation would join in maximum banks Kuhn Loeb & Co. and J. P. Morgan of New York, a London bank, *Société Générale de Belgique de Bruxelles*, and that negotiations would take place shortly to get the membership of French banks. Consequently, the Minister of Finance did not fail to make Dr. Giannini observe that “ai fini di una emissione internazionale per la mobilitazione, prevista nei documenti presentati, di 350 milioni sui 500 milioni di lire richiesti dal Governo Cinese la International Corporation for China composta dagli elementi suindicati non dava il più lontano affidamento.”² For instance, according to the Minister of Finance, due to that the conditions of American market were in effect well-known, let alone the sensitivity of the situation, for the well-known banking inquiry, the US banks mentioned above came to be in front of the American public. Next, it was known that in England there was an embargo on emission abroad. It was also known that the Belgian market was painfully busy with meeting their own needs and that the French saver ended in a shady suspicion. Therefore, the Financial Minister said, “È quindi evidente come il progetto finanziario che accompagna la richiesta di un finanziamento di 500 milioni al Governo cinese e che dovrebbe assicurarne il parziale smobilizzo, manchi assolutamente di consistenza.”³

As a conclusion, the Minister of Finance believed that for the part that he was concerned he had to point out to the Foreign Ministry:

1) che a mio avviso l’Italia non ha disponibilità di capitali trasferibili che le permettano di investire del denaro in costruzioni di impianti idroelettrici e di opere di bonifica in Cina;

2) che indipendentemente da ogni questione di rischio riguardo al fido (questione che a mio avviso va tenuta ben presente nei rapporti con la Cina) l’Italia non può del pari trasferire all’estero in forma di forniture da pagarsi in lungo numero di anni una somma quale quella prevista nei documenti allegati al telexpresso suddetto.⁴

At the same time of the internal discussion, more details about the cooperation project were communicated by the Foreign Ministry of Italy. On 24 July 1933, a note of this Ministry said that Dr. Giannini had had a conversation with the Presidency and Management of the Company Fiat on July 4, presenting the possibilities of business with China and more precisely with the Nanjing Government. After having highlighted the political position of the President of the Republic of

¹ Ibid., dal Ministro delle Finanze al Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Roma, 24/7/1933.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Nanjing and the strong presumption of stability in power, given the merits of the President for the overthrow of the Empire, as a result of which his political position was so easily to be consolidated also hereditary in his family, Giannini mentioned that it was envisaged an expenditure of 20,000,000 dollars of gold. Depending on the action carried out by Count Ciano, they would be assigned for purchases in Italy, 7,000,000 dollars of gold of approximately 140,000,000 lire. Mr. Monnet a French was going to function as Special Adviser to the Nanjing Government for such purchases. An Italo-Chinese Ente should be constituted, in charge of acting in the interests of the Nanjing Government in Italy, for the execution of purchases, and this Ente would be set up with a contribution of capital from the Bank of America and of Italy, and private Companies such as Fiat, Marelli, Ansaldo, Pirelli, Cosulich, etc. might participate in. Purchases in Italy concerned: materials of weapons, of machinery, of hydroelectric plants, railway equipments, motorboats, etc.¹

Direzione Generale Affari Economici communicated that as the financial agreement between the Italian and Chinese Government had been concluded, it was likely for the latter to make order of materials to the Italian industries. The undersigned Company pointed out that it had already gained occasion to deliver 30 thousand gas masks to the Chinese Government, with complete satisfaction of the latter. It would be pleased to make new supply of this material, or other products of Italian manufactures, such as: telephone cord of the field, tires for car, etc.²

On July 25, 1933, Italian Foreign Ministry offered further attitudes towards Song Ziwen and the current situation in China which influenced its decision on bilateral cooperation. In general, the situation in China was grim, i.e. the problem of Nanjing Government could not be solved at all only through the reconstruction of industry and military with the foreign cooperation and assistance. As a result of the lack of an effective government, which could maintain authority and power, it was “l'avviso che l'invio di materiali e la creazione di impianti industriali in Cina sarebbe come una costruzione sulla sabbia”. Therefore, “gli sforzi iniziali dovrebbero essere concentrati verso la costituzione della organizzazione militare, nei suoi aspetti tecnici ed organici.”³ In other words, that establishing military organization, in its technical and organic aspects, seemed to be more likely for Italy to participate in.

In detail, first of all, as regards Song Ziwen, Italian Foreign Ministry noted the American characteristic of this the Minister: “Non vi è dubbio che il Sig. Soong è una personalità cospicua e ben nota in Cina; peraltro la sua educazione nord americana può determinare in lui particolari orientamenti spirituali verso il Governo degli Stati Uniti, la cui politica asiatica è perfettamente conosciuta.”⁴ Due to that fact, pro-American nature could not be neglected in the so-called international cooperation project of Nanjing Government, in which Italy as one of the parties might be of less significance.

Second, the proposals of the Minister of China, in their enunciation, were seductive; however, given the vastness of the territory, the local conditions and the local need, to speak of industrial units, land reclamation and hydro power plants without fixing any ideas on areas where these activities should be initiated, might be too vague. Consequently, “Il Sig. Soong, meglio di ogni altro, potrebbe indicare le località più adatte alle prime sistemazioni e questa conoscenza sarebbe

¹ AP1931-45(Cina), B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, da S. E. Suvich, Fiat 24/7/1933.

² Ibid., Milano, 24/7/1933.

³ Ibid., T.4692, Roma, 25 luglio 1933.

⁴ Ibid.

indispensabile per l'attuazione del progetto proposto.”¹

Third, the practical situation of disintegration of Nanjing Government was a serious problem in respect of the supply of weapons, warships, aircraft etc., for which it deserved some considerations: for a few years that Europe provided military equipment to China, which arrived in the Chinese hand, became inefficient. They dispersed in the immense territory, and often went to end up in the hands of brigands. What was important that, from the point of view of Foreign Ministry of Italy, “Giudicando le condizioni della Cina alla stregua degli avvenimenti, subito appare la mancanza di un Governo effettivo, che abbia cioè autorità e potere: quello nominale non dispone della organizzazione nè della forza necessaria all'esercizio della sua funzione.”² Besides, it should not be forgotten that those other disintegrating forces acted on the scene of China as well as the Nanjing Administration, constituted the interests of the various nations who competed with each other. To achieve their intent they did not exclude any means; in other words, they did not hesitate to use means of violence, blandishments and corruption.

It was true that, as the Italian senior official of Foreign Affairs said: “Non vi è dubbio che il nostro paese possa avere attitudine ed energie da rivolgere alla riorganizzazione della Cina, facilitato in questo dal fatto di non avervi interessi diretti e di non aver mai fatto intravedere mire particolari. Ed ancora il prestigio del nostro Paese e quello personale del Capo del Governo hanno oggi raggiunto anche l'estremo oriente e suscitano correnti di entusiasmo persino nelle masse amorfe del popolo cinese. Ne deriva condizione propizia alla nostra prevalenza in una eventuale missione di riorganizzazione.” Nevertheless, “Ritengo però che primo compito del Governo Cinese dovrebbe essere quello di organizzare una forza militare armonicamente costituita nei suoi elementi terrestre, navale e aereo. E soprattutto tale organizzazione dovrebbe avere carattere unitario, essendosi sino ad ora le varie nazioni contesi i vari campi di attività, con risultato complessivo nullo.”³

According to the most reliable collection of impression, an army of 50-60 thousand men well organized, with adequate air force and a modest navy, essentially made up of some submarine and some gunboat for the supervision of the rivers and to combat piracy, could – despite the vastness of the empire – represent sufficient protection. That was the reason why the Italian believed to organize a military force both in sea and air was the first task of the Chinese Government. The purchase of merchant vessels, implantation of industrial units, the reclamation of land and hydroelectric plants should be placed in the second place, because in China, “Oggi quella sterminata regione ha bisogno essenzialmente di tranquillità e di ordine, invece di essere sottoposta alla angherie di eserciti raccogliatici, che compiono depredazioni e brigantaggio.”⁴

As for the execution of this task of the Chinese Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested:

Una seria organizzazione delle forze armate dello Stato, che dovrebbe essere naturalmente integrata da una parallela organizzazione di mezzi di trasporto terrestri, fluviali, marittimi ed aerei, non appare eccessivamente difficile.

Occorrerebbe però che fossero inviati sul posto non solo i capi, ma anche altri elementi della scala gerarchica, necessari a costituire la intelaiatura del nascente organismo.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Se si potesse ottenere questo primo risultato di una organizzazione militare, di qualità più che di quantità, e fatta con criterio unitario, e se si potesse escludere l'opera disgregatrice ed ostruzionista delle altre potenze, si avrebbero già le basi per la ricostruzione del paese.¹

As a matter of fact, the Chinese did have an organization that worked brilliantly in the past, “perchè in mano di europei,” which was the organization of Customs², while the current nationalist Chinese was changing the shape. Such an organization used to be in the hands of the Europeans, “dava ogni garanzia di solvibilità mentre oggi la situazione è peggiorata a svantaggio del Paese, angariato e vessato nella maniera più dura. Un più efficace controllo in questo ramo di attività potrebbe riuscire molto utile.”³

In conclusion, Italian Foreign Ministry asserted: “l'invio di materiali e la creazione di impianti industriali in Cina sarebbe come una costruzione sulla sabbia se prima non si creassero le forze capaci di salvaguardare l'autorità ed i poteri del Governo, e che pertanto gli sforzi iniziali dovrebbero essere concentrati verso la costituzione della organizzazione militare, nei suoi aspetti tecnici ed organici.”⁴

After the visit of Italy, Song continued his mission to France and Germany; then on 26 July he left Berlin for America.⁵ During his stay in Paris and Berlin, Song met with the Italian diplomats there, and assured that he was going to send detailed plan of cooperation between Italy and China.⁶ He asked whether the Royal Government accept, in principle, the cooperation proposal. He reiterated that the submitted project “*interessa R. Governo*”.⁷

¹ Ibid.

² From the 1850s the old Empire of China underwent a lot of crises: prosperous southern China was occupied by the *Tai ping* Heavenly Kingdom for 13 years, and the Empire's heartland was at stake as Emperor Xianfeng abandoned his capital city and the Summer Palace, Beijing was razed by Anglo-French forces. In addition, *Nian* bandits harassed northern China and Muslim uprisings broke out in the Southwest and the Northwest. Of all these large-scale rebellions, a minor incident consequently led to a major historic event. In 1853 in Shanghai, because of the revolt of the *Xiaodaohui* (Dagger Society, a Triad secret society), France, Britain and America successfully protected their trade interests by transferring the responsibility of Customs administration to foreigners. The Inspectorate was thus established under the supervision of the three foreign powers' Inspectors. “The Inspectorate can be seen as a temporary solution to a local rebellion, but it lasted for 96 years and became the most efficient and effective service of the Chinese government.” “The Qing government, surprisingly, muddled through these crises and lasted for another half-century.” A group of Manchu officials in the central government and provincial authorities started a series of westernising reforms in order to save this collapsing empire. These projects of westernisation were closely related to the Inspectorate, the Inspector-General (the head), and the Chinese Maritime Customs Service. Although it was designed as a revenue collecting institution, the responsibilities of the Customs Service went far beyond Customs administration in the imperial times, such as the building up of the Chinese postal service with its far-flung activities in the public weal; the establishment of the Marine Department to secure navigation – lighthouses, wireless signal stations, buoys and beacons located at every corner along the Chinese coastline and rivers; the setting up of the Statistical Department for the compiling and publishing of China's trade statistics, which today are the most precise and reliable quantitative data for researching. The other numerous activities were the setting up of western education through the *Tongwenguan* (the Interpreter School), the helping to establish and to sustain China's diplomatic and consular service, the supervising of quarantine and port sanitary measures in the days when there was no local or national organisation for the purpose, the organising and managing of the exhibits of China's arts and industries for international exhibitions, and the stewardship of foreign and domestic obligations secured on the Customs revenues. The foreign staff had significant international influence and real administrative power at the highest level. Negative feelings against the Inspectorate stemmed from this “foreignness,” which was usually labelled “imperialist” or “colonial”. See Chihyun Chang, *Government, Imperialism and Nationalism in China: the Maritime Customs Service and its Chinese staff* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1-2.

³ *API931-45(Cina)*, B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, T.4692, Roma, 25/7/1933.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., T.9758/1492.R. Roma, 26/7/1933.

⁶ Ibid., T.3251 R. Berlino, 26/7/1933.

⁷ Ibid., T.3264 R. Parigi, 27/7/1933.

On July 30, 1933, Fulvio Suvich, the Under-Secretary of Foreign Ministry, communicated to the Chargé d'Affaires in China, Filippo Anfuso about the project of economic cooperation between Italy and China. Suvich summarized the general contents of the preliminary project personally remitted to the Head of Government by Song Ziwen, informing Anfuso that this project concerned Italian participation in economic reconstruction of China and provided execution of hydroelectric system and reclamation with related machinery supplies and staff as well as transferring to China complete Italian industrial units. It mentioned also aeronautic and naval material supplies and sending specialized personnel. Financing project should be done through a loan from the Italian Government and industry repayable 500 million in 10 years; then amount of the loan could possibly be reduced *de facto* through particular methods of supplies payment and consolidation. In addition it provided that Italian activities were concentrated in certain areas. Suvich said that the Foreign Ministry was requesting technical ministries to make known in preliminary way their views maximum on project for sending to Song an early answer before his departure from Europe. Ministries aforementioned declared themselves in maximum favor of acceptance the project except Ministry of Finance. In spite of that, Ministry of Foreign Affairs believed that the project might offer important opportunities to Italian claims in China. Taking into account the opinions of technical ministries, Foreign Ministry had communicated with Song that the project affected the Royal Government but before declaring it Italy had to be made known the full and detailed proposals to discuss.¹

As a matter of fact, the Head of Government, Mussolini had followed with keen interest the exposition made to him by Mr. Song, and reserved the right to let Song know his views on the matter. From the point of view of Foreign Ministry, the project in question would offer immediate advantage to open for Italian economic activity a field of action, in which it had not so far been able to assert itself sporadically or to a limited extent; furthermore, the project itself, creating a strong complex of Italian interests in China, could, in the future, lead to certain developments by bringing Italy in the forefront among the countries directly concerned with the problems of the Far East.²

Among those positive voices about this Italo-Chinese cooperation proposal, there existed negative voice as well as the Ministry of Finance. Giacinto Auriti, Ambassador in Tokyo, expressed his opposite attitude in telegram of August 18, 1933. He asserted that Italy had no interest in opposing Japanese expansion in China. On the contrary, a powerful Japan, instead of Britain, Russia and America, which would be more preferable, or at least not harmful for Italy. Auriti said:

Per quanto riguarda l'Italia mi pare che noi non avremmo modo di opporci a tale ulteriore espansione politica del Giappone, e che d'altra parte non vi avremmo interesse. Non essendo noi il più forte stato occidentale, mi sembra essere invece nostro interesse che stati occidentali più potenti di noi, lungi dal rafforzarsi ancora di più, si indeboliscano. Invece di un'America di una Russia di un'Inghilterra più forti che non ora, un Giappone più forte è il meglio, o il meno peggio, che per noi potrebbe accadere, specie se poi come in questo caso tale acquisto di maggiore potenza andrebbe a scapito di quella degli altri. Particolarmente per quella d'Inghilterra, sia perché, per quanto riguarda un avvenire più vicino, non essendo da credere che essa farà mai in caso di vero pericolo per la Francia una politica a questa ostile o indifferente, ogni indebolimento dell'Inghilterra diviene in ultima

¹ *DDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XIV, N.37, 54.

² *Ibid.*, footnote, the published message of telepr. U. 222385/C on July 23.

analisi un indebolimento anche per la Francia, sia perché da tale indebolimento della Gran Bretagna, non sarebbe da escludersi che in un avvenire più lontano avesse ad aprirsi per noi qualche possibilità di successione all'eredità inglese.¹

Obviously, given that the interests of Italy were mainly in the Western world not in the East, Auriti did not in favour of cooperation with China, which was indeed opposite to the expansion plan of Japan. For the major interests, Auriti believed that Italy would be willing to prefer a stronger Japan rather than England. Furthermore, a stronger Japan might weaken England to some extent, and thus weaken France as well, that was in fact a favourable condition for Italy to strengthen itself in the West. Besides, the intransigent position took by Japan when it was confronted with Geneva, Auriti was convinced, indicated the Japan's self-confidence and distrust of other countries, which might set an example for Italy: "Il Giappone ha accettato l'isolamento, ha sfidato le minacce di Ginevra, e a queste non è seguita alcuna sanzione; forse disilluso dalla mancanza di uno sperato nostro appoggio, vuol mostrare anche a noi come al resto del mondo che può fare da solo, e ritiratosi come Achille sotto la tenda tratta noi con la medesima riservatezza e diffidenza degli altri. La stessa nostra politica con la Cina, osservata in questo speciale stato d'animo, può avere aggravato i sospetti di Tokio."² The opinions expressed by Auriti represented a pro-Japan attitude which would be demonstrated as one of the major considerations of Fascist Italy vis-à-vis Sino-Japanese issue after October 1935 in particular. In other words, the invasion of Japan in China without sanction by Geneva encouraged the Fascist Italy's actions in Ethiopia. Yet in 1933 such a clear opinion of pro-Japan had not been of overwhelming significance to block the proposal of Italo-Chinese cooperation.

The senior officials above-mentioned were giving their technical point of views on the cooperation project from the Italian national perspective, the Chargé d'Affaires in China, Filippo Anfuso offered, on the other hand, a well-organized analysis for the Foreign Ministry from a Chinese perspective. September 11, Anfuso informed Mussolini of the real purpose and situation of the Chinese Government with a systematic thesis. First of all, it was so far evident that Mr. Song, through urging the entry of foreign capital in China and the implantation of a network of economic agreements with foreign Powers, was inspired, in principle, by the need to create actual barriers against Japan, which China had, in recent years, tried to oppose in the political field. In a word, Anfuso noted, the Chinese Minister of Finance considered that a political solidarity of foreign Powers with China could be more easily to achieve and could be more easily to translate into effective action if those foreign Powers found the necessity of having to defend, along with China and against Japan, the common economic interests. The commitments that foreign capital would be taken into China should offer to his country, according to Mr. Song, a much more serious and longer-lasting protection than the protection promised by the European Powers and the United States through the action of the League of Nations, even the latter that had so far not been given to China. Anfuso explained:

In misura maggiore o minore, a seconda delle disposizioni trovate nei Paesi che ha avuto occasione di visitare, T. V. Soong ha gettato le basi di future intese economiche che vanno dalle probabili forniture di aerei o di

¹ Ibid., footnote, the telegram r. s. 738/447 posted by Auriti on Tokyo date, August 18.

² Ibid.

munizioni ai possibili impianti di unità industriali. Quanto egli ha fatto o progettato di fare, risponde sostanzialmente, all'indirizzo politico che ha sempre cercato di mettere in pratica: sottrarsi o per lo meno allontanare nel tempo quell'era di tutela economica giapponese che Tokio considera come necessaria conseguenza delle conquiste territoriali e dei successi militari ottenuti in Cina. Più effettivo e profondo sarà il contributo delle Potenze europee e degli Stati Uniti alla ricostruzione economica della Cina, più difficilmente il Giappone potrà arrogare i suoi diritti di tutore su un Paese – a sua detta – civilmente ed economicamente immaturo.¹

Particularly, Anfuso analyzed the situation in China concerning several Western Powers' interests. None of the European powers, Anfuso said, as a matter of fact, had enough economic privileges and interests in China to force them to take every measure to assure this country of territorial immunity. First, for Britain, large concessions made to China by the Labour Government in 1928 limited its action in this country. Britain did nothing but protected its incidental interests: “cercando, caso per caso, di offrirsi da mediatrice ma rimanendo, in definitiva, sulla linea delle altre Grandi Potenze.”² Second, the United States had, however, gradually and always in relation to the needs of their prestige on the Pacific, increased their capital investments in China, “in misura sproporzionata al collocamento effettivo della loro esportazione ma in misura appena adeguata al gravosissimo compito assunto di controbattere l'influenza nipponica in Estremo Oriente.”³ For this struggle between the US and Japan, the most important field was undoubtedly China. Japan ended up taking the upper hand, taking advantage of the severe US financial crisis and natural insensitivity of those masses in regard to an issue that is not economic. The United States was therefore in the alternative: to continue to squander their capital in China to ensure the maintenance of positions which had been so painstakingly acquired; or to loosen aid so far granted to China, therefore leaving China fall, inevitably, into the arms of Japan. It did not seem that Washington wished to adapt so easily to the latter alternative. Apart from the loan of 50 million dollars that Song had contracted in America, Washington should have sent to him concrete collaboration assurances that they had done, for the moment, to desist China from opening negotiations with the neighboring Empire.⁴

Anfuso argued that it was necessary to briefly refer to the situation aforementioned, because it “potrebbe maggiormente interessare il R. Governo nel prendere in esame il progetto di T. V. Soong è quella più specialmente politica.”⁵ Moreover, Anfuso admitted the importance of Italy's purpose by virtue of such a cooperation project:

1) To achieve an economic situation of privilege – he said, “Non vi è dubbio, difatti, che il trasferire in Cina un capitale così notevole e una somma di attività come quelle richieste dal Ministro delle Finanze cinese, significherebbe per il nostro Paese l'acquistare, di colpo, una situazione economica privilegiata come le altre Grandi Potenze hanno raggiunto soltanto attraverso un assiduo lavoro di numerosi decenni.”⁶

2) To bring Italy into a block of countries which directly concerned the issue of the Far East, as Mussolini had said – Anfuso quoted, “dar luogo a sviluppi tali da portare l'Italia in prima linea tra

¹ *API931-45(Cina)*, B.30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, T.1958/406, Shanghai, 11/9/1933.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

i Paesi direttamente interessati ai problemi estremo orientali”.¹

Particularly, Anfuso argued that the convenience of granting China a loan should be examined, which would be of most importance even in the history of foreign activities in China. Entrust to the Chinese Government so large a sum to develop a number of industrial activities which would signify a real economic reconstruction, it should mean for the excellent Government that it had, when the concession of loan was in action, the intention to constitute a most effective precedent to boast, later, such a remarkable credit to justify any seizure of pledge. “A mio subordinato modo di vedere,” Anfuso said, “il R. Governo dovrebbe considerare l’ipotesi che la Cina rimanga insolvente come quella che gli dà altrettante se non maggiori possibilità di rivalersi del suo credito in maniera reale. Sotto questo punto di vista e prendendo in esame il maggiore o minore interesse che ha l’Italia di partecipare attivamente alla soluzione dei problemi del Pacifico, il progetto di T. V. Soong può essere tenuto in considerazione.”² In spite of that, it should be fully considered the fact that Italy became a creditor nation of China and with this quality Italy could act alone or in concert with other powers that had interests in the Pacific. Therefore, Anfuso suggested, “Che se scendiamo ad un esame sommario del progetto, esso, se portato a realizzazione ci potrà permettere un’affermazione in campi dai quali siamo rimasti finora totalmente assenti.”³

On the issue of transfer of Italian industrial companies it should be clarified four aspects:

- 1) Type of industries to transplant;
- 2) Location of workshops that should arise in China;
- 3) Regime to which these workshops would be submitted;
- 4) Tax treatment of the products of these workshops.

With respect to the first aspect, it should be held in view that the Italian could had such confidence of success, after careful study by competent people, in relation to similar already flourishing industries in neighboring countries and already so well-equipped that they could beat competing products also manufactured in China. Namely, Anfuso believed that it was preferable to choose the type of industries based on its competitive ability. “Bisognerebbe essere estremamente cauti su tale punto,” Anfuso noted particularly, “giacchè se la scelta dovesse cadere su generi di industria nei quali il Giappone, ad esempio, è già bene affermato, si correrebbe il rischio di impegnarsi in una concorrenza in cui ogni aiuto del Governo cinese potrebbe anche non avere apprezzabili risultati.”⁴ If the Chinese Government could not as much as possible limit the penetration of Japan effectively with its own political means, or if its efforts failed to achieve that limitation, it would cause serious damage also to foreign industries which was operating in close collaboration with the Chinese ones. In other words, if Italy chose some types of industries to cooperate with China which in Japan had already been well developed, the Italian industries might run the risk because the Chinese was not able to help.

As for the second aspect, that to have an idea of the sites where it should arise those workshops was of essential significance. The reason was that, Anfuso noted: “Sono note infatti le condizioni

¹ A P1931-45(Cina), B. 30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, T.222385/C, Roma, 23 luglio 1933.

² Ibid., T.1958/406, Shanghai, 11/9/1933.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

di insicurezza che permangono in gran parte della Cina.”¹ If the capital investment in factories implanted in internal locations, where appropriate protection exerted by the presence of ships or landing forces might be undesirable, for such protection would be impossible to arrive or excessively expensive. As a result, it would be appropriate that the most important plants were established in Italian concession in Tianjin.²

For the third aspect, it had to be remembered that serious difficulties might arise with regard to the jurisdiction where the factories would be submitted. On this point an agreement should be achieved in every way: “e andrebbe per di più notato che anche vedendo riconosciuta la nostra piena giurisdizione su di esse – ciò che il Governo di Nanchino sarà molto riluttante a concedere – tale riconoscimento non salverebbe da colpi di testa da parte di autorità locali, dai quali potrebbero derivare danni incalcolabili alle aziende in questione.”³ Another important detail to consider was disciplining the workforce. The Chinese regulations were of an extreme partiality for the workforce, while the workers were organized in work rooms, and strengthened by the support of the authorities that often created serious embarrassment for employers. Strikes and lockouts followed each other with great frequency and various foreign factories were condemned to long periods of inactivity for such reasons.

The fourth aspect, the tax treatment of the products of the companies to be implanted was also important. As it was known in China, the most various denominations, taxes and unjust levies were imposed on products, including Chinese ones, which were transported from one location to another; there were also consumer taxes, surcharges to military spending and public aid to the disaster victims. All this mass of taxation ended up making impossible any dispatch of goods in certain regions, resulting in narrowing the market absorption that sometimes came down to one area adjacent to the production center. Neither would benefit to have insurance and commitments by the Government to exempt products of Italian workshops from any other tax that was not “regular”. It was known that the authority of the Central Government, in tax matters, was almost nothing in the same provinces which the Central Government directly controlled. It was also known that large foreign companies – such as Standard Oil Co., the Asiatic Petroleum Co., the British-American Tobacco Co., despite agreements already concluded to ensure the transit of their products (including those manufactured by them in China) in various provinces, they had to accept the imposition of provincial authorities to correspond every kind which would otherwise be found on display. All that of course was a burden on the selling price of the products, and that fact should be duly taken into account in examining the question in detail.⁴

The issue of the guarantees offered by the Chinese Government would remain to study, Anfuso said, “se, come è necessario, si vuol considerare il progetto stesso nella sua piena applicazione e senza tener conto dell’ipotesi più sopra espressa circa l’eventuale e considerabile insolvibilità del Governo cinese.”⁵ Numerous burdens and significant impact already existed on all assets of the revenue of the Chinese Government. Of these, some, such as the Customs and the Gabella del Sale, administered with the cooperation of foreign staff, would provide enough solid guarantees, “ma i loro proventi sono già nella loro maggior parte destinati all’ammortizzamento di prestiti esteri; nè le altre Potenze interessate lascierebbero liberamente alla Cina accendere nuove ipotetiche su tali

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

proventi, finchè resta pendente la questione del consolidamento di altri prestiti esteri, garantiti ora su entrate che non hanno permesso al Governo cinese di soddisfare ai relativi impegni assuntisi.”¹ As for the other revenue (taxes of various kinds, special surcharges, etc.), they would turn into maximum (with the only exception of some specifically assigned to the service of certain loans) insufficient to meet the obligations for which they had been pledged as collateral. Numerous internal loans, therefore existed for years in a state of default, and the measures repeatedly announced by Song Ziwen as imminent, to restore even in the credit of the Nanjing Government, had so far been unable to achieve.²

In China the state enterprises (railways, etc.) also indebted abroad and inside, were located mostly in arrears to their creditors, and it was therefore not possible to consider them as any guarantees – even apart from the fact that most of them were co-interested institutions and foreign companies. Thus Anfuso believed,

Alla scelta ed all’esame della validità delle garanzie che si potrebbero esigere dal Governo cinese si dovrebbe perciò procedere con estrema cautela e dopo essersi reso stretto conto delle effettive potenzialità finanziarie del Governo cinese di cui rendono idea distorta i bilanci annuali da esso pubblicati con tendenza esclusivamente propagandistica.

Si potrebbe naturalmente evitare il campo finanziario, portando la scelta, ad esempio, su concessioni minerarie, esigendo il controllo assoluto di esso (ciò che tuttavia costituirebbe una deroga dalla vigente legislazione in materia e pertanto difficilmente ottenibile); ma in tal caso andrebbe esaminata parallelamente la questione dell’effettiva protezione – anche militare – di tali concessioni, analogamente a quanto ho sopra accennato nei riguardi di erigende officine.³

The insufficiency of revenue proposed above might come to cease the industrial development of this country, which was called by Song Ziwen. The reorganization of tax administration – still very chaotic – which the Nanjing Government affirmed decided to proceed, were translating into reality, for it was not to be denied that under a wise administration China could be easily cope with its enormous resources rationally exploited, as the financial commitments much higher than those that it so far failed to maintain. From the foregoing, it was clear that the action of the Government lending to protect the invested capital should express itself in a more and more effective manner, in proportion as its economic interests would increase consistently. Therefore, Anfuso concluded that, “di fatto, che la presenza dell’Italia in Cina si manifesterebbe in misura simile a quella delle altre Potenze che hanno uguali interessi: vantaggio politico indubitabile e sul quale converrà adesso portare tutta la nostra attenzione se, effettivamente, si vorrà prendere in esame l’eventualità di accettare le linee del progetto T. V. Soong.”⁴ In respect to this project, Anfuso said:

in tanto per noi potrebbe avere un interesse proporzionato alle necessità della nostra espansione e tale da consigliarci l’esportazione di un capitale così rilevante, in quanto, oltre alla naturale affermazione che ne deriverebbe alle nostre industrie, dovrebbe consentirci di realizzare, in un avvenire non lontano e in un Paese nel quale è sempre aperta la via dei rimaneggiamenti politici e territoriali, dei vantaggi che dovrebbero

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

largamente compensarci dei sacrifici finanziari che oggi potremmo sostenere.

Mentre perciò converrà ugualmente riporre ogni cura nel cercare di ottenere dal Governo cinese tutte quelle garanzie che sarà possibile esprimere da un organismo politico ed amministrativo in evoluzione continua e totalmente difforme da quella occidentale, cercando, se possibile, di realizzare, totalmente, le premesse del piano T. V. Soong nel loro contenuto puramente economico, bisognerà, in pari tempo, confrontare le difficoltà e i gravami che oggi ci saranno imposti (necessario aumento dei nostri effettivi militari in Cina, organizzazione di un controllo civile dei nostri impianti, ecc.) con le necessità di costituire e trovare degli sbocchi adeguati alle nostre future attività nazionali. Solo in base a queste considerazioni il progetto T. V. Soong può essere, nella sua attuale forma, affrontato e considerato poichè nella sua parte specifica di carattere finanziario a troppe obiezioni esso può esser fatto segno soprattutto nei riflessi della situazione interna della Cina.¹

In short, the Chinese Government should pay more attention to justify its efficiency in protecting the capital investment of foreign Powers, assuring those Powers that their economic interests would increase consistently. Italy, similar to the other Powers who had interests in China, aimed for the same political advantage there. As regards the project proposed by Song, it was true that it might benefit the expansion of Italy, but obtaining all the guarantees from the Chinese Government was of particular significance, because its political and administrative organization was in evolution constantly and completely different from the Western one. Particularly, at the same time of economic premises provided by the Song's plan, Anfuso argued that it was necessary to impose some other measures, such as to increase Italian military personnel in China, organization of a civil control of Italian plants, etc. Anfuso left the decision to Mussolini, who "giudicherà se è nell'interesse attuale del R. Governo di approfittare della sollecitudine che dimostra, oggi, il Signor T. V. Soong nel ricercare la collaborazione dell'Italia, per offrire così, in Estremo Oriente, al nostro Paese, quelle possibilità che le altre Grandi Potenze hanno trovato più facilmente, per essere qui giunte prima e in condizioni più favorevoli delle nostre."²

2.2.3 Resignation of Song Ziwen and little success in cooperation project

In the autumn of 1933, Kong Xiangxi was substituted for Song Ziwen as the new Minister of Finance of China. In November, the new Plenipotentiary Minister in China, Raffaele Boscarelli arrived in Shanghai and met with Song. Song demonstrated to Boscarelli extreme cordiality on his arrival in China. Besides, Song gave Boscarelli the impression that his resignation from Chinese Government, Song considered, was only dictated by transient reasons. In addition Song took to emphasize that his return to power was not far depending in a large part upon his own will. Boscarelli was told, in fact, that Kong was confronting a lot of difficulties to find sums from banks

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

of Shanghai to fulfill the need of the Chinese Government. Song believed that if he were still in office he would overcome these difficulties more easily, as he continued to control, in effect, the local financial market. Such a particular position of the ex-Minister of Finance allowed him to assure Boscarelli that, although he was not being in power, he would endeavor to follow closely the question that concerned Italy (aviation mission, aeronautic material sales etc.) and to declare that his resignation did not diminish interest of the Italian activities that he had led into China and did not diminish the increase of Italian relations with China. Soong confirmed therefore that he considered himself one of the safest friends that Italy accounted in China, and he wanted to renew his deference and gratitude to Mussolini for the warm hospitality which he had received in Rome.¹ As a reply, Mussolini gave instruction to Boscarelli, expressing his gratitude to Mr. Song:

Prendo atto con compiacimento delle dichiarazioni fatte da T. V. Soong circa interessamento che egli intende continuare a portare alle attività italiane in Cina e all'incremento rapporti italo-cinesi.²

Indeed, the resignation of Song Ziwen and the appointment of Kong Xiangxi concerned the Italian Foreign Ministry that it might have negative consequence on the aforementioned project, as up to September 1933, they did not received a more concrete plan concerning the Italo-Chinese cooperation that Song had promised to elaborate so that it could be examined from the technical side.³ Boscarelli responded to Mussolini that the resignation of Song and appointment of Kong did not seem to have consequences neither to the project of collaboration between Italy and China nor to project of cooperation between China and other Powers headed by Mr. Monnet⁴. Even after Song's resignation as Financial Minister he remained the head of the National Economic Council which was an assigned office for implementing these projects, of which he had immediately called the new Minister Kong to be a member; and Song was the president of the Bank of China. The resignation of Song was motivated by personal rivalry between him and Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi, as well as political dissent on Sino-Japanese relations.

As a matter of fact, with the report of March 12, 1934 Boscarelli informed Mussolini that following the weakening of Song's political position, the project of Italo-Chinese economic cooperation had not made substantial progress.⁵ As Boscarelli reported, since his arrival in Shanghai, he had kept in touch with Song Ziwen for the project of Italian-Chinese cooperation. The conversation was of courtesy, yet there was no concrete project of the Italian-Chinese cooperation that he had promised Anfuso a few months ago. He replied that he hoped to give it to Boscarelli on December 15,⁶ whereas Song was unable to present before the promised date, because the relevant studies were not yet completed.⁷ Song promised again to send the final draft of such practical proposals, which was entrusted to Sir Arthur Salter (English Financial Adviser of

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XIV, N.346, 382.

² *Ibid.*, N.377, 411.

³ *Ibid.*, N.362, 397.

⁴ Jean Omer Marie Gabriel Monnet (1888-1979), French political economist and diplomat. He is regarded as a chief architect of European Unity and one of the founding fathers of the European Union. At the Paris Peace Conference, Monnet was an assistant to the French minister of commerce and industry. In 1929, his experience in international financial matters led to the foundation of the Bancamerica-Blair, a bank in San Francisco. From 1934 to 1936, Monnet lived in China at the invitation of Jiang Jieshi, where he assisted the reorganization of the Chinese railway network.

⁵ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XIV, N.379, 413-414, footnote.

⁶ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B.36, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T.555/97, Shanghai, 12/3/1934.

⁷ *Ibid.*, T.238414, Roma, 23/12/1933.

the Chinese Government, one of the “experts” of the League of Nations to the Chinese National Economic Council service, of which Song was the head), to the Royal Minister in China as soon as possible.¹ Song emphasized that it should be considered temporarily absent from power and he was thinking to return as soon as possible. The fact of China, however, was that the new Minister Kong – Song’s brother-in-law – was struggling in the midst of financial difficulties and the hostility of the Shanghai bankers. At the same time it was already beginning the uprising of rebellion in Fujian province² that seemed to significantly undermine the power of Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi – Song’s another brother in law and rival – and the unity of China. As a result, until January 1934, the detailed project was not completed by Song’s office, and in a long confidential conversation, Song told Boscarelli about the situation of Fujian which he considered very serious for rulers of Nanjing. As for the issue of sale of Italian material, Song said that he could do nothing at that moment but wait and he believed that Nanjing was still a strong government. At the same time, Boscarelli reported, there were rumors in political circles about the rift between Song and Jiang Jieshi, which became more and more insistent. And the family of Song Ziwen even spoke again of his departure abroad.³

When the Fujian rebellion was completely quelled by Jiang Jieshi in January 1934, Boscarelli noted, “questi potè così presentarsi vittorioso alla riunione del Kuomintang che consacrò in maniera non dubbia il suo potere quasi assoluto non solo sulle questioni militari ma su tutta la cosa pubblica cinese.”⁴ While the situation of Song Ziwen became unfavourable,

L’isolamento di T. V. Soong diventava sempre più apparente ed il suo diminuito potere (per il momento almeno) risultava da molte indizii, che potetti io stesso constatare a Nanchino. Pare anzi che la rivalità fra lui ed il Generalissimo cinese assumesse anche carattere di violenza personale ed ad un certo momento si considerò come possibile, il completo ritiro di T. V. Soong dalla vita pubblica, tanto che egli stesso dichiarò in un’intervista concessa ad uno dei più importanti giornali di Shanghai che esitava a conservare la direzione del Consiglio Economico Nazionale.⁵

Once again, Boscarelli send a letter to Song Ziwen on February 7, 1934, saying:

When Your Excellency was in Rome, in a conversation with Signor Mussolini a preliminary plan for a Sino-Italian cooperation proposed by Your Excellency was mentioned, and a short memorandum embodying the outlines of this plan was subsequently left in the hands of the competent authorities.

Signor Mussolini has taken some interest in Your Excellency’s proposals and agrees in principle with the same, and I have been repeatedly requested to supply all necessary details for a thorough study of the ways and means of carrying it into practical execution.

¹ Ibid.

² In November 1933 some leaders of 19th Route Army of the National Revolutionary Army, including Cai Tingkai (蔡廷锴), Chen Mingshu (陈铭枢) and Jiang Guangnai (蒋光鼐), who had gained fame for their role in the January 28 Incident anti-Japanese invasion, were deployed to southern China to suppress a Communist rebellion. Instead, they negotiated peace with the Communists. In alliance with other Guomindang forces under Li Jishen (李济深), those leaders broke with Jiang Jieshi and took control of Fujian, where they were stationed, and on November 22, 1933, proclaimed a new government. Guomindang responded to the rebellion first with air attacks and, in January 1934, a ground offensive force that quickly led to the defeat of the formerly prestigious 19th Route Army. On 13 January 1934 this Fujian government was defeated and its leaders fled or defected to Jiang Jieshi’s forces. See Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution*, Chapter 3.

³ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B.36, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T.555/97, Shanghai, 12/3/1934.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Knowing how busy Your Excellency has been during the last few months, I have refrained from inquiring whether it would be possible to have the detailed scheme desired by Signor Mussolini ready within a short time; but as I cannot indefinitely postpone a reply to the request of my Government, I beg to ask Your Excellency to advise me in regard to this question.

I do not wish to unduly press Your Excellency, but I hope Your Excellency will understand the awkward position I am placed by having been unable so far to answer to my Government on a question which arises from a proposal specifically made by Your Excellency himself several months ago, and which has attracted some considerable personal interest from His Excellency the Head of my Government.

I apologize for trespassing upon your valuable time, but I hope that Your Excellency will be good enough to give to the matter early consideration.¹

Having received this letter, Song met with Boscarelli the next day. Song repeated his declarations of friendship for Italy and for Mussolini. As regards the project of cooperation, however, Song said that the general political situation in the country had, until then, prohibited to take care of the project of Italian-Chinese cooperation but it was ready and that he would like to know if Boscarelli thought about discussing it personally with him (i.e. with the National Economic Council of which Song was the head), and if it was possible for Boscarelli to telegraph to Mussolini, deciding to send Italian experts in China. The letter of Song on February 8, 1934 made this proposal in writing:

In connection with your letter of yesterday's date and our conversation this morning, I wish to assure you that the National Economic Council is gratified to learn of the continued interest of Signor Mussolini in Sino-Italian cooperation for economic development.

Owing to the absence of two members of the National Economic Council until recently, discussions had been somewhat delayed, but the final character and programme of the Council have at last been decided upon and room is cleared to push ahead the actual projects.

The National Economic Council desires the cooperation of the Italian Government and Italian interests on:

- 1) The reform of the silk industry in China, along with the equipment of modern filature machinery;
- 2) The development of the artificial silk industry in China with the purchase of machinery on credit or for joint Sino-Italian financing;
- 3) In connection with the reorganization of the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company, the construction of new wharves and godowns, and more especially the purchase of new coastal and river boats on long term credit from Italy; and
- 4) Hydraulic and hydro-electric projects, notably the area of the Yellow and Hwai Rivers for land reclamation and hydro-electric projects.

I shall be pleased if you will communicate with your Government with a view of finding out with what Italian representatives these projects can be studied in detail by the National Economic Council.²

To respond, Boscarelli suggested that he was pleased to take note of the continued interest on Song's part to the carrying into execution of the program of Sino-Italian cooperation presented by himself in Rome. Politely, Boscarelli replied:

¹ Ibid., letters attached.

² Ibid.

I will duly inform my Government of the contents of your letter and ask them to choose Italian representatives for studying in detail the projects mentioned in the same. Before doing so, however, I take the liberty to urge Your Excellency to supply the promised technical details regarding the said projects, as I deem necessary to submit them to my Government without further delay, in order that the appointment of the Italian representatives may be made in accordance with the exigencies of the particular matters to be discussed.

I would be pleased, furthermore, to learn from Your Excellency where the meetings of the Italian and Chinese representatives shall take place, viz. whether in China or in Italy, and in the latter case to be informed of the names of the Delegates of the Chinese Government appointed for the purpose.¹

What was of more importance, Boscarelli communicated to Mussolini, that there existed, indeed, two different collaborative projects in the plan of Song Ziwen: one that could be called “Sino-Lega delle Nazioni” and the other was Italian-Chinese – “Ne esiste invece uno solo; e la collaborazione italo-cinese fa parte di quella collaborazione generale “sino-europea e sino-americana” per ottenere la quale T. V. Soong si è molto adoperato nel suo viaggio in America ed in Europa dello scorso estate.”² Such an observation was important because it meant that “la redazione, la trattazione e tutti gli eventuali sviluppi di una collaborazione dell’Italia colla Cina sono e dovrebbero essere, anche nel futuro, studiati e diretti dal Consiglio Economico Nazionale, organo del quale non solo sono noti i legami con la Società delle Nazioni, ma che funziona esclusivamente sotto l’ispirazione di consiglieri stranieri.”³ Those foreign advisers were:

Il Signor **Rajchmann**, israelita polacco, uomo di molta intelligenza, di grandissima attività, che conosce molto bene la Cina dove trovasi per la seconda volta; è persona ambigua e discussa anche dal punto di vista della correttezza personale.

Il Signor **Monnet**, francese, rappresentante di quel gruppo di banchieri internazionali che avrebbero dovuto finanziare tutto il programma di collaborazione sino-europea-americana che T. V. Soong aveva ideato nel suo viaggio dell’estate scorso.

Il Signor **Salter**, inglese, funzionario della Lega delle Nazioni.

Il Signor **Mazot**, francese, ex direttore della Banca dell’Indocina in Shanghai;

Il Signor **Drummond**, figlio dell’Ambasciatore britannico a Roma in funzioni di Segretario del Signor Monnet, ed altri di minore importanza.⁴

Obviously, they were of different nationalities and backgrounds, all gathered around the leader, Mr. Rajchmann. Thus Boscarelli believed such a condition benefit little for the Italian penetration in China: “Costoro non potevano, in tesi generale, essere sinceramente favorevoli a quell’aumento dell’influenza italiana in Cina al quale avrebbe potuto condurre la realizzazione del noto progetto.”⁵ However, given their special position for Song Ziwen, Boscarelli estimated it was appropriate to keep in touch with them, “anche perchè al mio arrivo in Cina avevo potuto constatare (la notizia mi era già stata data da Anfuso) che il Signor Rajchmann era perfettamente al corrente di quanto T. V. Soong aveva fatto in Italia (accordo Boxers, ecc.) e di quanto aveva

¹ Ibid.

² *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B. 36, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T.555/97, Shanghai, 12/3/1934.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

esposto a S. E. il Capo del Governo.”¹

In the conversation with Rajchmann, Boscarelli realised that those experts of the League, especially Rajchmann and Monnet, “continuavano ad essere i più influenti ispiratori del ‘leader’ cinese.”² As Boscarelli said, “Ho anzi spesso riscontrato una tale identità di vedute e di espressioni fra quanto mi diceva il primo e le notizie che mi davano i secondi che alle volte sono stato indotto a ritenere che le risposte di T. V. Soong erano preparate dai due europei.”³ Therefore, their opinions towards Italo-Chinese cooperation project might influenced the former Chinese Minister of Finance. Their attitude, Boscarelli viewed as “sebbene mascherato da molte scuse e tergiversazioni, è stato continuamente ambiguo, dilatorio e commisurato alle oscillazioni ed ai cambiamenti”.⁴ In fact, Rajchmann told Boscarelli with undisguised regret, that in China everything changed at any moment and that all political or economic programmes were too exclusively linked with the power that formulated them. In this sense the power of Song Ziwen was so diminished that it was no longer possible to think about the implementation of his program and projects. Mr. Monnet expressed the same attitude and language to Boscarelli.⁵

Boscarelli later found that the reality proved the words of two European experts. There had not yet response of Song Ziwen to the last communication of Boscarelli, when the news arrived that the political situation of Song became worse than several months ago. Song even publicly announced in the newspapers that he would leave for a long trip in the North of the Republic and abroad. Meanwhile Boscarelli was active to meet with many of the most representative and most influential politicians of China, such as Jiang Jieshi, Wang Jingwei, Kong Xiangxi, Luo Wengan, Sun Ke, etc. Each one of them spoke to Boscarelli “col più vivo interesse dell’Italia, della collaborazione italo-cinese, degli aiuti che la Cina attende dalle benevoli disposizioni di Vostra Eccellenza. Nessuno però (e con molti di essi ha parlato a varie riprese di fatti concreti) ha accennato ad un progetto di collaborazione nelle linee ideate da T. V. Soong.”⁶ The silent attitude of those Chinese political elites on the cooperation project proposed by ex-Financial Minister Song had to disappoint Boscarelli. He admitted: “Non sembrami pertanto inverosimile dedurre da questo loro silenzio, che lo stesso autore del progetto, resosi conto dell’impossibilità per lui di condurlo a compimento, abbia volutamente omesso di parlarne con essi, come avrebbe dovuto fare per un argomento di così grande importanza per la Cina.”⁷

As the fact that it was no longer likely to implement the cooperation project through the ex-Financial Minister Song, Boscarelli considered another approach. Since it was true that the National Economic Council of China was established particularly for execution of international cooperation, as well as the fact that the European experts such as Rajchmann and Monnet could interfere in the destination and administration of the capital provided by foreign countries, once Italy did this capital investment in China, there had to be an Italian expert in this group. Boscarelli said, “Occorrerebbe perciò far passi qui-forse ancora più che qui, a Ginevra allo scopo di ottenere che un ‘esperto’ italiano del rango e della capacità di Rajchmann fosse chiamato a far parte del Consiglio Economico Nazionale cinese.”⁸ Moreover, the existence of the National Economic

¹ Ibid. The communication from Rajchmann to Mussolini will be referred in next section later.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Council, above all, the existence of its foreign experts appeared to be quite precarious, because it seemed at that time that the Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi had expressed ideas absolutely opposed to its existence and its functions. Jiang believed, according to Boscarelli,

al momento attuale ogni spesa di denaro pubblico debba essere unicamente giustificata da necessità strategiche e militari.

Il Generalissimo si sarebbe anzi espresso molto severamente contro tutti questi esperti stranieri che sono qui, sotto vari pretesti, “per arricchirsi a spese della Cina”.¹

Despite that unfavourable situation, Boscarelli did not give up considering the possibility on bilateral cooperation. He examined the last letter received from Song Ziwen on 9 February, which mentioned some concrete contents about the cooperation, including particularly three fields: silk industry, purchase of new coastal and river boats, hydro-electric projects. In the first field, the Royal Legation in Shanghai did some research to find out possibility of cooperation on the production of silk (both natural and artificial) in China. Boscarelli even proposed that Italy could consider the opportunity to establish here an artificial silk factory. He and Dr. Mari², had a conference to examine the possibility of making new proposals on such a cooperation.³

In the second field, when China asked for the Italian provision of new wharves and godowns, Boscarelli argued that it was necessary to see in what conditions the Chinese Government wanted these ships, then the Royal Government would decide whether and in what manner to accede to the Chinese request, though the Head of Government had agreed in talks with the Chinese Minister of Navy about the sale of two submarines manufactured in Italy.⁴

With regard to the work of hydro-electric and land reclamation, Italian Eng. Omodeo was going to arrive in China as technical expert of the League, who would put the party of Italy in a position to judge whether and how should Italy at that moment take action in this field.⁵

In conclusion, Boscarelli remarked that as the former project proposed by Chinese ex-Financial Minister Song seemed to be unlikely to implement, Italy could still do some preparation for its penetration in future, saying to Mussolini:

anche se il progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, così come era stato ideato da T. V. Soong, non verrà oggi realizzato sia per ragioni esterne sia perchè il suo autore si trova nell'impossibilità di portarlo a compimento, la Regia Legazione potrà svolgere, come sta già svolgendo, trattative su gli stessi argomenti e le stesse materie sulle quali avrebbe dovuto vertere la collaborazione italo-cinese. Che anzi, qualora le trattative stesse avranno esito favorevole, ciò servirà di utile preparazione alla politica di penetrazione italiana in Cina, così opportunamente caldeggiata da Vostra Eccellenza, senza investire subito qui, allo scoperto, una cospicua somma di capitale italiano come quella prevista nell'idea di T. V. Soong.

T. V. Soong che è, senza alcun dubbio, uno degli uomini più intelligenti della Cina moderna e che sente di poter ritornare da un momento all'altro al Governo, cercherà forse di non lasciar completamente cadere il suo progetto anche perchè si sente in certo qual modo impegnato di fronte a Vostra Eccellenza. Se non potrà comunicarmi un vero disegno concreto redatto sulla base di quanto ebbe ad esporre verbalmente a Roma, tra

¹ Ibid.

² Dr. Benito Mari, Italian, silk expert in China of the League of Nations.

³ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B. 36, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T.555/97, Shanghai, 12/3/1934.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

qualche tempo forse mi farà delle proposte redatte sulla falsariga della sua lettera del 9 febbraio. Sarà allora il momento di esaminarle e di esprimere un giudizio su di esse, tenendo conto altresì di un altro importante aspetto del problema quello cioè che potrebbe far considerare ogni investimento di capitali italiani in Cina come un'eventuale presa di pegno per avvenimenti futuri.

Nell'attesa – salvo contrari ordini di Vostra Eccellenza – io continuerò a tenermi in stretto contatto con l'eminente uomo di stato cinese e coi suoi collaboratori europei.¹

When met with Boscarelli in April 1934, Song confirmed the disappointment of Boscarelli on the possibility of implementing the concrete contents of 9 February, saying that he was no longer in power and admitting that his relations with some other senior elites of Nanjing Government were not good. In spite of that general negative situation, Song emphasized that his disposition of cooperation had not changed. He hoped that he could very soon give Boscarelli communication about a new form of Italo-Chinese cooperation, which, even if was not a cooperation between the two Governments as early proposed to the Duce, would not be of less benefit to Italy. Song made a copy of his letter to the General Director of the Chinese Development Finance Corporation, sending this copy to Boscarelli. Song wrote in this letter,

as a result of domestic and international situation has occurred it is proved to be impossible to put the project of Italo-Chinese cooperation into execution on the lines submitted by me to S. E. the Head of Government in Rome. However, during the last few months I expected to organize a private corporation representing all the major banks in China, including the Central Bank, which will act by means for carry out the economic cooperation with various foreign countries.

This corporation - the Chinese Development Finance Corporation - was established now and is my intention to assign to it the task of bringing forward the cooperation program outlined in my visit to Rome and according to specific project indicated in my letter of 8 February².

This corporation being of a private nature and not political is perfectly free to conclude any kind of business with any country as you like and is therefore free from any outside influence. V. E. can therefore believe that as regards the instrument of execution is to be changed, these projects in question remain unchanged.³

Apparently, as Song lost his office in Ministry of Finance, and given his relations with the leader of Nanjing Government were not so good, he attempted to make the Italo-Chinese cooperation project more private rather than governmental, taking advantage of his personal influence in the economic field. Boscarelli, however, told Song that all the four subjects in the letter of 9 February were susceptible to attract the attention of the Duce, but for letting him able to give a more precise answer Boscarelli still asked for some details, at least to know what purpose, whether it is financial or technical, or both, and to what extent the cooperation could develop in the idea of Song. Boscarelli reported to Mussolini:

credo però fin da ora ovvio rilevare che qualsiasi forma sarà in avvenire per assumere e su qualsiasi materia sarà per vertere nuovo progetto, esso non emanerà più da Governo Nanchino direttamente e nemmeno da Concilio economico nazionale, bensì da impresa privata, sia pure diretta da personalità come Soong Tse Ven.

Impiego di capitali italiani in tali condizioni dovrà essere, a mio subordinato parere, esaminato con differente

¹ Ibid.

² See the letter of Song sent to Boscarelli on 9 February 1933.

³ *IDD*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.70, 92-93.

criterio da quello richiesto per progetto primitivo che, se realizzato nella sua forma originaria, avrebbe impegnato responsabilità del Governo Nanchino.¹

For this new proposal, the Under-Secretary of Foreign Ministry Fulvio Suvich communicated to Boscarelli on 16 April 1934, agreed with the new approach through “Chinese Development Finance Corporation” and preferred to provide management staff rather than capital:

Visto che progetto collaborazione italo-cinese non potrebbe concretarsi che attraverso «Chinese Development Finance Corporation», sta bene anche questo tramite; occorre però che ente predetto offra necessarie garanzie finanziarie e che proposte particolareggiate richieste da V. S. a signor Tze² risultino accettabili da nostre industrie.

In via di massima ritengo che la cosa potrebbe essere tanto più interessante per noi quanto maggiore fosse parte del saldo indennità boxers che, in relazione accordo di Londra 1 luglio u.s., Governo cinese vi dedicasse (pur non trattandosi più di collaborazione tra i due Governi) e quanto maggiore fosse partecipazione personale italiano alle imprese, potendo noi fornire personale direttivo più facilmente che capitali.³

At the same time of endeavour of Boscarelli, there existed some ambitious voices who also interested in the Italian penetration in China, among the officials of Royal Government. The results, however, was always against their expectation. For instance, the proposal on establishment of an Office of Export to China was refused. October 27, 1933, Signor Ing. Alberto Jacopini communicated to the Foreign Ministry, “ho fatto presentire il Ministero delle Corporazioni sulla convenienza e sulla possibilità pratica di favorire la costituzione di un consorzio tra le Ditte industriali italiane che esportano loro prodotti in Cina, mettendo in rilievo che lo scopo del consorzio stesso sarebbe quelle di evitare la concorrenza che le Ditte tendono a farsi.”⁴ Concerning this proposal, *Ministero delle Corporazioni* responded that such a matter needed further clarification in particular as regards which branches of industry that should be subject to control of this consortium.⁵ The Foreign Ministry replied:

Per quanto riguarda invece i suggerimenti pratici formulati onde procedere ad un riordinamento delle nostre attuali attività commerciali in Cina, e particolarmente nel campo del materiale d'armamento, non sembra che le proposte dei Sigg. Jacopini e Passardi siano adeguate alle condizioni del tutto speciali nelle quali procede la nostra attività di penetrazione nel mercato cinese.

In primo luogo tale nostra attività viene svolgendosi a seguito di lunghi sforzi di preparazione, di tentativi individuali di accordi speciali, ed ha bisogno di consolidarsi e confermarsi attraverso concreti risultati, prima di venire riorganizzata o trasformata su nuove basi.

Del resto per quanto riguarda la creazione di consorzi è noto a codesto On. Ministero che – in circostanze assai più favorevoli – iniziative del genere non trovarono per il passato possibilità di realizzazione, malgrado l'intervento dei principali Enti italiani interessati al mercato cinese.

Ora non risulta che siano intervenuti fatti nuovi, tali da richiedere la necessità di un intervento statale,

¹ Ibid.

² Mr. Tze Tzo Kay, General Director of the Chinese Development Finance Corporation.

³ *DDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.102, 124.

⁴ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B. 42, Penetrazione commerciale in Cina, T.232415/240, Roma, 27/10/1933.

⁵ Ibid.

secondo la proposta dei Sigg. Jacopini e Passardi. Nè si vede in quale forma tale intervento potrebbe oggi essere determinato nei confronti delle ditte che hanno provveduto ad organizzare individualmente per la loro esportazione in Cina.¹

In short, this Ministry argued that government intervention in war industrial export to China might affect the former initiatives of those individual exportation with a reorganized new system. Namely, “Sembra, infatti, che in questo primo periodo d’orientamento delle nostre industrie particolarmente belliche, verso il mercato cinese, un intervento statale, anche indiretto, per la creazione di un Ufficio di Esportazione in quel Paese, potrebbe, forse, nuocere più che non giovare, dato che l’azione da noi sinora svolta attraverso iniziative individuali ha ancora bisogno di meglio affermarsi prima che si possa pensare a riorganizzarla con nuovi criteri.”²

As a result, up to May 1934, when Boscarelli met with Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi, the atmosphere of conversation was quite friendly and polite, but there was indeed no real solution to the issue of cooperation project. Boscarelli reported to Mussolini:

Prendendo le mosse da quanto egli [Generalissimo] mi ha detto circa sua soddisfazione opera colonnello Lodi e nostra missione aeronautica gli ho detto che ero disposto a discutere con lui qualsiasi altra forma di collaborazione pratica e esaminare qualsiasi progetto positivo che egli volesse formulare e che ero sicuro che V. E. avrebbe preso in seria considerazione ogni proposta di collaborazione italiana cinese. Egli mi ha ringraziato e mi ha chiesto di restare ancora un giorno presso di lui per discutere altre questioni aeronautica.³

Since the earlier project of cooperation seemed impossible to execute, resulted from both Italian and Chinese obstacles, the political elites of Fascist Government tried to find another approach. 7 June 1934, *Il Comandante* Maurilio Domenico Varalda⁴, before leaving for China, prepared a memorandum in consultation with *i Signori* Marconi, Boezi e Caretti, submitting it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which “i connazionali predetti si propongono di attuare il loro progetto con capitali cinesi e con macchinari e direzione tecnica italiani.”⁵ This memorandum offered a thesis

¹ AP 1931-45(*Cina*), B. 42, Penetrazione commerciale in Cina, T.11545, Roma, 17/2/1934.

² Ibid., T.11545, Roma, 28/3/1934.

³ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.185, 203.

⁴ Comandante Maurilio Domenico Varalda (Capitano di Corvetta R. N.), iscritto al P.N.F. dal 25 Maggio 1926, Segretario del Fascio di Pechino dal 21 Aprile 1931. È destinato in Cina nel 1903 come Ufficiale (Tenente di Vascello) sulla R. Nave “Vettor Pisani” nave ammiraglia della Divisione Navale dell’Estremo Oriente, Ammiraglio Carlo Mirabello. È destinato al Distaccamento Regia Marina in Cina a Pechino (Guardia alla Regia Legazione d’Italia) dal Giugno 1904 al Novembre 1905, e rimpatriato nel 1906: date le volontarie dimissioni dal servizio attivo nel Settembre 1906 ed iscritto nella Riserva Navale. Egli è stabilitosi a Shanghai come Agente di Borsa dal 1910; richiamato in servizio attivo nel Settembre 1917 e destinato al Comando del Distaccamento R. Marina in Cina a Guardia della R. Legazione a Pechino. Promosso al grado di Capitano di Corvetta nel 1918, con funzioni di Addetto Navale. Demobilizzato nel 1920 e riscritto nella Riserva Navale collo stesso grado; rimpatriato nel Giugno 1920; stabilitosi a Pechino dal Gennaio 1921 quale Agente di Cambio e Assicurazioni, dove trovava tuttora in tale capacità. I molti anni passati in Estremo Oriente lo hanno messo in grado di rendersi molto famigliare con l’ambiente cinese dove ha molte aderenze e conoscenze di personalità ufficiale e commerciale cinese e straniero, e dove gode la stima generale. Oltre ad esplicitare la sua attività di Agente di cambio ha avuto occasione di studiare problemi diversi e di stendere rapporti anche per incarico di Autorità Consolari, come ad esempio uno studio per una linea di navigazione tra l’Italia e la Cina fatto nel 1913 per incarico dell’allora Console Generale a Shanghai, S. E. il Comm.re Gerolamo de Rossi; ed anche uno studio e rapporto sulla lavorazione, produzione e commercio della treccia di paglia nella provincia dello Shantung, fatto sul posto, per conto della Società “Il Trucchiolo” di Carpi dietro invito di S. E. il Comm.re Guido Corni. See the information attached to the Memorandum of Varalda, AP 1931-45(*Cina*), Busta 36, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese.

⁵ AP 1931-45(*Cina*), Busta 36, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T. 218492/29, Shanghai, 7/6/1934.

on industrial development of China, especially thinking about what Italy could employ for its penetration in China.

First, the memorandum evaluated the possibility of industrial development of China. “China, with her enormous territory and her astonishing variety of natural resources, is promised a stupendous industrial development, incomparably greater than anything so far realised, notwithstanding the remarkable strides she has recently made, under the impulse of new ideas and ideals, and under the guidance of leaders fully aware of her necessities as a Nation, and awake to her almost unlimited possibilities.”¹ A plan for the gradual industrial developments of China had been carefully studied, outlined and worked out, by the leading Statesmen of New China, foremost amongst them the late Dr. Sun Zhongshan, whose foresight commanded the greatest respect and admiration. However, one indisputable point, Varalda noted, was that China did not have to look to Foreign Countries for financial help, not only on account of the present crisis and shortage of credit abroad, but especially because finance was too often the forerunner of foreign commercial and political influence.

Certain Foreign countries, however, were at present well ahead of China in the development of their natural resources, mainly due to the fact that the problems they had to face were not of the same magnitude as in the case of China; consequently, they had been able to acquire a precious experience in certain industrial fields, and they might offer the help of their technical skill to China to the advantage of both parties. An intimate and fruitful collaboration was, therefore, to be looked for in Joint enterprises with Chinese capital and labour and foreign experience and instructors, machinery and equipment; such collaboration would have the main object of gradually emancipating Chinese enterprises and ultimately setting them on a footing of perfect independence.²

The possible field of joint action, according to Varalda, was so vast that it had to be tackled by degrees, starting, possible, from the less complicated industries such as would require a more limited outlay of capital, giving quicker results, both financially and commercially. A question of paramount importance to any country, Varalda believed, was national defence. In this field, while China was equipped to a fair extent with military arsenals (a further development of which would require very big sums, and a long time) there was as yet no production of explosives on a large scale. Such an industry, were it established, besides the part it would be called to play in case of war and in military preparedness, would also prove of great help to the rational development of Chinese agriculture, the production of fertilizers being closely associated with that of explosives. As for the latter, it might be noted that they play also a great role in industry, chiefly in mining and quarries. The enclosed Table, Varalda argued, that forcibly illustrated their fundamental importance, giving the capacity of synthetica ammonia plants for each country in the world:

Plant capacity of the various countries for the yearly production of Synthetic Ammonia³

	Tons.	Percentage.
1) Germany	1,248,200	37,3%
2) Japan	368,800	11,0%
3) United States	313,800	9,44%

¹ Ibid., attached to T. 218492/29, Shanghai, 7/6/1934.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

4) France	253,100	7,6%
5) Belgium	243,000	7,2%
6) England	235,000	7,0%
7) U.R.S.S.	188,000	5,6%
8) Holland	128,500	3,8%
9) Norway	99,000	3,0%
10) Italy	90,500	2,7%
11) Poland	63,500	1,9%
12) Jugoslavia	27,000	0,8%
13) Chekoslovacchia	23,500	0,7%
14) South Africa	20,000	0,6%
15) Canada	18,000	0,5%
16) Spain	9,400	0,3%
17) Switzerland	9,000	0,3%
18) Hungary	6,000	0,2%
19) Sweden	4,500	0,1%
Totals	3,348,800	100,00%

Obviously, Japan came second after Germany, with 368.800 tons a year, but, Varalda said: “if it be considered that in Germany, whose original aim was to supply the whole world in a regime of monopoly, plants are running at one fifth of their capacity, it may be asserted that the greatest producer of synthetic ammonia, and therefore of explosives and azotic fertilisers, is Japan. That China, with enormous population, territory and interests to defend, should be placed at least on a level with the neighbouring Empire, seems an obvious necessity.”¹

Second, Varalda’s memorandum explored what Italy could do in the cooperation of industry with China. In his words,

Italy, although not one of the largest producers, is perfectly well equipped for its needs and has most up-to-date plants and skilled experts second to none; she would, besides, be in a position to supply the bulk of the machinery required.

After careful consideration of the conditions as above reported, a group of Italian Industrial Leaders, working in collaboration with certain countrymen of theirs who have already served China in other fields, and consequently command a good knowledge of the country, the people and the language, are ready to offer their collaboration on the terms already explained, and they are convinced that encouragement and facilities will not be lacking, eventually, on the part of the Italian Government, which shows a very keen interest in, and broad comprehension of, the aspiration of China, while nursing no designs of political or economical hegemony in the Far East.

This group thinks that the new industry may be started in China on a plant as small as possible, compatible with technical perfection, embodying all of the latest devises and appliances, and economical efficiency. The supply of coal at cheap prices, the main requisite for the azote industry, should offer no difficulties in China? It is therefore estimated that an initial plant of the kind suggested above would require in all a sum not exceeding \$ 15.000.000.

¹ Ibid.

Should the proposal be found interesting, the group in question is ready to submit more detailed plans and estimates on request.¹

June 1934, Boscarelli reported that he had a conversation with Comm. Caretti in respect of the industrial cooperation plan between Italian and Chinese groups which had been proposed to Foreign Ministry by Varalda. Yet in this first conversation, Caretti did not provide for Boscarelli precise details about the manner in which the drafters of the memorandum aforementioned intended to implement the plan in question.²

On the other hand, Boscarelli met with Song Ziwen in the same month (June 1934), who had returned to Shanghai after his trip, consulting about the Chinese Finance Development Corporation and the Italo-Chinese cooperation, without in the end getting any details from Song which he had promised since September of last year. According to the observation of Boscarelli, the Chinese Finance Development Corporation seemed to have already begun the study of various problems. Moreover, the General Director of this Corporation Mr. Tze confided to one of Song Ziwen's brothers, Song Ziliang³ who would be able to operate a rapprochement between the former Minister of Finance and his two brothers-in-law: Kong Xiangxi and Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi. Yet Boscarelli complained: "Nei frequenti contatti che in questi ultimi mesi non hanno tralasciato di avere tutti costoro, ho sempre riportato impressione che essi, pur definendo una collaborazione economica e industriale tra Cina e Italia non hanno piani concreti al riguardo."⁴ Therefore, Boscarelli took his "personale iniziativa," to review the four points enumerated by Song Ziwen in his letter of 8 February⁵ and conclude that "quello che si riferisce alla riorganizzazione della industria della seta, sia artificiale che naturale, era quello che presentava minori difficoltà di realizzazione e forse maggiore interesse. Pertanto ho pensato che per guadagnare tempo e per evitare soprattutto che un altro Paese (Giappone e Germania) potesse intraprendere tale riorganizzazione prima di noi, sarebbe stato utile che, sia pure in via preliminare, e non impegnativa, io iniziassi subito le conversazioni su tale argomento."⁶ And before seeking instructions from the Head of Government, Boscarelli would like to exchange ideas with Song about the practical way in which an Italian-Chinese cooperation could develop in the silk industry; if they could achieve an agreement in principle here in Shanghai, he would telegraph to Foreign Ministry asking the approval. Boscarelli's initiative was greatly appreciated by Song, perhaps "anche perchè essa gli dava modo di uscire dall'imbarazzo nel quale egli si trovava di fronte a V. E. e alla R. Legazione di non avere potuto finora tenere impegni presi a Roma."⁷

Later, Boscarelli asked Dr. Mari, silk expert in China of the League, "che è competitivissimo oltre essere ottimo italiano, in materia di seta, di studiare la questione e di dirmi se veda come conveniente per l'Italia l'utilità di una tale collaborazione e eventualmente di prepararsi su tale argomento un progetto."⁸ Also making use of the studies completed by Engineer Aedo Bazzocchi on the the artificial silk, Dr. Mari assured Boscarelli of the great utility of the matter and drafted

¹ Ibid.

² AP 31-45 (Cina), B.36, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T. 1447/259, Shanghai, 25/6/1934.

³ Song Ziliang, Soong Tse Liang or T. L. Soong, 宋子良, the other brother was Song Zi'an, Soong Tse An, T.A. Soong, 宋子安.

⁴ AP1931-45(Cina), B.45, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, Shanghai, 11/7/1934.

⁵ AP1931-45(Cina), B.36, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T.555/97, Shanghai, 12/3/1934, letters attached.

⁶ AP1931-45(Cina), B. 45, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, Shanghai, 11/7/1934.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

project.

At the same time, Boscarelli reported five points of view on the possible cooperation:

1) Mi è sembrato che per fare uscire le trattative per collaborazione italo-cinese da quello stadio di “generalità” e di “vago”, nelle quali si trovano da circa otto mesi, questa fosse l’unica via.

2) Collaborazione italo-cinese nella industria serica non esclude quella negli altri campi, sui quali per il momento, io, per iniziare trattative non avevo dati sufficienti.

3) Ci sfugge mercato della seta artificiale. In questo Paese la nostra importazione di seta artificiale ha già subito una notevole diminuzione, essa finirà per sparire sia perchè l’industria cinese offre reali sintomi di emancipazione, sia perchè tanto Germania che Giappone stanno per impiantare delle fabbriche di seta artificiale qui.

4) È utile rammentare i due rami della industria serica (artificiale e naturale) secondo quello che Mari mi ha assicurato, perchè ai produttori di seta artificiale in Cina (che produrranno soprattutto per consumo interno) conviene avere anche il controllo della produzione della seta naturale.

5) Anche la fabbricazione dei cascami sarebbe contemplata dal progetto e a quanto mi assicura Mari, questa è assai remunerativa qui.¹

Then Dr. Mari’s project analyzed mainly on three aspects: 1) the situation of artificial silk industry in China; 2) to what extent the Italian could participate in the reorganization of Chinese silk industry; 3) the Chinese Government should give its full and constant support to this programme.

First of all, the artificial silk was, Mari said, “an industrial activity which is not yet represented in China; but it is fatal that soon as late it shall be considered in the Government reconstruction programme.” The details Mari presented were in following thesis:

At present all the artificial silk which is better we call rayon in accordance to the commercial name now adopted in the world market necessary to the Chinese weaving industry is imported from abroad. Custom figures give a total import of “Rayon” of about 9 millions Kg., but it is a well known thing that important quantities of this raw material are smuggled especially through the boundaries of the northern provinces. Therefore this cypher ought, perhaps, to be increased of a couple of million Kg.

This total consumption, however, whatever it may be, has not shown any sign of increase in these two or three last years, or at least its increase has not touched a noticeable amount, meanwhile Custom figures appear to mark a slight decline.

In any way, if not decline, certainly there is an arrest in the consume of rayon to which, perhaps, has greatly contributed the very low price of the home reeled silk by farmers which, at present, is sold at a rate of about \$ 2,80/3,00 per pound.

This phenomenon requires all our attention and must be considered when scheming a factory project. It should, for the moment being, contemplate a maximum of a yearly rayon production of 12,000,000 Kg. to be reached at the final stage while it should start with a production of 6,000,000 Kg. to be increased, in due time, to 9,000,000.

If the total amount of 12,000,000 Kg. will be absorbed and there will be a right prevision of a greater consume, then a second factory will be projected.

Nowadays China does not possess the necessary raw material for a rayon production. It could be imported

¹ Ibid.

from Canada which will till now is producing the most appreciated wooden paste and is supplying Japan and many European countries.¹

Based on these details of present situation of silk industry of China, Mari proposed to establish a factory, which should not be placed in Shanghai because of the excessive price of building space, frequent labour troubles besides the high cost of workmanship, nor in Tianjin owing to the possibility of a Japanese seizure of that place. It should be located in a sea or river port where the unloading and transport of the raw material would be easy and unexpensive. In the chosen place there should not be any other important industrial plant. The cost of a rayon plant for a production of 12,000,000 Kg. per year, according to the rough estimate of the Italian Engineer Mr. Aedo Bazzocchi resulted as total \$13,000,000.

Second, the Italian rayon industry was much interested in the future of rayon in China, Mari asserted, “owing to the fact that it is the most important supplier of this material to the Chinese weaving industry and in its sympathy to the Reconstruction programme of the National Government it esteems like its duty to suggest that would be unadvisable to entrust to Chinese initiative alone the building of a rayon producing plant.”² With respect to the example of taking initiative in this field, Mari suggested that Japan had been obliged to spend huge amounts of money for her studies and tentatives in establishing her own rayon industry; but not until 1930 she had reached, with foreign help, her complete organization and fine qualities of production. China, however, “can not follow the same way as Japan because it is not allowed to her to sacrifice, without immediate results, very important financial resources.”³

Therefore, foreign help of money and technical men had to be afforded to China, and Italy was quite willing to enter in some business combination in this special enterprise. Mari continued, the best share to be reserved to her in an eventual combination with Chinese industrialists and Government should be the supply of all the needed machinery, of all technical men required for directing and supervising such a delicate and difficult work and of some leading administrative people. Of course this rayon production – which would be a national production – should be well protected against foreign competition and perhaps not only with a custom tariff. But these important condition should be considered and settled in due time. Such a combination should last for ten years after which a renovation could be treated or the rescue by the Chinese shareholders of the foreign shares at a condition to be fixed up.

As for which kind of silk should Italy deal with, Mari believed that the artificial silk was preferable, explaining:

China conditions in regard to the natural silk do not allow us to consider the rayon business disconnected from the real silk. We will examine in the following pages what for this characteristic Chinese ancient industrial activity could be done: but we will not delay our declaration that we are also willing to give a hand to the Chinese Government for the already begun reorganisation of the natural silk industry and for establishing the mutual assistance between these two so important enterprises. Because we shall bear well in mind that mutual assistance will produce enormous consequences in everything is concerning export trade and competition to other producing countries which do not possess Chinese fields, climate and workmanship able to accomplish

¹ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B. 45, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T.1371/251, Shanghai, 14/7/1934, allegato II, L'estratto in inglese consegnato a titolo ufficioso a T. V. Soong e con lui discusso.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

excellent work if well directed and handled.

And precisely for this reason, considering that it would take a certain time to prepare in China a well trained workmanship; furthermore in order to give a more economical development to the present scheme it would be advisable to start with a plant having a production of six thousand Kg. a day and then gradually reach the maximum output of ten thousand Kg. a day.

The initiative that thirty years ago Italian technical staff took in China towards the organisation and machanisation of the Chinese Silk Industry and that resulted in the acquisition by Chinese Silk of an enviable position, has, after their departure, not only stopped during the last 15 years, but the movement has undergone a distinct and regrettable set back. It has thus been possible for Japan to gradually substitute Chinese Silk on all world's most important markets.¹

China, by virtue of the natural and social conditions prevailing in this country, used to acquire a position to compete successfully in the production of silk with any other country in the world, both as regards the standard of the quality and low producing costs. It was, however, a matter of regret that the silk industry in China lacked all elementary principles of organisation, and was left entirely upon the initiative and primitive methods of individual enterprise, which, very often, succeeded in spoiling the original natural good quality of the local raw material.

Then it comes to the third aspect of Mari's report: the duty of the Chinese Government in reorganization of silk industry. As for the fact that the old silk industry lacked elementary principles of organisation, Chinese Government realized, of late, the necessity of reviving such an important natural resource and had come to the decision of including the silk industry in its reconstruction programme. A special commission called "Sericulture Improvement Commission – National Economic Council" was founded to carry on the programme established in a meeting of this Council by disposing of a sum of \$750,000 to be used exclusively in this direction in this first year, and with the prospect of being granted, during the next years, of even more important financial assistance.²

Everything led to believe that the Chinese Government was very seriously engaged in this project of thoroughly reorganizing and restoring efficiency to this conspicuous branch of national activity. Various steps had already been taken in this direction, but the difficulty which arose from the Country's great extent and from farmers' traditions was of such an importance that it was feared that, unless additional capital and foreign help was sought, tangible results would not be achieved with that rapidity that the seriousness of market conditions were demanding. Italy, consequently, "with her old and brilliant traditions, has already given Japan the opportunity of modelling her production on the systems and standards that acquired her an indisputable supremacy in the silk industry; and with the friendship and renewed sympathy that characterise, today all her relations with China, Italy would be very glad of the opportunity to collaborate for the immediate realisation of this programme."³

Under the circumstances and as a logical conclusion to the consideration mentioned above, it was hereby proposed by Dr. Mari the formation of a company, which, under the protection and guarantee of the Chinese Government, would speed the development and execution of the organization programme of the silk industry. The financial scheme to govern the foundation of that company should be the following three parts:

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

- a) silkworm seed production;
- b) reeling;
- c) spinning mills.¹

On the part a), Mari advised that with the strict enforcement of the dispositions provided by the law, the greater part of all small home enterprises should be abolished, and the production of silkworms seeds entrusted solely to the Company which should produce them under a cooperative system and, successively distribute them to farmers under special conditions. For this part, total capital was a sum of \$3,000,000, which was the Chinese Government's share in the reorganisation programme.

On the part b), even for the reeling branch it should be considered an apport to the new Company represented by the silk filatures still at work. Unfortunately the four fifth of these operating filatures had functioning a kind of machinery which had become too old and spoiled. As a result, Mari said, "our opinion is that we could give a satisfactory compensation to the filature plants if we estimate them – altogether buildings, godown, offices, machinery, ground etc., etc., – at a rate of \$125 per basin."² The resulting capital to be apported, then, would be total \$5,000,000. This also demonstrated that in the eventuality that further developments and perfections in the industry would allow for an increase of production and export, it would be necessary to provide in the shortest possible time, for an enlargement of the existing reeling factories, while the circulating capital could be obtained from local banks.

On the part c), Chinese spinning mills were only 2 in Jiangsu Province, beside a Japanese factory. They should be increased and it was estimated that a new plant of a convenient number of spindles could require a sum of \$2,000,000.³

At last, Dr. Mari laid particular stress on "one company," to which everything concerning sericulture should be entrusted, because of his experience acquired from the League of Nation's Sericulture Expert's observations and suggestions and the "model areas" work started. In other words, "all sericulture business should be concentrated in one unic Institution, which the various sericulture branches ought to act in a cooperative like rule."⁴

In accordance with Dr. Mari's project, Boscarelli reported on 9 July 1934 to the Foreign Ministry about establishing a single entity for the separate management of the two branches of natural silk and artificial silk in China. Italy, Boscarelli wrote, supplying the artificial silk industry with needed equipment that could be manufactured in Italy and partly in China, should also "dare personale tecnico e una parte del personale amministrativo per funzionamento tutti reparti della fabbrica. Con partecipazione Cina sarebbe rappresentata dal conferimento dei fabbricati, del terreno e del capitale circolante necessario. Con partecipazione italiana sarebbe superiore alla Cina in questo ramo."⁵

With respect to this proposal about co-operation between responsible financial and industrial Italian groups and the China Development Finance Corporation for the establishment of an

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *API931-45(Cina)*, B. 45, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T. 379, Allegato N.6, Shanghai, 9/7/1934, Boscarelli al R. Ministero degli Affari Esteri.

artificial silk factory in China, this Corporation sent letter to the Italian Ambassador on 3 July 1935, writing:

We understand that the proper establishment of such an industry in our country might be of real benefit to general development of the silk industry in China, and our Corporation will be glad to co-operate with the responsible representative, whom you suggest should come from Italy, and study with him all details connected with this question, in the hope that from our study and joint effort a practical scheme can be evolved and carried through.

We shall be glad to hear the name of the Italian representative, as well as those of the financial and industrial groups which he will represent.¹

As a matter of fact, three months of communications on the matter of establishing an artificial silk factory in China were needed, the Ambassador in China Lojacono reported on 20 August 1935, to put some ideas in this question, “fra tanti organi statali, parastatali e industriali che erano chiamati ad occuparsene e che determinavano un vero frammischiamento di competenze.” However, the fact was “Situazione era resa più complessa dal fatto che Governo Nanchino specialmente nelle presenti difficoltà economiche e politiche non dimostravasi capace di alcuna iniziativa.”²

Song Ziwen, former Minister of Finance, who had prepared the project with Boscarelli and was then Chairman of the National Economic Council and Director of the three major Chinese banks, argued that Italy should concern not only the Chinese artificial silk, but also the natural silk which they could import into Europe in exchange for industrial products. Song, as Lojacono noted, “Pur sapendo che l’Italia soffre grave crisi della propria seta naturale che logicamente non dovrebbe permetterle di assorbire quella degli altri, egli si è creata una tesi secondo cui Italia, accaparrando seta naturale cinese, potrebbe arrivare a dominare mercato mondiale e manovrare sui prezzi, sino al punto di ridar vita alla sua stessa produzione nazionale. Idea certamente larga, ma della cui giustezza non sono in grado di fare valutazione in cifre.”³

Lojacono made an effort to deal with this issue, several facts should be paid attention to: first, as well as the National Economic Council, “Altro organo in causa è corporazione finanziaria nazionale, costituita per favorire formazione gruppo per grandi imprese e eventualmente mantenere rapporti con gruppi esteri.”⁴

Second, two experts of the League of Nations, Monet and Mazot, in words of Lojacono, “dai quali non ho potuto prescindere e che dopo un atteggiamento di diffidenza hanno finito per aiutarmi.”⁵

Third, the Ambassador in China had to make contact with some members of the Chinese capitalism, which should participate in the combination. Lojacono mentioned one of them who had numerous discussions with him and would be willing to make his contribution to the Italian project, whereas such an influential Chinese capitalist “teme che dopo impiantata fabbrica sulla base di una protezione doganale, Governo giapponese venga ad imporre a Governo cinese di abolire tale protezione, rovinando impresa. Egli perciò ha insistito innanzi tutto per conoscere

¹ *API931-45(Cina)*, B. 42, Missioni diplomatiche militari per studi, Shanghai, 3/7/1935.

² *API931-45(Cina)*, B. 45, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T.228278/C, 20/8/1935, unito in copia un telegramma in data 7 corrente del R. Ambasciatore in Cina.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

verità interno a costo di produzione giapponese e giudicare se produzione futura fabbrica in Cina possa reggersi da sola contro la concorrenza giapponese”.¹

Apparently, the confusion of ideas and the pressures of foreign competition might block the project of Italy, from the point of view of Lojacono. He took some initiative following the advice of two experts of the League, Monet and Mazot, directed to the National Financial Corporation of China a letter as well as to Song Ziwen, to declare that “sono pronto a far venire dall’Italia persona che rappresenti interessi italiani e sia munita di idee, di poteri e di capacità finanziaria tali da discutere questione sul terreno pratico e decisivo per giungere eventualmente a conclusione definitiva.”²

At last, Lojacono reminded the Foreign Ministry to make a decision as soon as possible, because according to the reply of the Corporation of China, competition among foreign groups indeed existed; i.e. Lojacono said, “Non consiglieri ritardi oltre quell’epoca [tra fine agosto e primi settembre] perchè, dopo questi lunghi e non ristretti negoziati, molta attenzione si è concentrata sulla cosa e molti concorrenti stranieri che oggi sono passati per il momento in seconda linea, attendono di riprendere vantaggio alla minima nostra emissione.”³

A matter of regret was that the action in Abyssinia of Italy and sanctions of the League against Italy occurred before Foreign Ministry having made the decision. Up till the end of December 1935, no such a decision could be made. At that time, following pressures that German and Czech groups had done to implant artificial silk factory in China, the President of the Financial Corporation of China sent letter to Lojacono asking “se gruppo italiano abbia deciso di mandare qui suo rappresentante, dato che parecchie parti interessate stanno facendo tentativi per negoziare con corporazione”.⁴ It seemed to Lojacono that,

Questo gesto di correttezza, che riafferma valore della situazione di privilegio a noi accordato con la lettera 3 luglio scorso, tende ora evidentemente a disimpegnare corporazione da impegni verso di noi, ma potrebbe invece raggiungere effetto opposto e servire a nostro favore qualora ottenesse una risposta affermativa immediata.

Esso inoltre ha importanza perchè supera in maniera incontestabile difficoltà formali delle sanzioni che potevano far credere all’interruzione degli impegni assunti e non condotti a termine con noi precedentemente alla entrata in vigore sanzioni stesse.⁵

Mr. Monnet also told Lojacono that the negotiations between the Corporation and the other foreign groups would drag a long time. Perhaps prior to the conclusion of these negotiations, Italy could once again explore missed opportunity to let Italian representative come to China without pledging anything other than the travel expenses. At the same time the coming of Italian representative would keep the prospects of Italy alive for entire duration of conversation and study.⁶ For those reasons, Lojacono urged the Foreign Ministry to make decision, indicating precise and imminent date of departure of Italian representative.

As a response to the urgent request of Lojacono, Barone Alberto Fassini – *Presidente ed*

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *AP1931-45(Cina)*, B. 45, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T.246557/C, 26/12/1935, unito in copia un telegramma in data 21 dicembre u.s. del R. Ambasciatore in Cina.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

*Amministratore Delegato della Società Generale Italiana della Viscosa*¹ – informed the Foreign Ministry and Royal Embassy in Shanghai that he had instructed the Inspector of this *Società* Mr. Giuseppe Matelloni, who was then in America, directed to Australia, to change his itinerary and immediately go to Shanghai to follow the suggestion of the Royal Ambassador.²

Giuseppe Matelloni arrived in Shanghai 12 January 1936.³ As he was dealing with the negotiations with Corporation of China about the cooperation of silk industry between Italy and China, a rumour was circulating through the Royal Embassy in China, saying that a strong American group had begun conversations with the Chinese Government for the planting of a giant rayon factory in China. Lojacono reported:

La Camera di Commercio americana in Shanghai ha smentito questa voce in una dichiarazione che è stata resa pubblica, non so a quali fini; la dichiarazione aggiunge che l'idea era stata favorevolmente avanzata dalla Missione Economica Americana venuta in Cina nel giugno scorso, ma non aveva dato luogo a negoziati col Governo cinese benchè i finanziari americani siano convinti "che la seta artificiale avrà un posto permanente nel mercato cinese".⁴

Furthermore, not only the American group was a strong competitor for Italy's company, but also the German one appeared to be quite competitive. According to Barone Alberto Fassini, the German company Kohorn, because of its supporter Signora Irxmayer was friend of Chinese Minister of Finance Kong Xiangxi, might take more advantages in the competition, though in Fassini's words, "nostra assistenza data nostra larga pratica istallazione e conduzione stabilimenti è di gran lunga più efficace di quella fabbrica macchine quale Kohorn."⁵ Given that situation of competition, Fassini instructed Matelloni:

Sarei disposto limitare nostra attività alla assistenza tecnica e cessione sistemi fabbricazione ricevendo in compenso partecipazione di minoranza da convenirsi con obbligo riscatto valore nominale dopo certo tempo e *redevance* da stabilirsi per chilo Rayon prodotto. Caso accettazione massima prepareremmo preventivi richiesti inviandoli costi e discutendoli anche con Monnet Parigi.⁶

17 April 1936, R. Ambassador in China Lojacono communicated to R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the preliminary results of negotiations between Italian representative and the China Development Finance Corporation, i.e. Italy offering assistance and cooperation to China. Five points were outlined as follows:

- 1) Ripartizione capitale 51 contingente gruppo cinese, 49 contingente gruppo italiano;
- 2) Gruppo italiano apporta macchinario brevettato, completo equipaggiamento tecnico e meccanico, gruppo cinese terreno, fabbrica e capitale circolante; tutto il macchinario ed equipaggiamento dovrà essere fornito a prezzi concorrenza; se rapporto gruppo italiano supera 49% dell'ammontare totale, gruppo cinese rifonderà differenza sotto forma obbligazioni società, redimibili entro un certo numero anni;
- 3) Direzione tecnica verrà affidata a cittadini italiani coadiuvati ingegneri ed esperti cinesi ed italiani, mentre

¹ La *Società Generale Italiana della Viscosa*, one of major rayon manufacturing companies of Italy.

² *AP1931-45(Cina)*, B. 45, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, Roma, 31/12/1935.

³ *Ibid.*, T.313/17, Roma, 10/1/1936.

⁴ *Ibid.*, T.174/38, Shanghai, 1/2/1936.

⁵ *Ibid.*, T.3317/88, Roma, 5/4/1936.

⁶ *Ibid.*

direzione amministrativa verrà affidata cinesi;

4) gruppo cinese preferirebbe impianto capace soltanto 3000 chilogrammi giornalieri.

5) amministratore delegato come pure Consiglio di Amministrazione, in base precise leggi cinesi, dovranno essere cinesi, perchè responsabili personalmente amministrazione societaria.¹

A matter of regret that the China Development Finance Corporation “fa presente non essere possibile ottenere assicurazione governativa, continuando protezione doganale attuale e quella di non rilasciare per 10 anni altri permessi erezione fabbriche rayon cinesi, queste concessioni essendo esclusivamente fatte società con capitale interamente cinese.”²

In this condition, several days later Foreign Ministry replied to Shanghai about its decision to provide the “società interamente cinese che potrà ottenere concessioni dogana proibizione nuove fabbriche contro *redevance* chilo prodotto,” with exclusively technical assistance. The consideration of Foreign Ministry was: “Impianto tremila chili antieconomico ingiustificato. Mancanza ogni controllo amministrativo, protezione doganale e proibizione nuove fabbriche rende affare come proposto non più interessante.”³

2.3 COOPERATION OF AIR FORCE

Compared with the cooperation in economic field between Fascist Italy and Nationalist China, the bilateral military cooperation especially in reconstruction of Chinese Air Force, appeared to be more prosperous in the first half of 1930s.

2.3.1 Chinese strategy of Air Force

Prior to discuss the military cooperation of two parties, it is necessary to understand the strategy of Chinese Government in the reconstruction of Air Force, which was the fundamental motive of military cooperation on Chinese part. First and foremost, the theory of Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi should be paid much attention to, as he was the leader of the National Revolutionary Army and later the dictator of Chinese Air Force. In 1934, Generalissimo Jiang issued a writing titled as “National and Aviation”(国民与航空), developing his theory on how about the situation of modern war and the military development (especially the Air Force) of the major Powers, why China had to reconstruct a modern Air Force, and how to achieve this goal.

As the starting point, Jiang asserted that the aircraft was the most significant weapon for

¹ *AP1931-45(Cina)*, B. 45, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T.213686/C, Nanchino, 17/4/1936.

² *Ibid.*

³ *AP1931-45(Cina)*, B. 45, Progetto di collaborazione economica italo-cinese, T.3923/95. 6895, Roma, 24/4/1936.

modern war; China had to develop its aviation in order to save herself from the threat both at home and abroad. He said,

The length and speed of weapons are the key factors to determine the outcome of a war and the survival of a country. [...] At the end of the war in Europe, aircraft has developed and became the longest and fastest weapon of today. Compared to aircraft, the other weapons, such as rifle, cavalry, pistol, gun, appear to be as old and slow as the ancient blunt swords. It is impossible to fight without the most developed weapons. Nowadays in China, as the tension of the international situation and the dangers both in the internal and external environment, the whole nation should concentrate on self-defense, of which the construction of air defense should be placed as the top priority. [...] Although it is true that we established the aviation of China with a view to developing transportation, economy and culture, and it is also true that peaceful progress is the quality of our nation, we cannot maintain national security without military in such a present time when all the nations are advocating the use of force. Only the development of aviation can guarantee the security of China. Therefore, China has to catch up in the development of aviation so as to save our country and maintain our nation.¹

Furthermore, Jiang justified the rationality of the strategy of aviation development,

Since the very beginning of our human being, the war has never been avoided. In today's world, the social system has not yet reached the ideal situation, and the fundamental problem of human life has not yet been resolved, the war between one country and another therefore cannot be avoided. War cannot be avoided, as a result, the newly created murder apparatus, has to be used in any case. After the outbreak of war in Europe, the aircraft's mission, a sudden change, became the most terrible weapon. Other weapons, only in the battlefield showed their power, the aircraft can fly to the enemy's important area to do the work of destruction. Therefore, in normal times the aircraft is the carrier of culture; while in wartime, it is turned into a criminal to undermine the culture, which is now a helpless fact.

The military value of aircraft, in the last Great War had become a profound understanding of people. Once upon a time, the conditions of a Power, the first was to improve a sound ground force; the second was to improve a sound navy. But now it appears that the consolidation of the defense almost entirely relies on the air force, and some people even say: where there is no air defense, there is no national defense. Thus all the countries were working to build a huge air force. [...] So we firmly believe that the future combat policy or defense policy if change fundamentally, tend to the establishment of the Air Force.²

Then Jiang enumerated in detail on the development of aviation of major Powers. Comparing the Air Force of the Great Powers, Jiang suggested that France dominated the first place; the second was the United States, Great Britain was the third, then Italy the fourth, Russia the fifth, Japan the sixth.³ As for the development of Italian Air Force, two factors improved it:

1) it was stimulated by the French Air Force, the dominating place of the French Air Force stimulated this country's strong national conviction;

2) Fascist leader Mussolini's strong will that made great progress to the Italian Air Force. In 1923 he abolished the imperfectly organized Supreme Aeronautical Commission, created the Air Force, and developed the forces of today.

¹ Jiang Jieshi, *National and Aviation* (Shanghai: Modern Publishing House, 1934), Preface.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 133.

[...] In 1925, Italy had implemented the five-year plan for aviation, which ended in 1930. Although it was not fully realized as planned, the five-year effort of Italian people was in any case worthy of our reverence. Italy is a Great Power of Europe. She not only seeks a way out in Africa and the Balkans, but also attempts to confront France – the King of Air Force – from time to time. This attempt, regardless of whether there is the possibility of victory, a nation growing in this world, should hold the determination to make progress.¹

Jiang gave a high rating to the effort of Mussolini in the field of Air Force, “Italy, under the leadership of Mussolini, was so organized and powerful in recent years!” He continued,

The Italian government through painstaking efforts developed a rich team of additional personnel, completed the ground organs, and improved the ability of aviation industry. The budget for the aviation in 1932 was a sum of 700 million (lira), and an additional sum of 18 million. According to an Italian newspaper, it is said that there is another increase of 80 million, which as a total is more than 798 million.²

Especially, Jiang laid stress on the flight education in Italy, “It is reported that the number of operators, who are capable of operating, is over 3,000 and in addition it is difficult to calculate the number of its operators who are capable of flight preparation. Now the number of aircraft used in Italy, is about half of France. In the spring of 1930, there were twelve Squadrons of competitive flight, all of which had military character. These squadrons in the war can be used as the messenger and contact service in the battlefield rear.”³

As regards Italy’s national defence, Jiang argued that

although this question is very complex, but careful study is a very simple matter. The enemies of Italy, are three: first, the Great Britain; second, France; third, Russia. The distance between them, are in close proximity, once the war takes place, the French aircraft can reach Rome instantly, taking the implementation of bombing. Italy, in recent years, apparently due to financial problems, seems to be a little idle in manufacturing a huge number of new machines. But we should not ignore that the development of civil aviation in Italy and the progress of aeronautic education. If the enemies try to bombing the city Rome to level, the defensive capacity of the Italian people is enough to make them fear and retreat. The positive purpose of national defence is to destroy the enemy’s headquarters, while the negative purpose, is to defend their own territory. Italy’s Air Force in Europe is the second only to France. Despite the French ambition is great, but if they wanted to wipe out the city Rome, which is not an easy case.⁴

As a conclusion, Jiang demonstrated the rationality of Chinese large-scale “air defense movement,” saying:

We do not have to be hostile to imperialism. We should owe a sincere worship to the efforts of imperialists, not to their militaristic idea, but to their spirit of struggle. Originally, it was impossible to call them a truce before the unsolved settlement of the economic and population problems. The so-called pacifism of the world is only a dream of the people. At the same time, we have to realize that the enrichment of the imperialists’ air force is not deliberately to destroy peace, but because of the population, economic problem and other problems

¹ Ibid., 87-89.

² Ibid., 87-89.

³ Ibid., 90-92.

⁴ Ibid., 90-92.

which have not been satisfactorily resolved. They have to meet the economic desires, have to prepare weapons to destroy others for their own roost. If China wants to defend its territory, it should prepare a considerable air force to seek self-defence. How pedantic to scold the immorality of those imperialists! In short, the Air Force of various countries developed rapidly, China should strive to develop its own strength, that is, we have to do a large-scale “air defence movement”. We are now in the position of the Aggressor State, but if our people can devote considerable money and effort to the Air Force, the “air defence movement” would be completed in the shortest possible time.¹

From the point of view of Jiang Jieshi, China was at that time facing an urgent problem of constructing a modern Air Force. As the other countries’ Air Force developed so fast, China’s aviation, however, there was no aviation program during more than 20 years. Aviation education was heartbreaking, too. Although there were more than 10 aviation school as much, but the real talents were limited and the technology was not very sophisticated.²

The real way, the first was to be able to self-made aircrafts; the second was to be able to train most capable flight talent and sophisticated combat technology talent. Although the Government was charged with this important mission, it was necessary for the people to contribute in this devastating situation. In the most recent period, it was impossible for China to build planes, but it should actively have the conditions for homemade aircrafts, and at the same time had to do so with the people’s financial resources to purchase airplanes from foreign countries. If the responsibility of the former mission lied in the government, the latter, naturally lied in the people. The people of Europe and the United States, treated the backward race like China was preferential. When the Chinese people went to those foreign countries to study industry, they took always very welcome attitude. If the Chinese people worked hard, to improve Chinese culture was an easy task. Japan and China reformed at the same time, and now Japan’s culture could keep pace with the Western countries. China in recent decades, had sent a lot of students abroad, but the Chinese people were still living a medieval life. This proved that the Chinese people did not have sufficient efforts in this way.³

China wanted to consolidate national defence, the fundamental way was to improve the culture, to manufacture self-made weapons on the defence, to do adequate preparation. The temporary solution was to purchase all kinds of equipments from civilized countries. “Now China is in a difficult time to survive. If this situation is still going on, in the near future, there will be a danger of subjugation and genocide.”⁴

Based on the theoretical tone of Generalissimo Jiang, General Zhou Zhirou’s writing *National Defense and Aviation* devotes more effort on the concrete implementation of theory of Generalissimo Jiang, as Zhou was the President of the Central Aviation School of Nationalist Government, then the Director of Aviation Committee and the first Chief Commander of Chinese Air Force. What interests me is Zhou’s idea on Italy and Italian Air Force, though it is brief and emerges as a part of his thesis on comparing the Air power of seven great countries. He started with the following paragraph:

¹ Ibid., 109-110.

² Ibid., 117-120.

³ Ibid., 156-163.

⁴ Ibid., 122-124.

The rise of Italy, Black Shirts Premier Mussolini should be paid a real tribute to. Mussolini is superstitious about Air Force. During the last decade, through painstaking operation, Italy obtained quite surprising results. Look their manufactured aircrafts, the maximum records of speed and altitude, their Air Force squadrons which crossed the ocean again and again, and their Air Force strategy – expeditionary bombing as the core, and their enormous desire of triumph, all of which indeed are sufficient to give the Air Force contenders a great stimulus.¹

Zhou summarized the number of military aircraft of the seven Great Powers in a table from 1932 to 1935, rough statistic²:

	France	Russia	Britain	Italy	US	Japan	Germany
Jan.1932	4,000	1,500	2,000	1,800	1,800	1,300	
Jan.1934	4,000	2,200	2,500	2,300	1,700	1,500	200
Jan.1935	3,600	3,000	2,800	2,300	2,060	1,850	600

After the European War, the situation in Italy was a mess. Since 1922 March on Rome, Mussolini seized power; Italy started a full-scale revival, and became increasingly prosperous. Mussolini is very active in the expansion of aviation. Italy, under his management, established the Aviation Committee in 1923, which then became the Ministry of Aviation in 1925, devoting its efforts, in urgent progress, to the training of personnel, equipment manufacturing, and rewarding research results. Within a few years, such an ancient southern European country, which has always been known as low intelligence and industrial decline, transformed into a great country with the most progress. Recently, Italy is carrying out its action in Africa, rather an idea of testing its chopper, making use of its dominant Air Force to oppress distant enemies. As a result, Mussolini achieved his personal will, but the world will be bothered from then on! The plan of Italy in 1935 was that the Italian Government is going to allocate 100,000,000 dollars to enrich its Air Force. It plans to produce 420 high-speed fighters, 330 multi-engine bombers and 400 armoured reconnaissance aircrafts by 1936. As for the Air Force personnel, also in August of this year [1935] greatly increased, which is estimated that there are 3,061 officers, 7,026 troops, 50,396 soldiers, and the reserve army has not yet counted. The highest administrative authority for aviation is the Ministry of Aviation, which is responsible for civil aviation as well.³

Zhou Zhirou emphasized in particular that Italy was the birthplace of the theory of air combat, saying “In order to fight fundamentally for hegemony, squadrons of large-scale expeditionary bombing has been regarded as the main force of Air Force.”⁴ Here Zhou referred to an important theory originated in Italy, namely the theory of Giulio Douhet, which undoubtedly exerted some influence on the elites of Chinese Air Force.

In 1919, Giulio Douhet⁵, military theorist, was attracted to the Fascist movement and within

¹ Zhou Zhirou, *National Defense and Aviation*, 117.

² Ibid., 120.

³ Ibid., 131-134.

⁴ Ibid., 120.

⁵ Giulio Douhet, “l’unico teorico militare italiano (dopo Machiavelli) noto in tutto il mondo, forse più all’estero che in Italia”. G. Rochat, *Le guerre italiane 1935-1943. Dall’impero d’Etiopia alla disfatta* (Torino: Einaudi, 2005), 226. Egli “è considerato in modo pressoché unanime negli ambienti militari e aeronautici il primo paladino dell’indipendenza dell’arma aerea, nonché l’ideatore della teoria del bombardamento strategico, e tuttavia il suo pensiero, sulla cui validità e coerenza tanto i contemporanei quanto i posteri hanno espresso giudizi contrastanti...”. Eric Lehmann, *La guerra dell’aria. Giulio Douhet, stratega impolitico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013), 7.

two years had published his stratagem *Il dominio dell'aria*, which proposed that large fleets of strategic bombers were essential to the winning of a modern war. He advocated that these fleets be built to the detriment of the army and navy who would become purely defensive forces to protect the coastline. “occorre,” Douhet argued, “per ottenere la vittoria decisiva, uno squilibrio enorme di forze [...] tale da far presumere che detto squilibrio, date le condizioni attuali delle nazioni in guerra, non potrà più prodursi”; “l’unico mezzo per raggiungere un risultato decisivo nella guerra attuale è il largo impiego della offensiva aerea”; “l’offesa aerea doveva esplicitarsi improvvisa, violenta ed a fondo [...] quindi essere svolta in massa e perciò mediante reparti di numerosi apparecchi potenti, agenti sopra un unico obiettivo, armati di bombe contenenti una grande quantità di alto esplosivo”; “distruggere i campi di aviazione, gli hangars, le fabbriche di materiale aeronautico [...] la più efficace difesa aerea [...] consiste nell’attaccare i mezzi aerei avversari nei loro ricoveri e nel distruggerne le fonti di produzione, e quindi si ottiene coi mezzi aerei offensivi”.¹ In March 1923, Mussolini officially formed the modern Air Force and asked Douhet to become his first chief of air staff, but Douhet declined. The writer of *Regia Aeronautica*, Dunning commented that Douhet “felt he would be too obstinate and finicky to make a decent leader. Besides, his outspoken theories had already upset his counterparts. However, for more than fifteen years his ideas motivated the command.”²

As it is mentioned above, Generalissimo Jiang advocated that “Compared to aircraft, the other weapons, such as rifle, cavalry, pistol, gun, appear to be as old and slow as the ancient blunt swords.”³ “Other weapons, only in the battlefield showed their power, the aircraft can fly to the enemy’s important area to do the work of destruction.”⁴ “where there is no air defense, there is no national defense.”⁵ It seems that, to certain extent, we can search for some clues of Douhet’s theory in Generalissimo’s thesis, though he did not say apparently that he had read about Douhet. One another Chinese military writer did study the theory of Douhet at that time. General Jiang Fangzhen, also known as Jiang Baili (courtesy name Baili)⁶, who formulated many defensive strategies and urged the Nationalist Government to prepare for war against Japan. In 1935, General Jiang Fangzhen was appointed as a high-level consultant in the Military Affairs Commission (chaired by Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi). In the following year, he travelled to Europe on a study tour. After returning to China, he advised the Nationalist Government to develop its Air Force and further modernise the military. In his well-known writing, *Treatise on National Defence*, he mainly proposed that if war broke out between China and Japan, China cannot win in the short

¹ Lehmann, *La guerra dell'aria*, 55-57.

² Dunning, *Regia Aeronautica*, 11-12.

³ Jiang Jieshi, *National and Aviation*, Preface.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Jiang Fangzhen (1882-1938), used to study in Japan at Tokyo Shinbu Gakko and Imperial Japanese Army Academy. In Japan, he joined the Tongmenghui (同盟会), which was founded by Sun Zhongshan and was the origin of Nationalist Party. He returned to China in 1906 and briefly served as an adviser of the Governor of Manchuria, then he left to further his military studies in Germany until 1910. In 1913, he became a first-class military adviser to Yuan Shikai, who had become the President of the newly established Republic of China. In 1931, Jiang travelled to Japan on a study tour and realised that an impending war between China and Japan was inevitable. During his second trip in Europe 1935, he secretly contacted the German and Italian Governments and urged them to support China if war broke out. In September 1937, Jiang Fangzhen was appointed as special ambassador of Generalissimo on official visits to Germany and Italy. After returning to China, he wrote *The Japanese* (日本人) and *Basic Perspectives on a War of Resistance* (抗战的基本观念) to explain his views on how China would eventually win in a war against Japan. In August 1938, he was appointed as the acting principal of Whampoa Military Academy. Jiang Fangzhen died of illness later on 4 November in Guangxi Province. The Nationalist Government posthumously awarded him the rank of General.

term so it should try to wear down Japan over the long term. In the same book, Jiang Fangzhen discussed, above all, from a perspective of the whole state of the world, about the so-called elements of national strength can be broadly divided into three kinds: “people”, “objects” and “organizations” of people and objects, thus the world could be divided into three groups.¹

First, the state to which all the three elements were available. The United States was the only one of this group. In fact, the US still had shortcoming in the aspects of human and organization, i.e. domestic materials of US were sufficient, including manufacturing side and raw materials, but the government could not control and improve the state in accordance with the new inventions because the commodity economy and liberalism were too developed. Nevertheless, the terrain of this state, its great manufacturing ability, the optimistic people and their self-confidence could be remedy for its shortcoming.

Second, this group had “people” and “organizations” but lack of “objects”, such as the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Germany, as well as small European countries. Among them it could also divided into two kinds: one was like the United Kingdom and France, they were lack of raw materials whild they could obtain from overseas, and the organization of objects was stronger than the organization of people. The other was like Germany and Italy, raw materials were not sufficient at all, relying on people and organizations.

Third, this group of countries had “people” and “objects” but the organizations were still not sound, such as the Soviet Union.

At the current time, the focus of the Europeans tended to supplement “objects”, that was the so-called basic force (Force Potentielle). China’s problem lay in that she had “people” and “objects” but “organizations” were not improved. “The key to life and death for China completely lies in the organization factor,” Jiang Fangzhen said.²

In the military field, Jiang Fangzhen introduced,

Recently Generale Douhet of Italy issued the writing *Il dominio dell’aria*, stimulating the brain of many young officers, who were looking and proceeding in the new direction. Generale Douhet opposed the theory of empiricism, thinking that experience was mediocre, creating an Air Force-based, Army Navy-assisted principle. His arguments were, at that time, although specifically for the Air Force, but his idea involved in all about the war and the military. His methods of developing the thoughts were also spectacular. Generale Douhet could be said as the comet of the recent military academy! That who could use the theory of Generale Douhet in the Army, would be the winner on the future battlefield!

The conclusion of Generale Douhet, Jiang Fangzhen noted, was arguing the coordinated approach: the Army and the Navy for defense, while the Air Force was specifically responsible for the attack. The attack aim of the Air Force was extremely distant and large, with a view to weakening the enemy’s potential for war; namely not only to attack force itself, but also to attack the fundamentals of force. The target of attack was on the enemy’s land. The Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Air Defense Force, the purpose of all the organizations was to make the four forces fit to fulfill their missions. In Jiang Fangzhen’s opinion, the theory of Generale Douhet

¹ Jiang Fangzhen, *Treatise on National Defence*, 12.

² *Ibid.*, 13.

“appears to be revolutionary or at least somewhat to think outside the box”.¹

2.3.2 Military cooperation

2.3.2.1 Cooperation in aeronautical affairs and arms trade

Since China had realised the importance of modern Air Force, and as Generalissimo had made decision to ask for foreign assistance, Nanjing Government sent its representatives to the West, consulting the possibility of military cooperation, of aviation in particular. In April 1931, high-ranking Chinese military officers conferred about the matters of national defense. With a keen sense of appreciation for the expansion of aviation and essentially laid the basis for the Chinese Air Force at this meeting. They publicized their concerted plan to expand China’s air force by training aviators, developing an aircraft industry, and constructing airfields and anti-aircraft defenses.² Generally speaking, the forms of military cooperation (mainly air force) in the 1930s between Fascist Regime and Guomindang Administration were three: improving the arms trade especially the aircrafts; sending the military missions in China; acceptance of Chinese officers studying in Italy. In fact, during the period 1933 to 1937, the first and second forms, to some extent, proceeded simultaneously.

The economic crisis of 1929 badly hit the Italian industrial leaders such as Fiat, Caproni, and Pirelli, which were in desperate need of new exports market.³ In the mid-1930s, under the pressure of German economic resurgence, several Italian companies extended their retail organizations in East and South-East Asia, increasing the selling of manufactured products in the Dutch Indies, India, British Malaya and Australia.⁴ Under this context, China had particular importance, especially as regards the procurement of military supplies.

China, at that time, due to the decades of civil wars among various warlords, was always the biggest market for arms trade. April 18, 1927, the Nationalist Government was inaugurated at Nanjing, which did not end the enormous need of arms of Chinese authorities. Actually, the Nanjing regime was born of factional strife and bloodshed and it would continue to march on such an approach based on force and blood. Large quantity and high quality of weapons with no doubt were viewed as the fundamental elements of a government. The well-known theory that “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”⁵ proposed by Mao Zedong in 1927 was apparently not only the belief of Chinese Communists, but indeed the “common sense” of all the political parties

¹ Ibid., 43-44.

² *China Weekly Review*, May 2, 1931, 3. As quoted in Pickler, *United States Aid*, 3.

³ Serri, “Fascist Imperialism and the Italian Arms Trade to Nationalist China 1929-1937,” 436.

⁴ V. Castronovo, *Agnelli: Il Fondatore* (Torino: Einaudi, 2002), 389-390.

⁵ News Website of Communist Party of China: <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64170/4467398.html>

at that time. The sellers all over the world might appreciate the war need of China then, especially after the depression. Likewise the Italian arms' sellers were searching actively for the possibility of exporting their products to China, such a huge market. The scorching defeat suffered by the Chinese Army silenced, in the Nationalist Party, the voices of those advocating financial moderation in military spending, which considered that the increasing arms' expenditure was nothing but boosting the personal power of Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi. The idea of "national defence economy", in which industrial development had to be diverted towards the build-up of military capabilities, made its way into the party and aroused the interest of the world largest arms producers.¹ On the other hand, The fact that most of the Italian companies involved in the arms trade with China lacked the financial capital and the risk-taking entrepreneurship for long-term investment abroad, together with the un-competitiveness of Italian firms and their consequent over-reliance on political support ultimately resulted in the Fascist Government pursuing an opportunistic foreign policy. In other words, only when conflicts and tensions emerged did Italy exploited the situation to carve up spaces of her own influence and interests. China was apparently an "ideal" scene of various conflicts and tensions. The struggle for the political and military modernization of the country championed by Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi seemed to offer Fascist Italy with the possibility to increase Italy's standing and provide Italian military manufacturing industries with good business opportunities.

The trade of armaments with China proved viable only when the Fascist state backed it up with credits, governing internal competition through the constitutions of export consortia and letting Italian diplomats take the lead in commercial negotiations with the Nationalist Government. In late May 1929 Daniele Varè, the Italian consul in China, informed the Italian Foreign Minister Dino Grandi that the embargo on arms exports to China, established in May 1919 with the Arms Traffic Convention of Shanghai, had been lifted.² The lifting of the ban made a clean sweep of smugglers and their old, second-rate equipment, opening up the Chinese market to a more regulated and legitimate form of competition among foreign firms. The relative stabilization of the country and the ambitious programme that Jiang Jieshi wished to pursue for the modernization of its military machine, in order to cope with the internal opposition and the threat of Japanese imperialism, aroused the interest of Western countries and industrial groups.³

From the point of view of Varè, however, Italy was in no position to take advantage of this new and yet untapped market. Particularly, Varè denounced the lack of a suitable diplomatic and business organization to carry on the armaments trade. Other Powers, such as Britain, Japan and France, had military and naval attachés who were able to react quickly to Chinese requests and, most of all, maintained an appealing "showcase" in China, made of modern naval units and advanced war material. The Italian military machine in the Far East, on the contrary, was composed of "few and antiquated" ships. The consular corps was highly disorganized and severely inexperienced with China's environment and business practices. In conclusion, the Italian consul stated:

it is imprudent to encourage initiatives that [...] would put us in competition with foreign rivals that have in

¹ W. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 89.

² Archivio Storico Fiat (ASF), *Consolato Shanghai a Ministero Esteri 22/05/1929*, Fondo Trattative Estero, S.47, F.380. As quoted in Serri, "Fascist Imperialism," 436-437.

³ *AP 1919-30(Cina)*, S.966, F.2408, *Ambasciata Tokio a Ministro Esteri 4/09/1929*.

China technical organizations and naval forces infinitely superior to ours.¹

The pessimistic perspective put forward by Varè was a reflection of the broader reluctance of Italian diplomacy to engage in Chinese matters at this earlier stage. Up until the explosion of the Manchurian crisis in 1931, Italian Fascist authorities were reticent to back up further penetration into China, yet adopted a very conservative attitude, within the frame of the League of Nations (participating in the Lytton Commission and technical cooperation with China), carrying on a more flexible foreign policy and preventing the clear-cut prevalence of either China or Japan. After all, the Mediterranean theatre was its main focus and it concentrated in constructing an international image as a “peso determinante” and an arbiter of European politics in particular. Therefore Fascist Regime did not attach much importance to the Far East scenario and pursued a policy aimed at securing existing positions, trying not to dissociate herself from the action of other Western Powers, Great Britain *in primis*. The conflict between Japan and China and the subsequent sharp changes it triggered in the diplomatic environment of the Far East that forced a re-orientation of Fascist diplomacy and led to the beginning of a cooperation between Italy and China based on technical, economic and military aid and the subsequent exports of armaments.²

The process of convergence between Fascist Italy and Nationalist China was enhanced by the dynamism of the young head of the Italian diplomatic mission in China. Galeazzo Ciano came to China as a legation secretary from 1927 to 1929. After having married the daughter of Mussolini, Ciano returned to Shanghai in 1930 as the Italian General Consul. Barely two years later, he rose to prominence in the foreign diplomatic community as well as in the upper echelons of the Chinese Government by chairing the International Commission in charge of settling Shanghai Incident of the January 1932.³

The political prestige that Ciano derived from this position was accompanied by his intense effort to cultivate public and private relations with the most influential members of the Nationalist Party and with the generals of the army. For instance, Ciano had a close friendship with Zhang Xueliang and often entertained prominent personalities and high-standing politicians such as Song Ziwen and Kong Xiangxi.⁴ Ciano geared the network of personal relations as well as his political influence towards the strengthening of Italian economic interests in China. His efforts were not simply focused on the enhancement of traditional trade patterns between Italy and China; rather, he devoted himself specially to improving the Italian rank in the arms trade. He acted in this way not only for he attached a great political relevance to such a delicate business, but also for he intended it to be the possible nucleus of a larger expansion of Italian influence in China. Empowering the Chinese military capability through arms technology transfer and direct export of war supplies was an approach to promote the balance of power in the Far East and to freeze the situation – conflicts and tensions, which might be more beneficial for Italy – while promoting the interests of Italian industries. This rationale was in line with the basic tenants of the Foreign Ministry: “Every solution that prolongs the conflict, avoiding any aggravation of the military situation and any international drawback, benefits Italy”.⁵

¹ ASF, *Consolato Shanghai a Ministero Esteri* 22/05/1929, Fondo Trattative Estero, S.47, F.380.

² Serri, “Fascist Imperialism,” 437-438.

³ League of Nations Miscellaneous No.5, *Correspondence and Resolutions respecting Events in Shanghai and Neighbourhood February-March 1932*, London, Stationery Office, 1932, 3-15. As quoted in Serri, “Fascist Imperialism,” 438-439.

⁴ D. Pong and E. S. K. Fung, eds., *Ideal and Reality*, 95-96.

⁵ G. Borsa, ed., *Europa ed Asia fra Modernità e Tradizione*, 251.

The export permits delivered by the Italian Ministry of War in 1932 testify the renewed efforts by Italian firms to establish themselves in the Chinese market. Breda and Fiat continued to send consistent collections of samples to their own local representatives. Several shipments of Italian war material were made to the local commercial brokerage companies Carlowitz & Co. and Arnhold Ltd.¹ In the early summer of 1932, Pirelli had even managed to sell to the Nanjing army a large supply of 350,000 P.43 anti-gas masks plus rechargeable filters.² Yet private entrepreneurship was far outstripped by the activism put forward by the Foreign Ministry bureaucrats and by the Italian diplomatic corps led by Ciano. On several occasions, the Italian consul seized the initiative from Italian companies, bargaining with the Chinese Government for military supplies that private firms were not immediately ready to accept or bargaining directly in the negotiations between their commercial representatives and government officials. In late November 1932, Ciano was operating on multiple tables trying to sell explosives made by Italian chemical industries, and to supply mountain howitzers produced by Ansaldo.³

The personal network of influential acquaintances of Ciano proved fruitful in securing the first important orders to the Italian industry and laying the long-term basis for the military-industrial partnership with Nanjing Government. For instance, in June 1932, Ciano was able to sell his personal friend Zhang Xueliang some armoured vehicles produced by Lancia and six Fiat BR3 bombers.⁴ A few months later, he signed another contract directly with Song Ziwen for the provision of two squadrons of BR3 plus another bomber manufactured by the Caproni of Italy.⁵ In the course of the negotiation, and despite Fiat initial opposition, Ciano operated a unilateral reduction of the unit price of the airplanes, and when the company tried to charge a high fee for the dispatch of a technician, Ciano immediately asked the Fascist Government to send a second lieutenant of the *Regia Aeronautica* in lieu of the private personnel of the company.⁶

The leading role that Fascist diplomacy was starting to play was a reflection of the larger interpenetration between state and private capital, triggered by the Italian financial collapse of 1931. The crisis had led the Fascist Government to take over control of the major Italian banks and, as a consequence, to acquire large numbers of shares in various industrial sectors. The creation of public participation industries drove a process of oligopolistic concentration that closely affected Italian heavy industries, culminating in their integration within larger state structures. This interpenetration between private and governmental interests resulted in the blurry overlapping of companies' requests for foreign expansion and the general foreign policy of the Fascist Regime in the Far East. Private sales networks became, *de facto*, one with the diplomatic corps of the various Italian consulates in China and the supply of arms to the Nationalist Government gained priority among the Italian bureaucrats of Foreign Ministry.⁷

On Chinese part, to purchase foreign armaments was one of the most significant motives of sending representatives abroad. When it achieved agreement on military cooperation (assistance) between Fascist Italy and Nationalist China, the military orders reached a peak by the mid-1930s.

As a result of the visit of Kong Xiangxi, the Head of Italian Government, Mussolini gave instruction to the *Incaricato d'Affari* in China, Filippo Anfuso (also Secretary of Legation in

¹ AP 1931-45(Cina), B.24, F.2. *Material Bellico per la Cina*.

² AP 1931-45(Cina), B.24, F.2. *Ministero Guerra ad Affari Esteri*, 7/7/1932.

³ Serri, "Fascist Imperialism," 440.

⁴ A. Spinosa, *Edda: una tragedia italiana* (Milano: Mondadori, 1993), 131-132.

⁵ AP 1931-45(Cina), B.24, F.17, *Ministero Esteri a Ministero Aeronautica* 13/09/1932.

⁶ AP 1931-45(Cina), B.24, F.17, *Shanghai a Affari Esteri*. N.3454 PR. 26/05/1932.

⁷ Serri, "Fascist Imperialism," 441.

China) on 12 May 1933, about favourable attitude of Italian Government for sending an aviation mission to China. Mussolini instructed Anfuso that he could communicate to Mr.Kong that:

1) Governo italiano è favorevole in massima invio missione sulle linee del progetto presentatogli da nostro addetto aeronautico;

2) Si sta studiando dettagli e composizione missione che verranno comunicati appena possibile;

Governo italiano accetta che residuo mensilità reliquato boxers accordo 1932 e saldo fondi inondazione 1931 siano destinati coprire spese invio mantenimento predetta missione.¹

During the visit of Song Ziwen in Italy, there was a conversation between Song and Commander Mario De Bernardi. Song demonstrated intention to recruit Italian pilots and mechanics who should organize Chinese military elements, making themselves as parts of formation. It would be enrolled twelve pilots of hunting, twelve of bombing and twenty-four of mechanics. De Bernardi was going to prepare the secret understanding with the Ministry of Aeronautic aforementioned pilots and mechanics who would leave for China as soon as the agreements between Song and De Bernardi were made concrete. Regarding aviation of bombing Song intended to use equipment of Fiat B.R.3 which had already been owned by the Chinese government, while that of hunting Song intended to purchase eighteen equipments of Fiat C.R.30, for which it had already started preliminary negotiations with the Ministry of Aeronautic, but negotiations would be concluded at Shanghai with the arrival of Song which was going to take place before mid-August.²

As aforementioned that when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested the other ministries for technical opinions on the cooperation project, the Ministry of Aeronautics expressed positive opinion. That was on 24 July 1933, *Ministero dell'Aeronautica* sent urgent confidential letter to Foreign Ministry, said that it was conducting through the *Addetto Aeronautico* in Shanghai, a assiduous work to facilitate the penetration of Italy in China. The negotiations with the Chinese Government, relative to sending an Italian Aeronautic Mission, to the installation of an airplane factory in China and finally to a supply of war and aeronautical materials valued at about 100 million lire, were ongoing until September 1933.³

The Central Bank of China affirmed in August 1933 the issue of cost with respect to the Italian Aeronautic Mission in China. According to the letter transferred by Song Ziwen to the Italian Bank for China, "With reference to the agreement, between the Chinese and Italian Governments, to engage the Italian Aviators Group to come to China for the purpose of helping the development of our aviation, it has been decided that the expense for the said group will be compensated with the surplus of the amount appropriated from the Italian Boxers Indemnity to purchase relief instruments (such amount will be transferred to the account of the Economic Commission from the relief Commission after its closing), and with the balance unpaid during the year 1932 of the

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XIII, N.573, 635.

² *APolitici 1931-45(Cina)*, B.34, Missione aeronautica italiana in Cina e forniture di aeroplani, T.7258/187 P.R. Roma, 19/7/1933.

³ *AP1931-45(Cina)*, B.30, Progetto di collaborazione italo-cinese, T.04984, 24 luglio 1933. G0556; B.34, Missione aeronautica italiana in Cina e forniture di aeroplani, T.8109 P.R. Shanghai, 1/9/1933.

Italian Boxers Indemnity.”¹ The Italian Chargé d’Affaires Mr. Anfuso requested the Central Bank of China to write separately to the Economic Commission and to the Italian Bank for China to transfer the account crediting the said amount under a new heading to meet the expenses. The amount deposited at the Italian bank for China on behalf of the “Economic Council” as well as the remainder of annuality 1932 of the Italian Boxers indemnity had to be transferred to a new account, entitled the “*Missione Aeronautica Italiana in Cina*”.² Later 35,000 lire as an advance for the travel expenses of the officers was transferred in the end of August.³ September 2, the Foreign Ministry of Italy received a certified check of Italian Credit for the aforementioned sum.⁴ September 7, the pilot Colonel Roberto Lordi and Captain of Aeronautical Engineers Nicolò Galante took embarkation on the steamer “*Conte Rosso*”⁵ directing to Shanghai.⁶

In fact, the Fascist Government sent the mission of De Bernardi as well as the mission of Lordi, the former one was made confidential, the latter was public. Until October, the local press of China, as a matter of fact, had no comments on the Mission of De Bernardi in China. That was because that Song Ziwen preferred to maintain confidential all the information about activities of Italian aviation mission, as well as the secret talks with De Bernardi, especially to prevent remonstrance of American nucleus that was of service to the Chinese Government, and likewise of group of officials that was of service to the Chinese Air Force, which had common interests with the Americans.⁷ At the same time the negotiations was concluded with an agreement, in the manner of dividing work into two aspects – official and business:

1) An Italian Aeronautic Mission would be sent to China, which would have official character and not deal with business. The head the Mission was designated Colonel Lordi and *Il Ministero dell’Aeronautica* would be responsible for its composition.

2) De Bernardi together with pilots and mechanics were to form part of the Chinese formations. In that sense, De Bernardi would be officially ignored. Therefore it was indirectly that De Bernardi was going to take care of business.⁸

It might be also resulted from the attitude of Japan. On 31 August 1933, *R. Incaricato d’Affari* in China delivered message about a declaration issued by Song Ziwen about his journey abroad,

¹ *AP1931-45(Cina)*, B.34, *Missione aeronautica italiana in Cina e fornitura di aeroplani*, T.376, Shanghai, 14/8/1933.

² *Ibid.*, T.1832, Shanghai, 20/8/1933.

³ *Ibid.*, T.8817/218 P.R. Roma, 30/8/1933.

⁴ *Ibid.*, T.409707/59, Roma, 2/9/1933.

⁵ *Austrian Lloyd* was founded as a shipping company in 1836 when Trieste was a harbor of the Austrian Empire. During the 19th century *Austrian Lloyd* became one of the world’s largest shipping companies. Trieste was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy after the defeat and dissolution of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire at the end of 1918, and *Austrian Lloyd* changed its name to *Lloyd Triestino Steam Shipping Company* in 1919. The Great Depression caused the merger of *Lloyd Sabaudo*, *Cosulich*, and *Navigazione Generale Italiana*, which on January 2, 1932 formed the new Italian Line, owning, among many ocean liners, the *Conte Verde* (so called after Amadeus VI, 1334-1383, Count of Savoy). *Lloyd Triestino* was incorporated into the new company for service from Trieste to Shanghai through the *Conte Verde*. After that, *Lloyd Triestino* engaged its sister liner *Conte Rosso* (named after Amadeus VII, 1360-1391, Count of Savoy) for the same route. The *Conte Rosso* was noted for her lavish Italian-style interior decoration. See Lloyd Sabaudo, *The Liners Conte Rosso and Conte Verde* (Genova: Barabino & Graeve, 1923); Yang Xianyi, *White Tiger: An Autobiography* (Hongkong: Chinese University Press, 2002), 25-26: “I remember that at that time [1930s] the fastest passenger ships across the Indian Ocean were two Italian liners, the *Conte Verde* and the *Conte Rosso*.” And Fatica, “The Beginning and the End of the Idyllic Relations,” Marinelli, *Italy’s Encounters*, 102-108.

⁶ *AP1931-45(Cina)*, B.34, *Missione aeronautica italiana in Cina e fornitura di aeroplani*, T.226101, 1/9/1933.

⁷ *Ibid.*, T.9979 P.R. Shanghai, 23/10/1933.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Roma, 27/10/1933.

in which Song expressed his admiration towards Fascist Italy, especially the internal solidarity of this state and the close solidarity between its leaders and the people. He noted fleetingly the employment of the American loan for works of reconstruction, adding that about the financial aid offered to China by other Powers he could not say anything until he had consulted other personalities of Chinese Government in this regard. *R. Incaricato d'Affari* noted in particular that the press of Japan manifested irritation for failure of Song visiting to Japan. The Japanese were concerning over possible change after his return to China. The current political regime of China, the Japanese suggested, might result in a new tension in this region and consequently for Japan adequate military measures needed to be taken.¹

Notwithstanding Japanese unpleasantness, 9 Fiat pursuits and 24 bombers purchased in Italy arrived in China in the spring of 1933.² Then it came the Aeronautic Mission of Italy headed by Colonel Lordi, which consisted of 20 experts. All of them were officers in service who majored in flight, mechanical, meteorological, communications, station, personnel, administrative etc.³ With respect to the sums for travels and salaries of the Mission, in December 1933, the Royal Minister in China, along with Colonel Lordi, proposed to the Minister of Finance, Dr. Kong Xiangxi,

di convertire in dollari cinesi tanto i dollari oro 48.185 attualmente depositati in Italia, quanto il saldo dei dollari carta 28.877,27 (dai quali sono state prelevate nel frattempo le somme occorrenti per i viaggi e gli stipendi del personale della Missione Aeronautica) e di accreditarne il relativo controvalore al conto della Missione Aeronautica Italiana presso la Banca Italiana per la Cina, eccettuando solamente l'equivalente di Lit.8.099 che occorreranno per le spese di viaggio dell'ultimo membro della Missione stessa che dovrà partire dall'Italia prossimamente.

Il Ministro delle Finanze cinese ha accettato le proposte anzidette ed ha assicurato che avrebbe dato istruzioni alla Banca Italiana per la Cina nel senso suggerito dal R. Ministro in Shanghai della Banca Italiana per la Cina dei dollari oro 48.185 che attualmente si trovano presso la Sede di Napoli della Banca d'Italia.⁴

The efforts of Lordi Mission concentrated in the Aviation School of Luoyang, Henan Province (middle region of China), which was a branch of the Central Aviation School of Jianqiao (笕桥), Hangzhou. The latter was established in 1931, which was mainly controlled by the United States: teaching equipments, a variety of technical classrooms, practice plants, air combat shooting, bombing exercise field were all American, and the Americans (12 American flight instructors and 5 crew members) set the teaching methods and flight size. Therefore there was no chance for Italian mission to participate in Jianqiao. While because of the Shanghai Incident in 1932, this Central Aviation School located much near to the Japanese aircraft carriers on the coastal waters of Hangzhou Bay. Thus Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi decided to set another aviation school in the mainland, that was Luoyang Aviation School.⁵

The majority of the members of Italian Mission were assigned to the offices of Commission of Aeronautical Affairs⁶ and the others to the Team of Instructors. Prior to Italian Aviation Mission,

¹ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B. 30, Viaggio di T.V. Soong in Europa, T.226465, Roma, 4 settembre 1933.

² Wen wen, *Secret Archives of Air Force*, 153.

³ *Ibid.*, 295-296.

⁴ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B. 34, Missione aeronautica italiana in Cina e forniture di aeroplani, T.238292/710, Roma, 22/12/1933.

⁵ Wen wen, *Secret Archives of Air Force*, 258-259.

⁶ In the National Government, the Aeronautical Bureau used to be in charge of military and civil aviation affairs. For concentrating the political power and for controlling air force, in 1935, Jiang Jieshi transferred it into the

the advisers of the United States, Germany and Japan who worked in Jianqiao Aviation School and the repair shop of Nanjing were only responsible for technical guidance, did not participate in the internal administration of Chinese Air Force. As the Italian advisers arrived, the Chinese authorities started to appoint foreign experts to co-organize the administrative affairs. For example, Lordi used to be appointed as the acting Head of Commission of Aeronautical Affairs in May 1934, which was always the seat of Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi, having the decision-making power for a brief time.¹ The new position acquired by Italian advisers was mostly due to the breakdown of Sino-American relations.² Immediately after taking his office, Lordi submitted to Jiang Jieshi a memorandum suggesting the reorganization of the Chinese Air Force on the Italian model. Negotiations between Kong Xiangxi and the representatives of Caproni and Fiat for building an aircraft factory and supplying Italian aircraft, valued 40,000,000 lire, began at the end of May 1934.³ Perhaps for the enhancing of power, Lordi was charged with allegations of accepting bribes from Italian companies during the summer of 1935 and then he was dismissed and recalled back to Italy in August amid great protests from Jiang Jieshi.⁴

From 1934 to 1935 (before October – the War in Abyssinia), the cooperated relations – especially in military field, given the little progress in economic cooperation as aforementioned – between Fascist Italy and Nationalist China seemed to enter into a most convergent year. Two facts should be referred here: one was elevating rank of the diplomatic representative (from Legation⁵ to Embassy); the other was the S.I.N.A.W. (Sino-Italian-National Aircraft Works).

It was in February 1933, Chinese Government informed Italian Foreign Ministry that she would like to raise the rank of legations, including Rome, Paris, London, Berlin and Washington. The Chinese Minister in Rome told Suvich that “Il Governo cinese terrebbe in modo particolare che l’adesione italiana potesse essere la prima e a tal fine il Ministro [di Cina] è stato incaricato di sentire in forma riservata l’opinione al riguardo del Capo del Governo.”⁶

On 2 August 1934, Plenipotentiary Minister of China in Rome, Liu Wendao⁷ met with Buti

Commission of Aeronautical Affairs, himself as the Head, Song Meiling was the Secretary-General, Zhou Zhirou was the Director.

¹ Wen wen, *Secret Archives of Air Force*, 297-299.

² See the later section on Competition of the US and Germany.

³ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 42, F.7, Sf.2, Ministero Esteri a Gabinetto Aeronautica 24/4/1934.

⁴ Borsa, *Europa ed Asia fra Modernità e Tradizione*, 269-272.

⁵ Soon after the defeat of China in the Second Opium War (1856-60), Qing Imperial Government established Zongli Yamen (总理衙门, bureau in charge of foreign policy) as a foreign office and opened the area around Dong Jiao Min Xiang (东交民巷, a long street in east of Beijing) for a number of foreign legations, which was so-called the Legation Quarter. After the Boxer Rebellion and the international military actions of Eight-Nation alliance in Beijing, those foreign powers obtained the right to station troops to protect their legations. Then the Legation Quarter was encircled by a wall and all Chinese residents in the area were ordered to relocate away. Despite the Nationalist Government inaugurated in 1928 with capital moved to Nanjing, those foreign legations still located in Beijing, but set consul in Shanghai, Italy for example. As a matter of fact, for Italy the consul in Shanghai acted as a plenipotentiary bureau before the elevation of Embassy.

⁶ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 35, Rapporti politici, 19/2/1934.

⁷ Liu Wendao, (刘文岛) diplomatico cinese, già ministro a Berlino. Nel settembre 1933 è stato trasferito a Roma, dove ha assunto il suo ufficio il 31 ottobre 1933. È una delle più eminenti personalità politiche del Governo Nazionale cinese. La sua carriera è stata brillantissima e rapida. Nato a Hubei (湖北) nel 1894 entrò giovanissimo nell’Accademia Militare di Chilli donde si recò a terminare i suoi studi nella Università Imperiale Giapponese. Andò poi a Parigi ove si laureò in Diritto alla Sorbona. Tornato a Nanjing fu nominato Rappresentante del Kuomintang presso l’Armata Nazionale Cinese, incarico che lasciò per passare Vice Direttore prima e Direttore poi del Dipartimento politico presso il Gran Quartiere Generale dell’Armata. In seguito fu Capo delle Forze Navali ed Aereo del Governo di Hankou, da cui poco tempo dopo fu nominato capo e membro del Comitato esecutivo del Partito Nazionale. Nel 1931 andò Ambasciatore a Berlino. Quivi ebbe anche l’incarico di far parte della Missione

(Direttore degli Affari Politici), three lines, according to Buti's summary, were proposed by Liu Wendao.¹ First, to create Embassy for bilateral friendship:

Il Governo cinese, in occasione della creazione della R. Ambasciata a Pechino, desideroso di dare anch'esso prove tangibili della sua amicizia verso l'Italia e di fare un gesto, procurerebbe di acquistare in Italia: a) navi da guerra; b) aeroplani.

La decisione di fare le ordinazioni predette in Italia, in occasione della creazione delle Ambasciate, sarebbe già stata presa, in via di massima, dal Governo di Nanchino. I quantitativi, i particolari e le condizioni dovrebbero essere concordati tra il R. Ministro in Cina e il Ministro delle Finanze cinese Dr. Kung.²

Second, Liu informed that Chinese Government proposed Italy to send military and technical missions:

Il Signor Liou Von Tao ha proposto al suo Governo d'invitare il R. Governo a inviare in Cina: c) una missione navale; d) tecnici per bonifiche e agricolture o tecnici industriali.

Sui punti c) e d), il Ministro di Cina non ha ancora avuto risposta; si riserva di comunicarla non appena l'avrà ricevuta. I particolari relativi a questi punti potrebbero essere concordati a Roma.³

Third, the Chinese Government was not willing to connect the creation of Embassy with the purchase and sending of missions in China.

L'elevazione ad Ambasciata della R. Legazione a Pechino dovrebbe apparire come un gesto spontaneo dell'Italia, e ogni correlazione formale tra la creazione delle Ambasciate e gli acquisti e l'invio di missioni dovrebbe essere evitata.

Tuttavia, al fine di sollecitare le decisioni del Governo cinese al riguardo, il signor Liou Von Tao conta di recarsi personalmente in Cina, probabilmente il 12 corrente.⁴

On August 8, Buti sent the information to Suvich about the plans of Chinese Government: a) the purchase of airplanes in Italy; b) the order of naval units in Italy; c) the invitation to the Royal Government to send a naval mission in China, at the expense of the Chinese government; d) the invitation to the Royal Government to send some technicians in China, at the expense of the Chinese government. As regards these plans, Liu Wendao clarified "le decisioni di massima di cui sopra hanno per ora carattere ufficioso, inquantochè sono state prese dal generalissimo Chang Kai-shek, ma non sono state ancora deliberate dagli organi competenti: Wang Ching-wei, Presidente del Consiglio e Ministro degli Esteri, che è d'accordo, ne è al corrente a titolo personale e non come Ministro degli Esteri. Pertanto il Ministro di Cina prega di tenere segreto tutto quanto riguarda sia la istituzione della R. Ambasciata sia le decisioni di massima esposte sopra, prese dal generalissimo."⁵ At the same time, Liu Wendao proposed, in respect of the naval mission sent to China, "che sia composta di un ammiraglio e di 12 ufficiali"; and "si occuperà

cinese alla Società delle Nazioni. *AP 31-45 (Cina)*, B.35, Progetto di collaborazione, Direzione Generale Personale, Ufficio I, per l'Ufficio del Cerimoniale e per la Direzione Generale Affari Politici, Roma, 29/9/1933.

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.638, 670-671.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, N.673, 721-722.

anche dell'invio di tecnici italiani e delle ordinazioni in Italia, ma soltanto fino a quando saranno prese le relative decisioni di massima in via ufficiale; non si occuperà di concretare i particolari (condizioni di pagamento, quantità delle ordinazioni ecc.), e propone che ciò venga fatto mediante trattative da condursi in un secondo tempo dalla R. Legazione in Cina con il Governo cinese.”¹

In September 1934, Liu Wendao informed the Italian Minister in China that Generalissimo had made decision on those affairs:

First, sending a naval mission in China,

Tale missione, che all'invio avrebbe dovuto comporsi di un ammiraglio e di due ufficiali (uno dei quali specialista nella posa di mine sottomarine), una volta sul posto avrebbe studiato la situazione ed avrebbe provveduto, secondo i bisogni della marina cinese, sia a chiamare altri ufficiali a far parte di essa, sia a fare in Italia le ordinazioni di navi e di materiali di cui la Cina ha bisogno, giacché Chang-Kai-Shek ritiene che l'arrivo di una missione navale italiana composta sin da principio di 12 ufficiali darebbe molto nell'occhio alle altre potenze e soprattutto al Giappone. Queste non solo avrebbero chiesto la stessa cosa ma avrebbero messo in relazione l'arrivo della nostra missione con l'elevazione ad ambasciata delle rispettive legazioni; correlazione che tanto il Governo italiano quanto quello cinese volevano evitare.

La missione, invece, nell'idea di Chiang-Kai-Shek, avrebbe dovuto ingrandirsi gradualmente come aveva fatto la nostra missione aeronautica comandata dal colonnello Lordi. Anche per quello che si riferiva all'acquisto di navi e di materiali in Italia, Chang-Kai-Shek preferiva che ogni ordinazione fosse fatta dopo che la nostra missione si fosse resa conto dei reali bisogni della Cina e delle sue condizioni speciali costiere e di difesa marittima. L'ammiraglio sarebbe qui venuto come «consigliere» di Chiang-Kai-Shek e non come consigliere del Governo cinese, e gli altri ufficiali come suoi segretari.²

Second, purchase of aircrafts in Italy, “Per quel che si riferiva all'acquisto di aeroplani Governo cinese aveva in questi ultimi due mesi già ordinati 50 aeroplani in Italia.”³

Third, technical mission, “Quanto ad una missione di specialisti tecnici di cui si era anche parlato in Italia, per il momento Chiang-Kai-Shek non era in grado di fissare nulla. Avrebbe studiato ed avrebbe fatto delle comunicazioni in seguito.”⁴

Liu Wendao emphasized that the above orders should not be imposed as the conditions on the issue of elevating Legation to Embassy, he “parlava «ufficialmente» a nome di Chang-Kai-Shek ma non del ministero affari esteri il quale era ...[Gruppo indecifrato] ed approvava tutto quel che egli mi aveva detto circa le missioni e le ordinazioni predette ma che non desiderava intrattenermene ufficialmente appunto perché non voleva che le decisioni stesse fossero considerate presto o tardi come condizioni poste all'elevazione delle ambasciate.”⁵ The issue of elevation for China seemed to be urgent, because of Japan's pressure. China attempted to bargain with Japan on this issue; unfortunately, as Liu Wendao said, “giapponesi erano stati dettagliatamente informati della cosa da notizie da Londra”.⁶

As a response, Italian Government intended to do in accordance with the request of Chinese Government. “Nei circoli autorizzati si apprende che il Governo italiano si propone di elevare

¹ Ibid.

² *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.827, 891-892.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

prossimamente la rappresentanza diplomatica in Cina al rango di ambasciata per farla corrispondere sia all'importanza della Cina come grande paese, sia all'importanza dei rapporti politici, economici e culturali tra l'Italia e la Cina.”¹

Mussolini gave instruction to the Minister in China Boscarelli,

1. Prendo atto con compiacimento comunicazione fatta ufficialmente a V.S. da Liou Von Tao a nome generalissimo Chang-Kai-shek relativa missione navale italiana, acquisti in Italia navi e aeroplani e tecnici italiani e confermo direttiva costantemente indicata non stabilire alcuna connessione formale tra elevazione R. rappresentanza ad ambasciata e provvedimenti che Governo cinese prenderà in tale occasione.

2. Prego V.S. far conoscere al generalissimo che sono d'accordo con lui su carattere urgenza che ha assunto elevazione ad ambasciata R. legazione in Cina.

3. Se lo consentono formalità ordine interno che – secondo quanto ebbe a dire Liou Von Tao a questo Ministero – debbono essere adempiute in Cina, gradirei che elevazione delegazione cinese in Italia venisse annunciata contemporaneamente o almeno subito dopo annuncio creazione R. ambasciata in Cina.

4. Proposta che risposta ufficiale affermativa al Governo cinese alla richiesta istituire R. ambasciata in Cina venisse da noi data soltanto dopo comunicazione scritta da parte cinese, era stata fatta da Liou Von Tao.

5. Senza farne affatto – *conditio sine qua non* – sarebbe evidentemente utile che comunicazioni verbali fatte a V. S. dal ministro in Cina fossero fatte risultare da uno scambio di lettere tra lei e Liou Von Tao destinato a rimanere segreto.²

Apparently, although the National Government asserted that they should avoid the correlation between the elevation of Legation to Embassy and the other cooperation programmes (purchase, naval mission and technical experts), the fact was that the creation of Embassy with no doubt would facilitate the bilateral cooperation at that time.

Britain, after having the news about Italy's decision on elevation, felt a little surprised and attempted to persuade Italy to wait for the other Power's action. The British Government “è rimasto sorpreso e *froissé* per l'elevazione della Legazione di Shanghai a Ambasciata senza consultare prima il Governo inglese mentre l'altr'anno, quando c'è stato il noto scambio di idee fra il Governo italiano e il Governo della Gran Bretagna in relazione allo stesso argomento, da parte italiana si era assicurato che nulla si sarebbe fatto senza avere prima consultato il Governo inglese.” Foreign Ministry of Italy replied, “noi ci siamo tenuti strettamente agli accordi in quanto in Cina esiste già una Ambasciata, quella dei Sovieti, e per tale caso noi avevamo fatto espressa riserva dall'obbligo di consultazione.”³ The letter of 1 October 1934 from Sir Eric Drummond⁴ to Suvich,

I fear that the slip of paper I gave you this evening containing a reference to an Aide Memoire about the China affair was inaccurate. May I therefore set out very briefly the story.

On May 16th 1933, the Italian Ambassador in London enquired the view of His Majesty's Government on the question of the elevation of the Legations at Peking to the status of Embassies. He was told that His Majesty's Government considered the suggestion inopportune and hoped that nothing would be done without consultation.

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.759, 812-814.

² *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.852, 925-926.

³ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XVI, N.13, 15-16.

⁴ Eric Drummond, Secretary-General of the League of Nations 1920-1933, then the British Ambassador in Rome 1933-1939.

On May 24th, 1933, an Aide Memoire was left with the Head of the European Department of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs embodying these points. The Embassy was then informed verbally that the Italian Government in making the original enquiry, were carrying out the undertaking given in 1919, and that, while they had no strong views themselves on the point, they would take no action before obtaining the views of the other Governments concerned.

It was these conversations that I had in mind during my talk with you.¹

Obviously, when the Chinese Government early in February 1933 proposed the request of elevation, Italy had consulted the opinion of Britain, which reflected such a fact that with regard to the affairs of China, consulting His Majesty's Government was a "tradition" of Italy's policy. In the end, in November 1934, Liu Wendao and Boscarelli became the first Ambassadors in Rome and Shanghai.²

The other evidence of convergent bilateral cooperation between Fascist Italy and Nationalist China was the S.I.N.A.W. (Sino-italian-National Aircraft Works). Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi, as mentioned above, argued that two methods to solve the question of air force: on the one hand, to purchase aircrafts from foreign countries; on the other, to self-manufacture aircrafts. At that time Nanjing had started the first step; the next step was undertaken in the beginning of 1935, when the Minister of Finance Kong Xiangxi began to negotiate with l'Ingegnere Luigi Acampora, the chief representative of four major Italian companies: Breda, Caproni, Fiat and Siai, to establish a factory in China for manufacturing aircrafts. According to the memoir of Scaroni (the head of Aeronautical Mission of Italy since August 1935),

A seguito dell'incarico ricevuto da quel «Consorzio» l'Ingegnere Luigi Acampora presentava sin dal novembre 1934 un suo progetto di massima che veniva approvato da entrambi i contraenti: Governo Nazionale cinese e «Consorzio» italiano (chiamato «Aerocina»). Questo, unitamente al Banco di Napoli, prevedeva al capitale necessario; capitale che, per il 75%, era garantito dallo Stato italiano.

La scelta della località ove erigere la fabbrica venne fatta dal Governo cinese, tenuto conto principalmente che la città di Nanchang, nel Kiangsi, era strategicamente favorevole. La fabbrica prese il nome di S.I.N.A.W. (Sino-italian-National Aircraft Works). Direttore lo stesso ing. Luigi Acampora assistito da alcuni tecnici cinesi.

[...] Il capitale investito nella costruzione della Fabbrica doveva poi esserci rimborsato in cinque anni sulla base di rate bimestrali.³

China choose Nanchang, in Jiangxi Province because it was the station where Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi commanded the Guomindang Army to suppress the Communists' Red Army; and for his commanding the Bureau of Aeronautical Affairs used to be transferred in this city. Such a choice seemed to be conducive to the administration but not facilitate manufacturing. Scaroni noted,

La città di Nanchang, come dissi, giace nelle paludi del lago di Poyang, il cui clima, d'estate, è poco meno che tropicale e molto umido. Ciò che poco si prestava per costruzioni aeree, specie quelle in legno. Ragione per cui fu necessario provvedere a impianti moderni per il drenaggio delle acque e il condizionamento

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XVI, N.13, 15-16, allegato.

² *API931-45(Cina)*, Busta 35, Rapporti politici, Roma, 7/1/1935.

³ Scaroni, *Missione militare aeronautica in Cina*, 47-49.

dell'aria.¹

The contract was done on 30 September 1935, establishing the council with Song Ziliang (brother of Song Ziwen) as the chairman of board, Luigi Acampora as general manager. In 1936, the Chinese technical staff led by Zhu Lin (朱霖) went to Italy Fiat for inspection and practice, negotiating cooperation in imitating Italian aircrafts. This factory set various departments, such as technology, manufacturing and repairing aircraft, repairing engine, official, personnel etc.² According to Scaroni,

La S.I.N.A.W. fu dal Governo italiano autorizzata a costruire in Cina tutti i tipi di aeroplano che erano, o sarebbero stati costruiti in Italia. Dopo trenta mesi a datare dal 21 Gennaio 1935 la S.I.N.A.W. doveva essere in grado di costruire velivoli interi e, naturalmente, tutte le parti di ricambio. Era prevista anche una opzione per la costruzione di motori italiani.

La «Convenzione» stabiliva anche che al termine di cinque anni tutto il personale italiano sarebbe stato ritirato e che a quel momento il personale cinese da noi istruito sarebbe stato in grado di condurre la Fabbrica senza aiuto straniero.

Nel mese di Novembre del 1936 iniziava la lavorazione dei velivoli destinati all'Aviazione cinese. Non ci volle molto tempo per rendersi conto che queste maestranze avrebbero appreso la nostra arte aeronautica con estrema facilità. Diretti discendenti di quegli artigiani che da tremila anni stupivano il mondo coi loro prodotti artigianali collezionati in tutti i più importanti musei d'ogni Paese nonché da collezionisti privati di gusto raffinato.³

The result of this factory: because that "it was poorly sited and was slow in creation. Only three S81 bombers were built, with three others under construction before Japanese raids made it unsafe to continue. The factory was abandoned."⁴ Scaroni also felt sorry about this end:

Questa nostra superba realizzazione tecnica piazzata nell'interno del «continente» cinese costituiva l'orgoglio di ogni italiano. Fu perciò un brutto colpo per tutti quando si apprese che i nostri «cari alleati» giapponesi l'avevano demolita con bombe aeree prima ancora che la Missione Aeronautica rientrasse in Patria.⁵

Together with the arms trade and military missions in China, the third approach of bilateral military cooperation was to accept the Chinese officers in Italy. For setting up training courses for Chinese engineers and pilots, the Royal Oriental Institute of Naples organized three special Italian language courses in academic year 1934-1935 in accordance with an agreement between the Ministry of National Education and that of the Colonies, i.e. courses of Amharic and Tigrinya languages and of colonial teaching. These courses were attended by 55 officers of the Royal Army especially selected by the Minister of War. Besides, the Ministry of Colonies sent to the Ministry of War despatch no.81490, dated October 26, 1934, in which it reported the allocation in the budget of 20,000 *lira* for the Oriental Institute to contribute to the expenses necessary to enable

¹ Ibid., 47.

² Gao, *Flight Path of Air Force*, 150-151.

³ Scaroni, *Missione militare aeronautica in Cina*, 48.

⁴ Dunning, *Regia Aeronautica*, 20.

⁵ Scaroni, *Missione militare aeronautica in Cina*, 48.

such courses to be set up. In that academic year, two Italian language courses were established for Chinese engineers and officers sent by the Chinese Government to Italy to improve their aeronautical specialization. These courses were instituted with the approval of the Italian Ministry of National Education on behalf of the Ministry of Aviation. The former announced in despatch no.12983, div. XIII, Year XIII of the Fascist Era (April 3, 1935) the decision to provide the Oriental Institute with 10,000 *lira*, as a contribution to the expenses for these course. These were attended by 25 Chinese engineers and by 25 officers of the Chinese Army.¹

From 9 to 18 December 1934, a Chinese mission led by General Yang Chieh (with five members) visited Italy. Italian Government planned in detail about their visit, including,

In Roma: visita alla Caserma Mussolini; l'Aeroporto di Ciampino Nord e Sud – Gruppo Bombardamento, Gruppo d'Assalto; la Ditta Nistri (apparecchi ottico-meccanici per aviazione); la Caserma Allievi Carabinieri Reali; la Caserma Carri Armati; Esereitazione militare a Centocelle coll'intervento dei Reggimenti 8 Artiglieria Pesante Campale, 13 Artiglieria da Campagna, 1 Granatieri e 81 Fanteria; l'Aeroporto di Monte Celio; la Scuola di Cavalleria di Tor di Quinto; la Caserma del Genio; il Comando Generale della M. V. S. N.

In Terni: visita alle Acciaierie e alla Fabbrica di Armi.

In Livorno: ai Cantieri O. T. O., alla R. Nave Trieste ed ai sommergibili; la Accademia Navale; gli Stabilimenti della Società Metallurgica Italiana.

La Spezia: Visita a R. Arsenale, Bacino di Carenaggio. Museo Tecnico Navale. Visita alle Unità sottili, all'Aeroporto Cadimare.

In Genova: agli Stabilimenti Ansaldo, alla Caserma M. N. S. Portuaria.

In Torino: agli Stabilimenti della F. I. A. T., all'Accademia d'Artiglieria e Genio, la 2° Brigata Caccia, alla Scuola di Guerra.

In Milano: Visita agli Stabilimenti Caproni e Isotta Fraschini, agli Stabilimenti Breda di Sesto San Giovanni e di Brescia, agli Stabilimenti della Società Metallurgica Italiana.²

It could be expected that each Chinese military mission which came to Italy would visit these factories and bases of military industries.

The visited military missions of China, for instance, in April 1933, Colonel Shao Chang Pe and Lieutenant Colonel Shih Che Woo, commissioned by the Chinese government to study the manufacture of weapons, particularly that of the guns, anti-aircraft guns, etc.³ In the same month, the Chinese military mission consisted of “Signori Pan You Chang, Generale Brigadiere già Segretario Comitato Centrale Kuo-Min-Tang; Jen Kiao Ou, Professore Scuola Centrale Politica;

¹ Document dated July 19, 1935, signed by Bartolomeo Chinazzi, Historical Archive of the “Oriental Institute of Naples,” dossier 42-1. As quoted in Fatica, “The Beginning and the End of the Idyllic Relations,” Marinelli, *Italy's Encounters*, 99-100.

² *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B. 42, Missioni diplomatiche militari per studi, T. 7112 P.R. Trieste, 15/7/1934.

³ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B. 34, Missione cinese in Italia per studi sul fascismo, T.797, Roma, 1/4/1933.

Hu Puje, Segretario Commissione Militare; Yang Shu Ki, Segretario Sezione Istruzione Politica nella Commissione Militare,” arrived in Rome on April 9.¹ In September 1933, Chen Qingyun (later as the Director of Aeronautical Commission in 1935) visited in Italy for several days: “Durante il suo soggiorno nel Regno il Generale anzidetto, per incarico del suo governo, desidererebbe studiare l’organizzazione dell’Aeronautica Italiana e, in particolare, visitare alcuni campi, la R. Accademia Aeronautica di Caserta, fabbriche di aeroplani (Breda-Fiat-Caproni).”²

On 18 January 1934, the Head of Government, Mussolini was in favor of sending in China Caproni³ as requested by Chinese Government. He also ordered that it was not made public on the arrival of the Chinese mission.⁴

In 1934, Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi selected 8 students from Jianqiao Aviation School sponsoring them to study in Italy.⁵ In the same year, 4 students were sent to study specially in aviation engineering for two years. Besides towards the end of 1934, the Commission of Aeronautical Affairs sent 25 students to Italy to learn the engine, aircraft manufacturing, communications, aviation materials, etc. The Central Aviation School selected 19 people went to Italy in batches to study flight, combat technology; 14 people to learn aviation structure.⁶ In October 1934, five graduates from German military school came to Italy to study some military matters: “i sottotenenti cinesi Pan Ke Ting, Sio King, Lai Tie Juen, Yang Hai Tsai e Cheng Tie Foo”.⁷

2.3.2.2 Competition of arms trade and the result of Italo-Chinese military cooperation

Competition with the United States and Germany

Since 1920s, the Guangzhou Government⁸ had sent a small number of trainees to a flying

¹ Ibid., T.3571/127, Roma, 9/4/1933.

² AP 1931-45(Cina), B. 34, Missione cinese in Italia per studi sul fascismo, T.228645/499, Roma, 25/9/1933.

³ Caproni was an Italian aircraft manufacturer founded in 1908 by Giovanni Battista “Gianni” Caproni. It was initially named, from 1911, Società de Agostini e Caproni, then Società Caproni e Comitti. Caproni made the first aircraft of Italian construction in 1911. The manufacturing facilities were based in Taliedo, a peripheral district of Milan. During World War I, Caproni developed a series of successful heavy bombers, used by the Italian, French, British and US air forces. Between the world wars, Caproni evolved into a large syndicate named Società Italiana Caproni, Milano, which bought some smaller manufacturers.

⁴ IDDI, Serie 7, Vol. XIV, N.580, 661.

⁵ Wen wen, *Secret Archives of Air Force*, 185.

⁶ Gao, *Flight Path of Air Force*, 148.

⁷ AP 1931-45(Cina), B. 42, Missioni diplomatiche militari per studi, T.232717/326, Roma, 12/10/1934.

⁸ Guangzhou Government, after death of Sun Zhongshan (on 12 March 1925), the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China was established in Guanzhou on 1 July. The following year, Jiang Jieshi became the de facto leader of the Guomindang (Nationalist Party). Jiang led the Northern Expedition through China with the intention of defeating the warlords and unifying China. Jiang received the assistance of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communists; but he soon dismissed Soviet advisers, because he was convinced that the Communists wanted to get rid of Guomindang and take over. He decided to strike first and purged the Communists, then moved the

school at Redwood City, California, to learn how to fly and, hopefully, assimilate instructing techniques. Upon their return to China, they began to instruct other young Cantonese officers.¹ Early efforts to form a cadre of fliers and erect an air force were sporadic. The militarists who controlled the Guangzhou Government had a few airplanes yet they did not want to depend on the United States or any other nation. Now and then individual officers applied to the US Army Air Corps for pilot training in America, the War Department rejected them almost without exception.²

Nationalist Government solicited aid during the 1930s from major air powers, obtaining aircrafts, pilots, instructor pilots, maintenance advisers and combat volunteers from the United States, Germany, Italy and then Soviet Union. Other nations strenuously competed for Chinese orders. "The Americans proved most successful and thus became most fully involved in the building of the Chinese Air Force."³

Stimulated by the activity of planning for the Air Force, Nationalist Government wrote to Washington and succeeded in obtaining authorization for one of its nationals to enter an American flying school.⁴ During the Japanese attack on Shanghai, on 22 February 1932, an American volunteer aviator, Robert Short, flying for the Chinese, was mortally wounded in aerial combat against the Japanese after he had shot down a Japanese naval plane.⁵ When the Japanese Air Force gained complete control of the airspace above Shanghai, Minister of Finance Song Ziwen in his capacity as Chief of the Commission of Aeronautical Affairs inquired of the US Government if it would favour a petition for the services of a group of American flying instructors to assist the Chinese to operate a school for military aviation. US Minister in China Nelson T. Johnson and the military attaché strongly endorsed this tentative on the ground of stimulating the sale of American aircraft. Song stressed that the American mission should be headed by an officer of high rank with a prestigious background in military aviation and promised that he would have considerable power not only as an adviser to the Commission of Aeronautical Affairs (which controlled the Chinese Air Force), but in the operation of Chinese training discipline among aviation personnel and the institution of American training methods in the flying programme.⁶ In a subsequent message to Washington, Johnson warned that if the Chinese requests were refused, China would probably tie herself closely to French or Italian commercial and military aviation.⁷

As a matter of fact, on the request of China, the US Government used to be particularly cautious. The Department of State and the War Department considered the proposal inadvisable for the US to become so intimately involved with the Chinese Government while the latter was in a state of

Nationalist Government from Guangzhou to Nanjing in 1927. See *Archives of Guangzhou and Wuhan Nationalist Government*, The Second Historical Archives of China (Nanjing).

¹ Capt. Lincoln C. Brownell, US Army Air Corps, Assistant Military Attaché for Air to China, G-2 Report 9110, January 25, 1944, Decimal File, Chinese Air Force, 839.01, US Air Force Archives, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. (Hereafter all records used in Air Force Archives will be indicated by the file number or call number and the symbol AFA.) As quoted in , Gordon Keith Pickler, *United States Aid to the Chinese Nationalist Air Force, 1931-1949*, Ph.D. dissertation of Florida State University (1971), 2.

² Memoranda of the Chief of the US Army Air Corps, Air Force Central Files, 1939-1942, Chinese Training, 350.2, Records of the Army Air Force, Record Group 18, Modern Military Records Division, National Archives Building, Washington D.C. (Hereafter records of the Army Air Force, Modern Military Records Division, National Archives are indicated by the symbol NA.) As quoted in Pickler, *United States Aid*, 2.

³ Pickler, *United States Aid*, 3.

⁴ Letter, Army Adjutant General to the Commanding Officer, Randolph Flying School, September 25, 1931, Air Force Central Files, 1939-42, Chinese Training, 350.2, RG 18, NA. As quoted in Pickler, *United States Aid*, 3.

⁵ US, Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1932, Vol.III, The Far East, 451. (Hereafter the published diplomatic papers of the Department of State are indicated by FRUS, year, volume, and subtitle.) As quoted in Pickler, *United States Aid*, 4.

⁶ FRUS, 1932, III, The Far East, 582-83. As quoted in Pickler, *United States Aid*, 4.

⁷ Ibid.

hostility with Japan.¹ Major General Frank Ross McCoy, who had served in the Lytton Commission, believed that Japan would declare war on the United States if US dispatched such a mission to China.² Notwithstanding the State Department did not want to see other Powers gain ascendancy in developing Chinese aviation and referred the request to the Commerce Department, whose representative in Shanghai, Edward P. Howard, took the lead in arranging for and facilitating the dispatch of a mission to China.³

As the head of American mission, Colonel John Hamilton Jouett choose 16 Americans to accompany him to China: 10 flying instructors, 4 mechanics, a physician experienced in aviation medicine, and a secretary. His principal assistants were Harry T. Rowland, in charge of flying instruction.⁴ As mentioned before, the Jianqiao Aviation School (Hangzhou) was in control of the Americans, in which the training programme were patterned after American military aviation methods and stressed the same tactics emphasized at Army Air Corps schools. Since the Generalissimo and Song Meiling did not attend frequently to the Commission of Aeronautical Affairs, even when Song Meiling went to the office of the Commission, Colonel Jouett was always accompanied and gave suggestions, in 1935 the top control of the Chinese Air Force was indeed in the hand of Americans.⁵ Subsequently, the US achieved virtual control of the market for the air force, selling aircraft for roughly \$ 9,000,000 since the lifting of the arms embargo.⁶ After the breakout of the full-scale Sino-Japanese war in July 1937, Germany and Italy withdrawing their military missions in China, the United States obtained a monopoly in the matters of foreign cooperation with Chinese Government. Even before that, aircraft export of US almost always the most, here see the exports of aircrafts by foreign powers to China⁷:

%	United States	Britain	Germany	France	Italy	Japan	Norway	Netherland	Other countries
1929	39.6%	12.8%	32.9%	11.6%	0.8%	1.5%			0.8%
1930	82.1%	4.1%	7.1%	2.0%	0.6%	1.6%	2.5%		
1931	68.0%	13.4%	4.8%	2.7%	6.0%	2.0%			
1932	26.1%	30.9%	10.0%	10.5%	20.0%	2.5%			
1933	75.0%	4.3%	6.8%	0.6%	13.3%				
1934	68.9%	8.1%	1.4%	16.3%	5.2%				

In respect of the military cooperation with China (before the Second Sino-Japanese War), Germany undoubtedly played quite a significant role.⁸ In October 1927, Colonel Max Bauer as a communications officer left for China and made contact with Li Jishen (李济深) the Guomindang-affiliated military governor and *de facto* ruler of Guangdong. One of his first memoranda written for the Chinese was entitled “The Organization of a Modern Army,” and

¹ FRUS, 1932, III, The Far East, 668. As quoted in Pickler, *United States Aid*, 5.

² *Ibid.*, 680.

³ *Ibid.*, 694.

⁴ John H. Jouett, “War Planes for China,” *Asia*, XXXVII (Dec. 1937), 828. As quoted in Pickler, *United States Aid*, 7.

⁵ Wen wen, *Secret Archives of Air Force*, 164-165.

⁶ Serri, “Fascist Imperialism and the Italian Arms Trade,” 445.

⁷ Liu Jun, *Air Defense and National Defense*, 30.

⁸ See “Sino-German Diplomatic Secret Archives,” *The Second Historical Archives of China* (Nanjing).

included specific recommendations concerning weaponry and the essence of his later plans to begin with a “model division.” Bauer was concerned from the outset not only with questions of economic development but also and perhaps primarily with the reorganization of the Nationalist army.¹ Since the Soviet advisers had been dismissed and the expulsion of Communists from the Nationalist Party had been urged, the Nationalist political elites was considering to search for the assistance of the other Great Powers. To Jiang Jieshi, the employment of German assistance was compatible with what might be called his efforts at “conservative modernization.” One of his reasons for wishing to go to Germany early in 1912 was to learn the “secret of Germany’s success.” Jiang Jieshi saw the secret, both in spirit and practice, in the Bismarckian policy of “blood and iron,” and urged in his *Military Voice Magazine* that this be made the “guiding principle” for China. Later on, this would take the form of an attempted “militarization” of Chinese society, the goal of which was not to preserve the *status quo* but to create a law-abiding citizenry of a modern, industrialized nation-state.²

In 1928, the military apparatus of Nationalist Government most clearly reflected a German model, its autonomy made more secure by the rigid separation of command and administration. Most of the six major military divisions were copied directly from the military system of Imperial Germany. The sole integrating mechanism for all these military offices was the president-commander. The military was thus essentially freed – as in Imperial Germany – from parliamentary interference. In a series of memoranda written in the summer of 1928 on the specific military divisions, Bauer had done much to encourage this direct imitation of the German structure. Moreover, Bauer and his German subordinates proceeded energetically with the training and outfitting of a “model division” in Nanjing as the cornerstone of Jiang Jieshi’s new army. The Central Military Academy was moved from Whampoa (Guangzhou) to Nanjing and, like the Army Staff College in Beijing, staffed with German instructors. Special schools for the training of staff officers and experts in artillery, tanks, and communications were established. Bauer sought to restructure the military system to give greater emphasis to Jiang Jieshi’s central control. This took the form of having Jiang, as President of the Republic, formally assume actual command of the armed forces. Bauer emphasized the need for a single office to which all military organizations would be subordinate. His suggestions were “crucial” when in March 1929 Jiang Jieshi established a General Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Navy, and Air Force (陆海空军司令部) – the direct predecessor of the National Military Council after 1932. “Thus military power became attached closely and almost exclusively to the President-Commander.” For the long run, Bauer saw all his efforts in the military sphere as dependent on economic development and the development of close ties to German industry: “There is no use talking about organizing a national army until there is a national industry.”³

The Sino-German Eurasia Aviation Corporation (欧亚航空公司), which underwent such a rocky beginning, was held up during the Nanjing decade as a model of Sino-foreign cooperation and as an example of the Nanjing Government’s commitment to modernization.⁴ The articulation of a coherent Nationalist Party strategy for industrial development along the lines of a “national defense economy” coincided with the emergence of new German interests in China after 1933. In the simplest terms, China grew in importance for a rapidly expanding German war economy, and

¹ Kirby, *Germany and Republican China*, 38-40.

² *Ibid.*, 46-47.

³ *Ibid.*, 58-60.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

expanded Sino-German ties after 1933 were based in large part on the complementary interests of their respective war economies. During the period of clandestine rearmament of the Weimar era, China had proved a major outlet for German arms and munitions. The mission of Max Bauer – in so many ways similar to other “unofficial” German military missions abroad during the 1920s – might have called forth a more positive Reichswehr (Army of Reich) response and in turn facilitated industrial involvement.¹

Only in 1930 did the Reichswehr begin to play a direct, though still minor, role in the German Advisership in Nanjing. With the National Socialist seizure of power on January 30, 1933, however, the interests of army and industry coalesced around a new approach to the China market. The greater German requirements for export markets and sources of raw materials gave rise to a new foreign trade policy that would help overcome earlier obstacles to German investment in China. In the process, a strong German “China lobby,” composed of military and industrial circles working together with the Economics Ministry, increasingly came to dominate the formulation of German policy toward China. Thus it is not surprising that the new intimacy between China and Germany began with the reorganization of the Nanjing Advisership. The form and aims of its reorganization were dictated by the mutual desire for new forms of military-industrial cooperation that became practicable only after 1933.² German companies sold howitzers and other artillery to the Chinese Government and together with Czech ammunition supplies provided the main chunk of the land army equipment.³

Under this context of competition, the participation of Fascist Regime in the military modernization programme of the Nationalist Government was “completely dwarfed by the larger assistance provided by the United States and Germany.”⁴ Against the more organized foreign competitors, Italian authorities avoided as much as possible a direct confrontation, waiting to capitalize on any weaknesses of their adversaries.

The competition was particularly harsh in the aviation sector, where Italian companies faced both the American Curtiss-Wright and the German Junker. The former was better organized and had a more solid control of the Chinese market. The network of personal relations created by Italian diplomats and the rapidly improving Sino-Italian relations avoided the commercial marginalization of Italian companies but did little to cope with American competition, which counted on lower production costs and a qualitatively better product. In September 1933, the Chinese Government struck an agreement with Curtiss-Wright for the creation of an airplane factory in Hankou, dooming to rapid failure the negotiations that Kong Xiangxi contemporarily entertained with Fiat and Caproni for the supply of Italian aircraft.⁵

The opportunity for Fascist Italy to seize hegemony in the aeronautical market in China only came with the new policies on silver implemented by the United States during the summer 1934. The US Government’s decision to raise the value of silver dealt a severe blow to the Chinese monetary system, causing vibrant protests and a steep decline of American sympathies in Nanjing.⁶ As a consequence, the US aeronautical mission led by Jouett saw its influence drop,

¹ Ibid., 102.

² Ibid., 103.

³ Serri, “Fascist Imperialism and the Italian Arms Trade,” 445.

⁴ Ibid., 445.

⁵ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 34, F.6, Affari Esteri ad Ambasciata Washington, 8/9/1933.

⁶ A. N. Young, *China's Nation-Building Effort 1927-1937: The Financial and Economic Record* (Stanford: Hoover Press, 1971), 212.

which was cleverly exploited by Lordi to strengthen the already rising authority of Italian advisers. Since the contract of the American mission was not renewed, Lordi managed to take advantage of his personal sway on Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi, and as aforementioned in May 1934 Lordi was nominated Head of General Staff of the Chinese Air Force¹, effectively bringing under his jurisdiction the management of military indentures and contracts.²

The results of Italian Aeronautical Mission and military cooperation

Apart from the fierce competition, two other factors caused the unfavourable situation of Italian Aeronautical Mission as well as military cooperation.

First, in the competition with the other Powers in military sales, the Italian companies were bound to hesitate to involve in, when it referred to direct capital investment; for instance, the economic project mentioned before was abandoned because of the reluctance of putting the Italian industries at risk. Consequently, in their opinion, sending technical advisers seemed to be a most safe approach. Likewise, despite the guarantee offered by the Central Bank of China, Italian companies proved hesitant once again to support a project – building aircraft factory – that entailed a foreign direct investment and thus required strong finances and well-developed organizational capabilities on their part. Almost immediately, Fiat highlighted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the difficulties of such a project, stressing that “from a sheer economic perspective, it might not be convenient”. Besides, the Italian companies were keen to underline the “political value of the project,” thus justifying their heavy reliance on state support.³ The size and scope of their demands had made even the Foreign Ministry cautious. In fact, Fiat had filed a request for a state credit warranty to cover not only the possible export of aircraft, but also the cost of building the factory. This haemorrhage of capital was judged unsustainable by the State Treasury, raising the vehement opposition of the Ministry of Finance.⁴

Given the impossibility of relying on conventional means to confront the parasitism of large Italian oligopolies, and the need to cope with the internal opposition, the Fascist Government was forced to intervene directly into the business organization of this project. In the summer 1934 (in June the negotiations had been on the brink of collapsing), Mussolini exerted pressure on Fiat and Caproni in order to create a larger consortium of firms to share the risk and the financial burden of the whole enterprise. On September 12, Fiat, Caproni together with Breda and SIAI (Società Idrovolanti Alta Italia), founded the S.A.C.A.I.C. (Consorzio Aeronautico Italiano per la Cina)⁵, a consortium with the explicit purpose of furthering the export of Italian aeronautical material to China.⁶ The new company regimented internal competition among producers and, through a loan from the Banco di Napoli, provided the 20,000,000 lire required to begin the construction of a factory in Nanchang. At the end of September, the president of the group, Luigi Acampora, left for

¹ In Chinese archives and writings, Lordi was said as the “acting Head of Commission of Aeronautical Affairs (航空委员会代委员长),” see Wen wen, *Secret Archives of Air Force*, 297-299.

² *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 42, F.7, Ministero Esteri a Ministero Aeronautica, 21/05/1934.

³ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 42, F.7, Sf.2, Fabbrica di Aeroplani in Cina MOD 6215, 31/5/1934.

⁴ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, Busta 42, F.7, Sf.2, Appunto per Sottosegretario di Stato, 10/7/1934.

⁵ See Olimpia de Mari, *La Missione Militare Aeronautica Italiana in Cina (1933)*, tesi di laurea magistrale, Università Ca'Foscari Venezia, anno accademico 2013/2014, 50, 84-85.

⁶ ASF, Affari Speciali a Ufficio Statistiche, 30/9/1934, Fondo Affari Speciali, SACAIC. As quoted in Serri, “Fascist Imperialism and the Italian Arms Trade,” 448.

China to ratify the deal and to set up the SINAW, a mixed Sino-Italian company to handle the logistics of the new plant.¹

Second, accusations came from the Chinese part against the Italian advisers and aircrafts. As a matter of fact, the political and economic expansion of Fascist Italy in Nationalist China reached its peak in the first half of 1935 with the promotion of the Italian Royal Legation to the rank of Embassy, and the further development of the military-industrial partnership between the two countries. However, the clear contradictions between the imperial ambitions of Italy and the endeavour to cultivate a pacific informal influence in China soon collided at the bilateral relationship. The invasion of Ethiopia showed the dangerous, destabilizing character of Fascist foreign policy, pushing Italy towards a diplomatic rapprochement with Japan and making her position in China politically untenable. The sanctions adopted by the League of Nations and the declining Fascist sympathies in Nanjing rapidly dried up the flow of Italian arms to China, undermining the already fragile foundation of Italia informal imperialism in the Far East.²

As referred above, in the summer of 1935, Lordi was recalled back to Italy on a charge of accepting bribes. According to the report of Lojacono to Mussolini in November 1935, Generalissimo Jiang had a conversation with Lojacono on this question. Lojacono told Jiang “Lordi era stato sostituito per ragioni di salute, che già si erano rivelate molto gravi a Shanghai nel giugno scorso e che rendevano suo ritorno materialmente impossibile.” Jiang said “che lo si privava del braccio destro e che non era giusto che egli ricominciasse ad affiarsi con altri esperti.”³

Silvio Scaroni⁴ was appointed to be the new head. The hurriedness of this change contributed to a steep decline in the authority of the Italian aeronautical mission, which had based its influence on a strong personal relation with the Chinese general staff. In order to improve the Italian standing, Mussolini sent a SIAI S.72 airplane as a gift to Generalissimo of China.⁵ Such a propagandistic move which was supposed to safeguard the Italian mission, however, could not avert its progressive marginalization and the re-emergence of foreign competition in the selling of aircraft supplies. Scaroni, after having arrived in China, immediately denounced:

Uguale, ma meno diplomatica in differenza incontrerò il giorno seguente tra gli altri ufficiali cinesi della base di Nanchang, sede della Missione, che ero destinato a comandare. Non ci voleva molto per capire l'esistenza di un ordine segreto di lasciarmi su di un binario morto fino al rientro del mio predecessore.

Intanto i giorni passavano e il dissidio Mussolini Chiang-Kai-shek appariva sempre insanabile. Con un

¹ Ibid.

² Serri, “Fascist Imperialism and the Italian Arms Trade,” 450.

³ *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.552, 525-528.

⁴ Lojacono reported to Mussolini about his conversation with Generalissimo Jiang in November 1935: “Non starò a ripetere con quanta ferma insistenza egli ha continuato a reclamare ritorno Lordi, per quanto io lo pregassi di aver fiducia nella persona di Scaroni, che V.E. aveva prescelto e che offriva assolute garanzie di efficace lavoro. Alla fine egli mi ha detto che non era vero che Lordi fosse ammalato e che invece gli risultava che era «imprigionato» in Italia. Che se questo provvedimento derivava da fatti commessi in Cina, egli copriva completamente Lordi e chiedeva suo ritorno, se invece si trattava di fatti commessi in Italia non aveva nulla da dire. Gli ho detto che non conoscevo quale fosse situazione disciplinare di Lordi ma che certamente, se erano state prese misure contro di lui, ciò doveva dipendere da fatti che in qualunque caso non potevano sfuggire alla disciplina militare italiana. Generalissimo mi ha espresso desiderio di avere da V.E. una comunicazione in proposito.” *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.552, 525-528.

⁵ Ovidio Ferrante, “Missione Aeronautica Italiana in Cina,” *Storia Militare*, N.3(2008): 47.

pretesto, anch'esso annunciato solo a metà, il Duce aveva inopinatamente richiamato in Patria il Capo della nostra Missione mandando me a sostituirlo, senza curarsi di interpellare il Generalissimo. Roma non sognava neppure che questa semplice misura di avvicendamento avrebbe suscitato l'ira del dittatore cinese. Non si pensava che in molti paesi orientali, e in Cina in modo particolare, anche nelle Forze Armate l'amicizia personale sta al posto del concetto occidentale della disciplina collettiva, in funzione dell'interesse generale. In altre parole, il mio predecessore era riuscito ad accaparrarsi la preziosa amicizia del Capo Supremo della Cina. E in Cina l'amicizia è considerata sacra, come mi sentirò ripetere da Madame Chiang-Kai-shek ogni qualvolta l'occasione capitasse. Un sentimento che fa parte della natura di certi popoli e che ricorda il cosiddetto spirito di «ospitalità del deserto», ove si è nemici o fratelli. E il Generalissimo non riusciva a superare l'idea che abbandonare Lordi non fosse un tradimento da parte sua. «Fino a quando non mi sarà detta ufficialmente la *ragione vera* per cui Lordi è rientrato in Italia, io gli conserverò la mia amicizia». Il Generalissimo me lo disse in tutte lettere. Per lui Mussolini gli aveva fatto un torto immeritato. Ma Mussolini non decampava: il cambio del Capo della Missione era una faccenda sua, quale Ministro dell'Aeronautica; e di nessun altro. *Fosse orgoglio, fosse quel che fosse, per chi conosceva l'una e l'altra parte vedeva perfettamente come il tutto fosse basato su di una imperfetta conoscenza dei fatti da parte italiana; fatti che nessuno s'era presa la briga di chiarire.*

Il Generalissimo aveva scelto il mio predecessore quale suo «Chief Adviser» (Consigliere Capo) per l'Aviazione cinese, ma avrebbe ugualmente potuto scegliersi qualsiasi Ufficiale straniero, lasciando da parte tanto la Missione Aeronautica Italiana, quanto l'analoga Missione Americana. Era una questione strettamente personale del Generalissimo; ma a Roma si continuava ostinatamente a credere erroneamente che Capo della Missione Italiana e Capo Consigliere fossero due incombenze strettamente legate l'una all'altra.¹

Moreover, Scaroni noted that the denigrating campaign was launched against Italian officials as well as against the Italian material sold to China, which were criticized for poor quality and excessive cost:

Questa ostilità tra i due Capi di Governo comportava fatalmente il mio isolamento dai cinesi, lasciando libero gioco agli aspiranti alla successione degli italiani, tanto nel campo dell'organizzazione militare, quanto in quello commerciale. Rappresentanti di industrie aeronautiche straniere competitive, altri ufficiali più o meno intimamente legati a quelle industrie; alti ufficiali amici del mio predecessore attendevano con ansia il suo ritorno; sciovinisti che mal digerivano l'interferenza straniera negli affari del loro paese, specie nel campo militare, pensavano essere giunto il momento favorevole per liquidarci e realizzare le loro aspirazioni. Da ciò un'aspra campagna denigratoria contro i nostri ufficiali, ma soprattutto contro il materiale da noi venduto alla Cina, criticato come scadente e più costoso di quello d'altri paesi, ottenibili, questi materiali, con dilazioni di pagamento assai più favorevoli. Non c'era paese occidentale che non avesse lì pronto un Capo Consigliere o degli ufficiali istruttori pronti a «sacrificarsi» per la Cina. La quale, per il fatto di non possedere un'industria aeronautica propria, costituiva un immenso mercato sfruttabile subito, con grandi prospettive per l'avvenire.

I tedeschi, che già erano sul posto con una Missione Militare di un centinaio di «consiglieri» guidati dal generale Falkenhousen e una fabbrica di aeroplani in progetto, si agitavano tanto quanto gli americani.

Insinuazioni e accuse circolanti più o meno clandestinamente, cominciavano a far presa anche sui cinesi che sin dal principio ci eran stati favorevoli; e oltre che sui cinesi in genere, anche sul Generalissimo e Madame, non a perfetta conoscenza di problemi aeronautici. Talune di quelle accuse rasentavano il ridicolo, come quella secondo la quale il volo con i nostri CR. 20 era pericoloso perché, onde evitare che la miscela necessaria a far

¹ Scaroni, *Missione Militare Aeronautica in Cina*, 17-18.

funzionare i motori si disintegrasse, era necessario sbattere continuamente le ali e agitare l'apparecchio.

[...] L'odiosa offensiva dei nostri ostinati concorrenti, parve avere raggiunto il suo pieno successo il giorno in cui Mr. Kung, Ministro delle Finanze, cognato del Generalissimo Chiang-Kai-shek, convocava presso il suo Ministero il nostro Ambasciatore Lojacono per comunicargli, chiaro e tondo, che «la presenza della Missione Militare Aeronautica Italiana in Cina non era più gradita».¹

In the memoir of Chinese officers in the Air Force, there did exist unfavourable emotion against the Italian advisers and aircrafts, i.e. more doubts about the rationale of the presence of them. Zhao Tingzhen (赵廷珍), an officer who used to study in Italy, said, "In the performance, the aircrafts of the United States and Britain are much better than Italian aircrafts, even those of Germany are better, the Italian ones may be in the same rank of Japanese. One of the biggest drawbacks of the Italian aircrafts lies in their poor cooling equipment of engine. They are quite easy to fire in the air. Bombers are slightly better; this disadvantage of pursuits is very serious. The pilots of the pursuits are often worried about security issues."² Yang Yannian (杨延年), another Chinese officer of Air Force, remembered that among the Italian advisers, "there was a mechanical adviser named Andrea Zotti, who was actually an ordinary air force mechanic, but at the consultant position. He was not even as good as the Chinese mechanic. He drank and danced all day long, loving football very much, which can be considered a strange thing."³

In actual fact, those Chinese officers also complained that the officials responsible for purchasing aircrafts were quite unprofessional; all of them were "laymen" in the field of air force, such as Kong Xiangxi and Song Ziwen, who were Minister of Finance and had little knowledge about airplanes. Consequently, what they had purchased, large quantity, were either second-hand or substandard. The Director of Commission of Aeronautical Affairs, Chen Qingyun (陈庆云) himself used to be a businessman, who had almost no idea about aircraft, but purchased a large quantity as well. The Chinese pilots then could do nothing but sigh. When it occurred a serious flight accident of pursuit (Chinese officers called it "small Fiat") – the aircraft crashed down for fire in the air, with the pilot killed – the representative of Air Force pilots met with the chief of the instructors' team, tearfully stated that this kind of pursuit had to be suspended. After discussion in a conference with Italian advisers, the authority of Air Force decided to stop all training of this "small Fiat".⁴

Notwithstanding, as the officer said, large quantity of Italian aircrafts were exported in China during that period, according to the study of Borsa:

L'unico settore nel quale l'Italia riuscì ad effettuare forniture i un certo rilievo fu quello aeronautico. Alle prime ordinazioni propiziate da Ciano nel 1932 (23 BR. 3 Fiat, 1 Ca. 101 Caproni da bombardamento e materiale vario) altre ne seguirono fino al blocco determinato dall'imposizione delle sanzioni contro l'Italia. Nel 1933 fu venduto alla Cina solo un CR 32 (Fiat) da caccia; ma nel 1934 furono conclusi ottimi affari per 6 S.72 (Savoia Marchetti) da bombardamento; 6 CA 111 da bombardamento; 9 Ba 27 (Breda) da caccia; 9 CR 32 (Fiat) da caccia; 20 Ba. 25 (Breda) da scuola. Nel 1935 l'Italia esportò 18 Ba. 28 (Breda) da acrobazia, 3 CR. 32 (Fiat) da caccia. Agli aerei vanno aggiunti pezzi di ricambio, mitragliere, bombe, materiale didattico, etc. per un totale

¹ Ibid., 18-19.

² Wen wen, *Secret Archives of Air Force*, 296.

³ Ibid., 297-299.

⁴ Ibid., 297-299.

(compresi gli aerei) di Lit. 48 milioni 40,332; e la fornitura da parte della Fiat all'Università di Nanchino di una galleria a vento perfettamente attrezzata.¹

With regard to the S.I.N.A.W., it appeared to work well in the beginning year, as Scaroni suggested,

Lo stanziamento nel bilancio dell'Aviazione cinese per l'anno 1936-37 relativo alle tre fabbriche d'aeroplani esistenti sul territorio cinese (Sino-americana; Sino-italiana; Sino-tedesca) assegnava alla S.I.N.A.W. una somma circa quattro volte superiore a quella della Fabbrica Sino-tedesca; e alla fine del 1936 questa nostra Fabbrica oltre alla prima rata di rimborso spese costruzione della Fabbrica stessa riceveva diciannove milioni di lire, quale importo per la produzione dei Breda 65, da consegnare entro il primo anno di esercizio.²

However, not everything went smoothly, the potential contradictions were: “ignoranza da parte di taluni ufficiali tecnici cinesi delle clausole della Convenzione AEROCINA-GOVERNO CINESE; opinioni diverse dei tecnici italiani e cinesi sui materiali da impiegare; sulle precedenze nelle costruzioni; finzze burocratiche e via dicendo creavano a volte difficoltà tra cinesi e italiani. Le malevoli insinuazioni dei concorrenti sempre pronti ad ingigantire quelle divergenze, facevano il resto.”³ Scaroni also complained to Song Meiling about the lack of cooperation of the Commission of Aeronautical Affairs: “la fabbrica di Nanchang è stata “greatly hampered” (intralciata) per mancanza di collaborazione da parte della ‘Commission’.”⁴ Besides, Scaroni noted, from his point of view, the drawback of communication between two parties:

Contrariamente alla nostra Missione, la Fabbrica italiana era un'impresa totalmente privata; anche se lo Stato garantiva il capitale impiegato per la sua costruzione per il 75%. Nonostante ciò, poiché il Capo Missione era il solo italiano permanentemente a contatto tanto del Generalissimo quanto della sua autorevole consorte, era su di lui che in definitiva venivano a scaricarsi gran parte delle divergenze relative al funzionamento della Fabbrica. «Oggi – mi scriveva ancora l'Ingegnere Acampora – il perno della situazione sta nella riaffermazione della Missione Aeronautica, impersonata nel suo capo».⁵

In the end, Scaroni said, “Al momento in cui la Missione lasciava la Cina, la Fabbrica Italiana aveva in costruzione 6 velivoli S.81, ed era oberata di ordini per riparazioni d'aeroplani e costruzioni di accessori, come lanciabombe e altre attrezzature belliche.”⁶ On 4 December 1937, “Tutta la Missione Aeronautica Italiana è inviata a lasciare la Cina.”⁷ After the leaving of Italian advisers, this factory was abandoned.

Scaroni received the last two letters from Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi and his wife Song Meiling, with of course quite diplomatic and courteous tone. Jiang Jieshi wrote:

¹ Questi dati sono ricavati dal prospetto di cui alla n. 40 e dalla testimonianza Unia. In confronto i quantitativi di mitragliatrici, lanciapiamme, fucili, munizioni, granate, bombe a mano, mine, siluri venduti alla Cina nello stesso periodo dalle ditte Metallurgica Bresciana, Breda, Fiat, S. Eustacchio, Bombrini Parodi, silurificio Whitehead, risultano modesti (v. i prospetti inviati dal ministero della guerra e dal ministero della marina al M. E. in data rispettivamente 31 gennaio 1935 e 12 novembre 1934, in AP. Italia 1931-45, b.21 f.5) As quoted in Borsa, “Tentativi,” 398.

² Scaroni, *Missione Militare Aeronautica in Cina*, 49.

³ Ibid., 49-50.

⁴ Ibid., 50.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁷ Ibid., 72.

I fully appreciate your assistance to us in our resistance to Japanese aggression. On behalf of our people I wish to tender you my heartfelt thanks for your sympathy and unswerving support.¹

Likewise, Song Meiling was grateful for Scaroni's "unfailing loyalty" and the "courage in fighting the inefficiency and stupidity" encountered in the work, especially in the struggle of trying to build Chinese Air Force. "Whatever the future may hold for our Chinese Air Force, I feel sure that we have laid a solid foundation upon which to build a sound Air Service and that the past two years' work has not been in vain. I am full of hope for the future because China is on the right road."²

The naval mission of Italy suffered the same fate as the aeronautical one, or exactly even less achievements. As aforementioned, the Chinese Government invited Fascist Regime to send naval mission in China in September 1934.³ It arrived in China in March 1935, which was composed by the head, "capitano di vascello (poi con insegne di contrammiraglio) Luigi Notarbartolo di Villarosa" and two officers, "il cap. di fregata Vincenzo Ruta e il ten. di vascello Lorenzo Bezzi. Il Ruta ed il Bezzi furono sostituiti per avvicendamento nel 1937 con il capitano di corvetta Vittorio Moccagatta e e ten. di vascello Francesco Ribezzi."⁴ When they left for China, the Ministry of Navy gave instructions:

- 1) consigliare il generalissimo in materia navale;
- 2) assisterlo nelle ordinazioni del materiale navale necessario, tenendo ben presente come sia altamente desiderabile che le ordinazioni vengano fatte in Italia nella maggior misura possibile;
- 3) preparare al più presto un piano difensivo dello Yangtse.⁵

In the same year, Fascist diplomacy supported the negotiation carried on by the shipbuilding company *Cantieri Riuniti dell'Adriatico* for the provision of two submarines to be constructed in the shipyards of Shanghai through a bilateral technical partnership.⁶ Due to the complaints of the company, which lamented the unfeasibility of the bargain, Italian diplomacy in China again took the lead and the newly appointed Ambassador in Shanghai, Vincenzo Lojacono, asked for a direct intervention of the Foreign Ministry to solve the contradiction between the economic interests of the Italian industries, which were partial, and the more general objective of Italian line of action in China. "A government that tantamount has given to its national military industries should exact in exchange that those industries comply with his foreign policy, even if it is not immediately profitable."⁷

Indeed, the naval mission had to work in difficult conditions. Cap. Notarbartolo wrote in a report:

¹ Ibid., 86.

² Ibid., 87.

³ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.827, 891-892.

⁴ Borsa, "Tentativi," 409-410.

⁵ *Archivio Storico del Ministero della Marina, Gabinetto Arch. Segreto*, MNI b.2720, f.4, Ministero Marina a Notarbartolo f. n. 11777, 12/2/1935.

⁶ Borsa, *Europa ed Asia fra modernità e tradizione*, 279. And ASF, Fornitura Sommergibili a Governo Cinese, Marzo 1933- Giugno 1935, Fondo Trattative Affari Estero, S.46, F.392. As quoted in Serri, "Fascist Imperialism and the Italian Arms Trade," 449.

⁷ *API931-45 (Cina)*, Busta 48, F.1-Marina da guerra, Ambasciata Shanghai a Ministero Esteri, 26/3/1935.

è stata subito oggetto di preoccupazione da parte del generalissimo che ne voleva attenuare l'importanza sino al punto di voler mantenere il segreto sulla sua stessa esistenza per timore del giapponesi che, come è noto, hanno due consiglieri navali presso il Ministero della Marina a Nanchino.¹

Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi appointed Cap. Notarbartolo the chief adviser of Navy; such an appointment was also not made public and Notarbartolo was relied on directly by the Generalissimo, even without contact with the Chinese Ministry of Navy. As a matter of fact, according to Notarbartolo,

Il generalissimo e la signora Chiang Kai-shek mi hanno confessato che non hanno alcuna conoscenza di cose navali, né tali conoscenze sono possedute da qualcuno dei generali o alti funzionari che li circondano.²

In the first months after his arrival in China, Notarbartolo devoted himself to the study of the naval defense of the Yangtse River and the reorganization of Submarine Mines College, an institute "creato poco tempo prima per formare il personale per quella difesa". Notarbartolo presented his plan in May 1935, which "prevedeva invece l'installazione di artiglierie navali costiere nella zona di Kiang-yin ed una difesa mobile del fiume affidata a flottiglie di siluranti e a due monitori".³ The plan was finally agreed, but when conflict with Japan broke out the construction had just started and could not be implemented.

As regards the second instruction of Italian Ministry of Navy, "il lavoro della missione fu un totale fallimento". At first the negotiations of purchase were going well despite the resistance of the Chinese military circles, and China attempted to import "motoscafo armato silurante, siluri e torpedini" from Italy. Because of the sanctions, the orders were passed to British and American companies. Besides, the Chinese Government signed an agreement with Germany in July 1936, "in base al quale la Cina doveva fornire alla Germania minerali rari e materie grasse contro un credito di 100 m. di dollari da usarsi per l'acquisto da parte della Cina di manufatti tedeschi e specialmente di armi pesanti. Tutte le ordinazioni furono dirottate verso ditte tedesche."⁴ Finally there was no deal done during the 34 months of stay in China. The naval mission like the aeronautical mission was completely marginalized for the same reasons. They departed from Hongkong for Italy in January 1938.

¹ V. rapporto mensile di Notarbartolo a Ministero Marina n. NSI. 32, 16/2/1936, Archivio Storico del Ministero della Marina, Gabinetto Archivio segreto, MNI b.2720, f.4.

² Ibid.

³ Borsa, "Tentativi," 410.

⁴ Relazione sulla Missione Navale Italiano in Cina, febbraio 1935 – gennaio 1938, Archivio Storico del Ministero della Marina, Gabinetto Archivio segreto, MNI b.2720, f.4.

2.4 ADMIRATION, MODERNIZATION AND “FASCISM” IN CHINA

Fascist Italy, according to the foreign observer in the 1930s, was a relatively small-sized but strong country, inhabited by a happy people enjoying a booming economy in the absence of social conflict, and equipped with a powerful air force and navy. The Kingdom of House Savoy was widely admired around the world – in liberal democracies as well as in authoritarian systems – with the exception of the Soviet Union.¹

Examining the archives of economic and military cooperation between Fascist Italy and Nationalist China, it is not difficult to find the clue of admiration; namely, there was an emotion of the Chinese who were then admiring the Italian Fascism: its party, organization, leadership, and achievements in general. Furthermore, during the first half of 1930s, it emerged the so-called “Chinese Fascism,” which should be taken into account for understanding the partnership between Fascist Regime and National Government.

2.4.1 Fascist Italy as a model of modernization

For the knowledge of Fascism, Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi sent a few missions to Italy, i.e. to Europe for both Germany and Italy, with a view to study Italian Fascism since 1933². On 30 March 1933, for instance, “Il generalissimo cinese Ciang-Kai-Schik ha inviato in Europa in forma strettamente riservata una missione composta di quattro persone influentissime e di sua assoluta fiducia per studiare il Fascismo per una possibile applicazione dei suoi principi e dei suoi metodi in Cina.”³ There were four members in the mission, together with one diplomat in Rome and another “notevole personalità in Cina,” Father Yu Bin⁴:

¹ Fatica, “The Beginning and the End of the Idyllic Relations,” Marinelli, *Italy's Encounters with Modern China*, 89.

² As a matter of fact, in the 1930s a key goal of Fascist Italy was to export the myth of the Duce to the whole “free world”. See Fatica, “The Beginning and the End of the Idyllic Relations,” Marinelli, *Italy's Encounters with Modern China*, 89-92.

³ *AP 1931-45(Cina)*, B. 34, Missione cinese in Italia per studi sul fascismo, Promemoria T.64223, 30/3/1933.

⁴ Yu Bin (于斌), the advisor to the Lega italo-cinese, a Chinese catholic priest, later archbishop of Nanjing (1946-1958) and cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church (1969). He enthused with patriotic spirit, was a staunch believer in Sino-Italian friendship. He had graduated in the History of the Press at the University of Perugia from the Fascist Faculty of Political Science (Facoltà Fascista di Scienze Politiche di Perugia) in November 1933. The leading Italian daily *Il Corriere della Sera*, publicized the event in an article published on November 17, 1933: “Yu-Pin, che è un'illustrazione del corpo professorale di Propaganda Fide, avrebbe potuto, secondo le vecchie consuetudini, chiedere il dottorato a Parigi, a Berlino, a Londra, a Ginevra. Invece ha voluto farsi consacrare dottore in Italia e da quella Facoltà universitaria che è la diretta privilegiata creazione del Duce delle Camicie nere, che sola porta ufficialmente il titolo di «fascista». Il reverendo Yu Pin ha inteso dare pubblica e legale prova della sua piena incondizionata adesione al Fascismo, primo tra i religiosi stranieri.” See Fatica, “The Beginning and the End of the Idyllic Relations,” Marinelli, *Italy's Encounters with Modern China*, 94; and Chen Fangzhong, ed., *Biography of Cardinal Yu Pin* (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 2001).

La detta missione è composta dai signori: Pan You Chang, Jen Kiao Ou, Hu Puje e Wang Shu Ki.

Il primo dei detti commissari è stato segretario del Comitato centrale del Kuo-Min-Tang, membro dello Stato Maggiore di Ciang-Kai-Schik e commissario di disciplina nella Commissione militare. Ha grado di generale brigadiere. Il secondo è professore della Scuola centrale di politica. Il terzo è segretario della Commissione militare. L'ultimo è segretario della Sezione istruzione politica nella Commissione militare.

Secondo le istruzioni ad essi date dal generalissimo, questi Commissari non debbono avere dalla Legazione della Repubblica di Cina a Roma che dei semplici contatti formali, ed in linea strettamente confidenziale ho saputo che le persone da essi prescelte per l'assistenza che a loro occorre sono il segretario della Legazione di Cina a Roma, il Sig. Tehuin ed il prof. Paolo Yu Pin di Propaganda Fide. Essi commissari non desiderano mettere al corrente dell'incarico ad essi conferito il Sig. Ouang, attuale incaricato d'affari della Legazione di Cina a Roma, e ciò perchè il padre di costui – notevole personalità in Cina – appartiene, per la sua mentalità, ad una corrente orientata verso il vecchio regime.¹

According to the memorandum of the *Vice-Presidente del Comitato Esecutivo di Lega italo-cinese*²,

Dalle conversazioni avute e dalle notizie raccolte mi risulterebbe che i detti quattro Commissari sarebbero destinati a formare il Direttorio – dirò così – fascista che, con alla testa il generalissimo Ciang-Kai-Schik, dovrebbe assumere una vera e propria dittatura in Cina allo scopo di riordinare il Kuo-Min-Tang con una impronta a tipo fascista.

Mi si assicura che il movimento che il generalissimo Ciang-Kai-Schik desidera attuare ha moltissimo probabilità di successo, poichè al generalissimo sono legate da assoluta devozione le più spiccate ed influenti personalità militari e politiche della Repubblica.

Sintomatico è un episodio recente, che rivela l'enorme prestigio di Ciang-Kai-Schik. È noto che il generale Ciang-Hsue-Liang pur essendo alla testa di 150.000 uomini ha lasciato occupare lo Jehol senza combattere. Per la prima volta nella storia cinese, questo generale si è sottomesso con tutto il suo esercito fidatissimo al Governo, e ciò perchè il generalissimo Ciang-Kai-Schik glielo ha imposto e al generalissimo non ha ostanto ribellarsi.³

The members of this mission desired the assistance of Lega Italo-Cinese, “li assista nei loro

¹ AP 1931-45(Cina), B. 34, Missione cinese in Italia per studi sul fascismo, Promemoria T.64223, 30/3/1933.

² The *Lega italo-cinese* was founded in Rome on October 20, 1932, by powerful academic Emilio Bodrero (1874-1949) – a member of Parliament since 1924 and a senator of Kingdom of Italy from 1934 – in order to establish cultural relations with China. See Fatica, “The Beginning and the End of the Idyllic Relations,” Marinelli, *Italy's Encounters*, 94. “I successi ottenuti dalla Lega a un solo anno dalla sua fondazione portarono quest'ultima ad acquisire sempre più peso nel campo delle relazioni culturali e politiche con la Cina, riuscendo così a intervenire in più occasioni anche nelle decisioni governative in materia (ad esempio, nella designazione delle persone da inviare in Oriente al fine della propaganda). Visto il carattere privato dell'organizzazione, il governo iniziò a temere che la situazione potesse sfuggire dal suo controllo e corse subito ai ripari. Il 22 aprile 1933, con Regio Decreto n.142, venne fondato l'Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (I.S.M.E.O.), presieduto dal Sen. Giovanni Gentile e da Giuseppe Tucci, in qualità di direttore esecutivo. L'istituto, di natura governativa, aveva uno scopo analogo a quello della Lega italo-cinese e, al fine di evitare un'inutile duplicazione con relative interferenze tra le attività, nell'estate del 1933 esso assorbì la Lega assumendone il controllo. Quest'ultima, passata sotto gli auspici dell'I.S.M.E.O., ebbe in sostanza una vita piuttosto corta e di poco rilievo finché non si disciolse completamente, sembra anche in seguito «a interventi e pressioni dell'Ambasciatore del Giappone Sugimura presso il Capo del Governo e il Ministro degli Esteri». Da allora l'attività culturale con la Cina fu svolta esclusivamente dall'I.S.M.E.O.” Vincenzo Moccia, *La Cina di Ciano. La diplomazia fascista in Estremo Oriente* (Padova: libreriauniversitaria.it.edizioni, 2014), 118. As regards the I.S.M.E.O., see Valdo Ferretti, “Politica e cultura: origini e attività dell'I.S.M.E.O. durante il regime fascista,” *Storia contemporanea*, Anno XVII, n.5(ottobre 1986): 779-819.

³ AP 1931-45(Cina), B.34, Missione cinese in Italia per studi sul fascismo, Promemoria T.64223, 30/3/1933.

studi, eminentemente pratici, e diretti a rilevare quanto dei nostri ordinamenti fascisti è utilizzabile nella ricostruzione del Kuo-Min-Tang.” As a response, the *Vice-Presidente del Comitato Esecutivo di Lega italo-cinese* advised that “sia opportuno prestare a questi autorevoli personaggi tutta l’assistenza possibile, anche per la diffusione che si deve fare nel mondo delle idee universalistiche del Fascismo. E mi sembra che tanto più utile sia questa assistenza, in quanto le dette persone sono, con molta probabilità, destinate ad assumere nel loro Paese una notevole posizione di governo.”¹ This mission also visited Germany where they had contact with Chancellor Hitler, the Vice-President laid stress on that China, in fact, was comparing and selecting a more applicable regime:

Non si tratta – giova ripeterlo – nè di una missione ufficiale, nè di uno studio generale ed ufficiale del fenomeno della riorganizzazione dello Stato Italiano sotto i segni del Littorio: si tratta, invece, di un importante esame dei criteri e dei metodi di governo adottati dal Fascismo per rilevare quali di essi siano applicabili in Cina, tenuto conto delle particolari condizioni di quella civiltà.²

The *Lega Italo-Cinese* “di compenetrarsi della dottrina, dello spirito e del metodo fascista per poter poi assistere col loro consiglio l’opera del generalissimo Chang Kai Shik per un adattamento del Fascismo in Cina,” proposed that “nel periodo di uno o due mesi in cui la Missione si fermerà in Italia, di metterla in condizione non solo di conoscere la storia e l’opera del Fascismo in tutte le sue manifestazioni culturali, assistenziali, di ordinamento corporativistico, di organizzazioni giovanili e delle milizie dei metodi usati dal Fascismo contro le cause perturbatrici della solidità del Regime, ma anche di conoscere e più che conoscere di valutare in pieno i formidabili risultati ottenuti nel campo dell’attrezzatura economica del Paese, sia industriale che agricola, e sulle possibilità per l’Italia di fornire alla Cina armi, velivoli, carri armati ed anche mano d’opera specializzata e tecnica.”³ “La missione predetta dovrebbe studiare in Italia i criteri e i metodi di Governo adottati dal Fascismo, allo scopo di rilevare quali di essi siano applicabili in Cina, dove Ciang-Kai-Shek vorrebbe riorganizzare il Kuo-Min-Tang, dandogli impronta fascista. La Lega Italo-Cinese si propone di facilitare l’opera della missione cinese, mettendola in condizione di poter studiare tutti gli aspetti dell’attività del Regime.”⁴ With this purpose, *Lega Italo-Cinese* requested for:

- 1) Di essere messa in condizione di poter eventualmente esercitare, anche modestamente, l’ospitalità;
- 2) Che per qualche gita o sopralluogo il Ministero degli Affari Esteri metta a disposizione dei mezzi di trasporto;
- 3) Che il Ministero degli Affari Esteri disponga affinché i singoli Enti interessati assecondino e facilitino lo studio delle diverse branche dell’attività del Fascismo.⁵

For the requests, *la Direzione Generale per gli Affari Politici* expressed a favorable opinion. And *il Ministro delle Corporazioni* agreed to accept the mission’s visit.⁶ The *Lega Italo-Cinese*

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ AP1931-45(Cina), B. 34, Missione cinese in Italia per studi sul fascismo, T.210943/46, Roma, 10/4/1933.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., T.212798/679, Roma, 28/4/1933.

was granted a sum of Lit. 500 as the fund of their assistance to the Chinese mission.¹

In July 1933, the Chinese Government proposed another mission to Italy, for studying the following fields: “1) Partit Fasciste, 2) L’Aviation, 3) la Police, 4) L’armée de terre, 5) L’Education Nationale”², for which Suvich communicated:

Il 4 luglio è giunta a Roma, inviata dal Governo cinese, una Missione di cui è Capo il Colonnello Feng, la quale ha ricevuto incarico dal suo Governo di studiare, fra l’altro, l’organizzazione realizzata in Italia dal Partito Nazionale Fascista.

L’incaricato di Affari di Cina in Roma ha chiesto, per il tramite della Commissione Italiana per la Cooperazione Intellettuale, che alla predetta Missione venga concessa ogni possibile facilitazione allo scopo suindicato.

Questo Ministero, aderendo ben volentieri al desiderio espresso dall’Incaricato di Affari di Cina, prega l’E. V., ove nulla osti da parte Sua, di voler fornire al Colonnello Feng ed ai componenti della Missione predetta ogni informazione utile ad assolvere l’incarico ricevuto.³

Then during the visit of Italy, Song Ziwen, in the description of Italian newspapers “uomo d’azione, simboleggia, infatti, le più moderne aspirazioni di rinnovamento della Cina”, announced to the press that “Ho visto – egli dice – un popolo giovane, ardente, volitivo, tutto proteso verso l’avvenire”.⁴ According to the newspapers of Italy,

Quello che lo ha impressionato più profondamente del nostro Paese è stato il fervore dell’attività produttiva che gli si è palesato in ogni regione, sia nei campi che nelle officine, che egli ha visitato numerosissime; nonché il senso di serenità e di ottimismo da cui i lavoratori Italiani gli sono apparsi animati. La rete stradale italiana, perfetta anche nei luoghi in cui la natura ne rende evidentemente più ardue la costruzione e la manutenzione, gli è parsa tra i segni più eccelsi del grado di civiltà dell’Italia, palesatagli per tanti altri aspetti. Egli ha voluto conoscere, nella loro essenza e nei loro più minuti particolari, le istituzioni fasciste; e ne è rimasto ammirato. – È un campo questo – egli ha detto – in cui ogni uomo politico ha da imparare e da meditare moltissimo.

Ha visto il Duce due volte, e la seconda si è trattenuto a lungo con lui. «È un uomo meraviglioso – egli dice – e credo che non sia facile trovare le parole adatte ad esprimere l’ammirazione che si prova per lui e per la sua opera. Sono felice di averlo veduto: non fosse altro che per avere ottenuto questo, il mio viaggio in Italia è stato fortunato».⁵

At the end of August 1933, Song Ziwen, after visiting several states of Europe and the United States, returned in Shanghai. He issued a statement on his journey abroad. As regards Fascist Italy, Song said that during his trip he had the opportunity to admire the work of reconstruction in progress in various countries which he had visited. Besides he had seen how the fundamental aim of the Fascist Regime was to promote internal solidarity. China though poor and weak was still able to stand up, but with a close solidarity between leaders and people. It would be possible to further improve the conditions, putting its national resources in value.⁶

¹ Ibid., T.212952/794, Roma, 29/4/1933.

² AP1931-45(Cina), B. 34, Missione cinese in Italia per studi sul fascismo, Legation de Chine N.289, Rome, 4/7/1933.

³ Ibid., T.220610/76, Roma, 7/7/1933.

⁴ AP1931-45(Cina), B. 30, Viaggio di T.V. Soong in Europa, giornale del 18 luglio 1933.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ AP1931-45(Cina), B. 30, Viaggio di T.V. Soong in Europa, T.226465, Roma, 4 settembre 1933.

The Plenipotentiary Minister in China, Raffaele Boscarelli reported to Mussolini about his conversation with Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi in May 1934. Jiang said to Boscarelli:

Quantunque non conosca personalmente Mussolini ho impressione di comprendere suo pensiero e sua azione e cerco di ispirarmi a suo esempio. Come egli ha voluto che Italia in Europa non fosse seconda a nessuna Potenza così vorrei che avvenisse in Asia della Cina e a ciò rivolgo tutta la mia azione di Governo.¹

On June 10, 1934, Mussolini indicated to Boscarelli in respect of sending a *missione educativa fascista italiana* in China.

Lieto dell'interessamento che generalissimo dimostra per le cose del fascismo e persuaso dei vantaggi che potranno derivare alla Cina da una riorganizzazione della vita politica ed economica del paese secondo i principî fondamentali cui si ispira il fascismo, adattati alle peculiarità storiche e psicologiche di codesto grande popolo, ben volentieri aderisco desiderio espresso a V. S. da Chang Kai-Shek di inviare costà missione educativa fascista italiana.

Mi riservo di indicarle al più presto i nomi dei componenti la missione che saranno scelti con la massima cura fra persone che abbiano già dato prova loro capacità organizzative, che parlino correntemente l'inglese. Sarebbe mio intendimento che il capo della missione sia particolarmente competente in materia organizzazione del partito, uno dei membri sia esperto in materia corporativa ed un altro in materia organizzazione giovanile; potrebbe essere opportuno aggregare alla missione un funzionario del ministero degli affari esteri al fine rendere più agevoli contatti tra missione ed autorità cinesi.²

On 23 June, Boscarelli emphasized once more to Mussolini upon the friendly emotion of Generalissimo Jiang towards Fascist Regime, especially his desire to invite a Fascist mission in China. Boscarelli noted:

Chang Kai-Shek si è mostrato sensibilissimo alla nuova prova di amicizia che V. E. voluto dare alla Cina e a lui con l'aver accolto suo desiderio inviare qui una missione educatrice e mi ha chiesto di fare pervenire V. E. la espressione della sua più profonda riconoscenza.

Egli desidera che missione parta appena possibile per giungere qui al più presto.³

In Boscarelli's opinion, such a proposal would "assicurare la diffusione dell'idea fascista e l'applicazione di sistemi fascisti in questo paese."⁴ As Boscarelli observed, Generalissimo Jiang did not want to make public this mission, or at least the real intention of this mission, otherwise he might be accused of dictatorship and it might offer Japan another excuse to interfere in Chinese affairs.

Chang Kai-Shek mi ha fatto infine osservare che, date recenti manifestazioni politiche del Giappone verso Cina, e data delicata situazione interna di quest'ultimo paese, una pubblica designazione di «fascista» data subito alla nostra missione potrebbe fornire pretesto al primo di nuove interferenze nella politica cinese, e ai suoi avversari politici interni occasione di rinnovare con maggior vigore la campagna cinese contro di lui con

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.185, 203.

² *Ibid.*, N.376, 399-400.

³ *Ibid.*, N.431, 456-458.

⁴ *Ibid.*

l'accusa di tendere ad una dittatura della Cina.

Egli perciò gradirebbe che, almeno in un primo tempo, si parlasse soltanto di «contatti educativi» tenendo celati i fini politici che egli effettivamente si prefigge nel sollecitare cooperazione del Governo fascista.

Chang Kai-Schek si propone di considerare membri della missione come capi di servizi civili del suo quartiere generale. Questi non avranno pertanto bisogno di uno speciale intermediario per i loro contatti col Governo cinese.¹

Boscarelli asked the permission of Mussolini to let the Italian Legation in China to take in charge of this mission, for this Legation “che dovrebbe sempre, a mio avviso essere la coordinatrice di tutti i servizi e manifestazioni italiane in Cina.”² Besides, Boscarelli asked for another secretary sent in China, because of the need of Legation as well as the desire of Nanjing Government:

Debbo invece vivamente pregare V. E. di volere, anche in considerazione questa nuova e importante branca di attività che viene ad essere attribuita alla legazione, destinare un altro segretario.

Non è lieve aumento di lavoro che potrà da essa derivare che mi induce a rivolgere tale preghiera, ma soprattutto il fatto che dovrei essere messo in condizione di spostarmi liberamente e assai sovente da Shanghai per poter recarmi a Nanchino, a Pechino e a Nanchang (quartiere generale di Chang Kai-Schek), dove già si trovano circa 20 nostri ufficiali, quando la necessità lo richieda.

D'altra parte Governo Nanchino mi ha fatto a più riprese direttamente e indirettamente notare che esso desidererebbe vivamente che un funzionario di carriera risiedesse permanentemente colà.

È solo ponendo a mia disposizione un altro segretario che io potrei aderire a tale desiderio, la cui realizzazione d'altronde non può che giovare al buon funzionamento di questa legazione.³

The friendly emotion of Generalissimo was not only upon the Fascist Italy, but also on Hitler's Germany. Through Lordi and Boscarelli, Jiang Jieshi attempted to ask for the attitude of Mussolini confronting with Hitler. According to Boscarelli's report, Generalissimo Jiang, above all, in the conversation with Lordi had expressed his admiration for Mussolini:

Egli, Chiang-Kai-Schek, al quale sono devolute in maniera sempre più positiva responsabilità politiche della Cina, segue con vivo interesse sviluppi della situazione europea, e non può fare a meno di constatare profonda, decisiva influenza che su di essa esercita personalità del Capo del Governo Italiano.

Non si limita ad ammirare Mussolini, ma desidera, per quanto gli è possibile e per quanto gli è consentito dalle speciali condizioni del suo paese, inquadrare la sua opera nelle linee generali politiche segnate dal Duce.⁴

Jiang was drawn attention to the situation of Central Europe, “recenti sviluppi della situazione Europea centrale che hanno culminato nelle categoriche affermazioni italiane di garantire indipendenza Austria”. “Pur giudicando tale situazione da un punto di vista naturalmente conforme alla posizione politica e geografica della Cina, egli [Jiang Jieshi] si sente, anche a tale riguardo, vicino al Capo del Governo italiano.”⁵ Boscarelli reported to Mussolini:

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *IDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.675, 723-724.

⁵ Ibid.

Come è noto però, una parte dell'esercito cinese è stata addestrata da ufficiali tedeschi, mentre alcuni di essi fanno parte dello Stato Maggiore di Chang Kai-Shek in qualità di consiglieri, per quanto si possa affermare che la loro posizione sociale sensibilmente diminuita negli ultimi tempi, pur non di meno essa continua ad avere suo peso negli orientamenti dello Stato Maggiore cinese.

È in relazione alla presenza di tali elementi militari germanici in Cina e all'eventuale continuazione della loro missione che Chiang-Kai-Shek ha invitato Lordi a venirmi a vedermi a titolo personale di domandare riservatamente a V. E. «quale sia attitudine del R. Governo nei confronti del regime Hitler».

Nostra risposta dovrebbe servire Chang Kai-Shek di norma politica e militare e anzi, a quanto mi dice Lordi, allo spirito di essa egli vorrebbe conformarsi.¹

On 31 August 1934, to reply the telegram of Boscarelli, Mussolini gave instructions on the information to provide for Generalissimo Jiang about the Italo-German relations. First as regards Germany, Mussolini announced:

Italia considera Germania elemento equilibrio europeo e Governo fascista ha sempre appoggiato giuste domande tedesche ispirandosi a tale criterio che risponde a interesse proprio come a quello di tutti altri Stati. È così nota – limitandosi a più importanti questioni – parte che Italia ha avuto nella questione delle riparazioni che per tanti anni hanno occupato un posto così notevole nella politica europea; per l'evacuazione dei territori renani e ultimamente per assicurare alla Germania l'uguaglianza dei diritti. Governo italiano deve constatare con rammarico che da un certo tempo politica tedesca ha assunto atteggiamenti che legittimano dubbi e sospetti circa ultime finalità che esse persegue. Con la stessa determinatezza con la quale Italia ha appoggiato le legittime rivendicazioni della Germania, Italia è intervenuta nella questione austriaca per arginare l'azione tedesca e assicurare l'indipendenza e l'integrità dello Stato austriaco, ispirandosi anche qui allo stesso criterio di equilibrio europeo e di rispetto dei diritti che sono il caposaldo della sua politica. Proposito italiano di svolgere una politica di collaborazione – oltre che con Inghilterra e con Francia – anche con Germania – non contro di essa – continua tuttavia a persistere, naturalmente fino e dove è possibile, ma è certo che i rapporti fra la Germania e tutti gli Stati europei risentono in questo momento e da un pezzo di una minore cordialità e di una mal celata preoccupazione. Errori commessi da Stato tedesco si mostrano anche nella stessa compagine interna dove appaiono crepe e dissidi di cui sono evidentemente indice i risultati della recente votazione.²

For responding to Generalissimo Jiang, Mussolini advised Boscarelli to proceed with caution in speaking with Jiang Jieshi, “ma non conviene tacere situazione quale si sta determinando in Europa nei riguardi tedeschi.” Mussolini continued,

Di quanto precede ella potrà quindi opportunamente avvalersi per rispondere alla domanda rivolta ma mi parrebbe opportuno che ella lo intrattenesse personalmente alla prossima occasione.

Nella sua conversazione ella vorrà pure e anzitutto ringraziarlo della comunicazione che Le ha fatto e degli apprezzamenti che ha espresso riguardo al regime fascista, aggiungendo che apprezzo pienamente i propositi da lui manifestati. Converrà poi che in modo appropriato ella si faccia pure eco delle notizie che circolano ormai correntemente, di intese sempre più intime fra Germania e Giappone allo scopo di lasciare più libero il

¹ Ibid.

² *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.747, 796-797.

Giappone nella sua azione verso l'URSS e la Cina, e la Germania nella sua politica verso l'URSS.

A proposito del principio della parità dei diritti cui è accennato di sopra, ella potrà pure dire a Chang Kai-shek che nel concetto italiano tale principio si applica oltre che all'Europa anche all'Oriente e che Italia segue con soddisfazione le cure che Chang Kai-Shek dedica all'organizzazione dell'esercito e alla riorganizzazione della marina, riorganizzazione che è indispensabile perché la Cina possa validamente tutelare i propri interessi, e che – come è ben noto al generalissimo – trova nel Governo fascista tutta la simpatia e l'appoggio possibile.

In fine, poiché domanda di Chang Kai-Shek circa attitudine R. Governo nei riguardi della Germania sembra, secondo quanto V.S. riferisce, sia da mettersi in relazione alla presenza elementi militari germanici in Cina e all'eventuale loro sostituzione, V.S. potrà, ove ella lo giudichi opportuno, far comprendere al generalissimo che l'Italia sarebbe ben lieta di aiutarlo anche in questo campo.¹

All in all, Mussolini intended to let Generalissimo to know that as the relations between Germany and Japan became increasingly intimate, Japan might be more free in the Far East. As a consequence, it might be not safe for China to maintain the military cooperation with Germany. Moreover, Italy appreciated the effort of China in military reorganization, to which Italy might contribute as well.

Based on the archives, such a mission of Fascism was not realised. Nevertheless, the admiration of Nationalist China towards Fascist Italy could be proved in some other fields. First of all, from abundant publications in the end of 1920s and in the first half of 1930s, especially in the words and writings of Chinese political elites, we may search for some clues on that issue.

2.4.2 “Fascism” in China

Fascism was introduced to China in the early 1920s.² Due to the small number of people studying in Italy at that time, to understand the Fascism was mainly through the reports on the Italian Fascist Movement in domestic newspapers and magazines, such as these major ones: *Guo Wen Zhoubao* (国闻周报, National Weekly), *Dongfang Zazhi* (东方杂志, Oriental Magazine), *Zhongguo Qingnian* (中国青年, Youth of China), *Zhengzhi Shenghuo* (政治生活, Political Life), *Shenbao* (申报), etc.

Since the 1920s, a number of reports or translations had been published on the Italian Fascist Movement and the life of Mussolini. At that time in China there are many different translation of “Fascist Party,” “Fascism,” and “Fascisti”: “Banghe Group (Banghe tuan, 棒喝团),” “Fanxi Party (Fan xi dang, 泛系党, 汎系党),” “Black Shirt Party (Hei shan dang, 黑衫党),” “Brown Shirt Party (He shan dang, 褐衫党),” “Banghe zhuyi (棒喝主义),” “Banghe Movement (Banghe

¹ Ibid.

² Liu Jianqing. “The Emergence of Guomintang Fascism and the Establishment of Jiang Jieshi’s Dictatorship,” 73.

yundong, 棒喝运动),” “Fan xi zhuyi (汎系主义),” “Faxi zhuyi (法西斯主义),” “Fa xi si di (法西斯蒂)”¹. Among them, “bang he,” in the not very flattering meaning of “to arouse a person from his stupid ways as if by hitting him with a club.” After 1933, however, the term “Fa xi si di (法西斯蒂)” for *Fascisti*, especially in the shortened form of “fa xi si (法西斯),” came to mean Fascism in general.²

In *Dongfang Zazhi* (Oriental Magazine), for instance, some articles argued that Mussolini was a great man of Italy, and Mussolini’s seizure of power was not to transform Italy into Napoleon’s France, but bound to transform it into Bismarck’s Germany.³ Another author suggested that Mussolini was just a “hypocritical” guy, under the rule of Mussolini, the Italian people were “angry but not dare to say,” “Italy’s politics, from then on might confront more trouble.”⁴ Similarly, this phenomenon also appeared in the *Guo Wen Zhoubao* (National Weekly), of which some articles pointed out that Fascism would make Italy increasingly insecure and at risk. While some others said Mussolini was a versatile man and born leader.⁵

Notwithstanding, as the Chinese political situation in the 1920s: the rule of warlords, political chaos, successive warfare, extremely weak finance and economic disorder, very hard living of the people,⁶ together with the powerful advocacy of Fascism and Mussolini,⁷ some people became more and more sympathetic to the Fascist Movement and some public opinion was gradually fascinated to Fascism, even to Mussolini’s individual worship. In 1923, an editor of *Dongfang Zazhi* (Oriental Magazine), Hu Yuzhi (胡愈之), with his pseudonym “Hua Lu (化鲁),” wrote in an article that the current political situation in China had been already terrible. To solve this dangerous situation, it seemed that only Communism and Fascism could achieve. Yet most people in China regarded Communism as a serpent and beast, and under the oppression of the capitalist Powers, it was impossible for China to produce a red culture. Then perhaps only the dictator-style Fascist revolution was able to clean up the present terrible situation, though Fascism was far from the ideal of civilian politics, as the people’s freedom was deprived.

Despite that, Hu Yuzhi said, “if we really had a party based on the premise of nationalism, and had a heroic man like Mussolini; the Fascism appears to be acceptable as an approach.”⁸ This could be seen as the earliest publicly advocating of using Fascism to save China. While most of the public opinion at that time believed that China had no such premise to implement Fascism, not only because that there was no leader like Mussolini – “not afraid of death, brave and fearless”; but also because that the China’s national character was completely different from Italy. To follow Italy without careful considerations might not benefit, but make society in chaos.⁹

After the Manchurian incident, a large number of publications on Fascism emerged in China. According to statistics, there were dozens of publishing houses mainly published the writings about Fascism, biographies and discourses of Mussolini and later of Hitler,¹⁰ including some publishing houses operated by Nationalist Party. During this period, among the domestic

¹ Dong Zhixue, *Fascism*, 3.

² Kirby, *Germany and Republican China*, 153.

³ Hu Yuzhi, “Biographic Sketch of Mussolini, a Great Leader of Italy: from Socialism to Fascism,” 90.

⁴ You Xiong. “The High-handed Policy of Mussolini,” and “New Electoral Bill of Italy,” 8-10.

⁵ Chen Bosheng. “Italy and Russia,” and Li Qiao. “Under the One-party Rule the New Italian Organizers: Mussolini,” *National Weekly*, Vol.5, No.30(5 Aug. 1928).

⁶ Zhang Yufa. *Modern History of China*, 204.

⁷ In the Chinese documents, the Fascist representative in Shanghai devoted much efforts to promoting Fascism. See Hu Yuzhi, “Fascism and China,” 1.

⁸ Hu Yuzhi, “Fascism and China,” 1.

⁹ He Zuolin. “Italy under the Fascism Administration,” 93.

¹⁰ Liu Jianqing. “The Emergence of Guomindang Fascism,” 74.

publications on political thoughts and theories, more than half were Fascism-related. Besides, there were dozens of translated books – from Japanese into Chinese – introducing Fascism, which was indeed a large proportion in the total of the translated Japanese political writings. Such a sort of books was very popular at that time.¹ Moreover, some special publications on Fascism could be found in 1930s, *Shehui zhuyi yuekan* (社会主义月刊, socialist monthly), for example, started in 1933 at Shanghai, which claimed in the first issue that it was the publication of Fascist study in China.²

The domestic consciousness of saving nation since the Mukden Incident of September 18 (1931) might be the main reason of the rise of Fascist publications in China. The fall of the Northeast stimulated a strong sense of salvation among Chinese people, academia, and public opinion, which put forward a variety of ways to save China.³ In respect of Fascist Italy, the Chinese believed that the situation in China after “September 18” was very similar to the situation in Italy before the rise of Fascism. Therefore, the Italian experience was informative. “Italy is the oldest empire in the West. Sixty years ago it was still divided without unity. In 1922 the situation Fascist party faced was: Communist riots, people’s losing of livelihood, complex of thoughts, economic decline. In short, both its spiritual and material resources were on the verge of bankruptcy, and the environment was very difficult. China is also the old East Empire, and that Italy in the past had suffered all can become a microcosm of the Republic of China. Thus all the process of Italian renaissance is worthy of our attention and research.”⁴

Nevertheless, as the leader of Nanjing Government, Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi rarely mentioned in public his view of Fascism. In May 1931 at the National Assembly, Jiang Jieshi for the first time expressed his opinion about Fascism. In the opening speech, he stated that the governments all over the world at current time had different forms, three types in principle: Fascism, Communism, and liberal democracy. The political theory of liberal democracy was the result of a long history of evolution. If it were to be implemented in a country without such a historical background, the result would be like chaotic Italy before the Fascist regime. Thus the weakness of parliamentary politics has been fully exposed. As regards Communism, it often formed a cruel class struggle, not suitable for China’s industrial backwardness, and China by virtue of inherent morals and ethic did not need this theory, which could be asserted. Fascism, through organized corporations, made the state as the supreme entity. State required all the sacrifices of the people, for the continuation of national life, and for the current welfare, in which the domination and society coexisted without priority. The people with most capability and efficiency were the operator of power.⁵ As a matter of fact, Jiang Jieshi held the opinion that Fascism eventually caused international disputes and wars, thus did not meet the traditional Chinese spirit of Datong (大同) world⁶. In short, each country had its objective environment, and absolutely could not

¹ Feng Qihong, *Fascism and the Politics of China in 1930s*, 55-56.

² *Shen Bao*, Page 4, 1 March 1933.

³ Programs for saving China: Fascistization China, international co-management, Sovietization China, to abolish party and implement people’s government, education saving nation, defense saving nation, etc. See “How to Save China,” *National Weekly*, Vol.10, No.1(1 Jan.1933, Tianjin): 1-4.

⁴ Xue Guangqian, *The Rejuvenation Way of Italy*, 115.

⁵ See Jiang Jieshi, *Self-reflection*.

⁶ Da Tong, a Confucian concept of the world in which everyone and everything is at peace. According to it, the society in Great Unity was ruled by the public, where the people chose men of virtue and ability, and valued trust and harmony. People did not only love their own parents and children, but also secured the living of the elderly until their ends, let the adults be of use to the society, and helped the young grow. People disliked seeing resources being wasted but did not seek to process them; they wanted to exert their strength but did not do it for their own benefit. The Great Unity is often mentioned in the writings of Sun Zhongshan “Father of the Nation”.

completely transplant the politics of another. The theory of Sun Zhongshan, who had integrated both Chinese and foreign doctrine, based on the study of actual situation of China, was the only suitable political theory for China.¹

In March 1934, given the rumors that the Nationalist Government was going to follow the Fascist politics of Germany and Italy², Jiang told reporter of *Central News Agency* (中央社): “I always believe that the success or failure of revolution not depends upon how the system changes, but on how to achieve the doctrine. In the past, our Party followed the Soviet system and proved to be a failure. Therefore, we should not follow the German and Italian dictatorship only because they had succeeded. China’s environment is different from that of the two countries.”³ In October of the same year, Jiang Jieshi accepted an interview of *Zi lin xi bao* (字林西报) of Shanghai, and reiterated that Fascist dictatorship in Italy and Germany might be very good on their land, but they could not be compared with China, which was too vast to be ruled by a dictator.⁴ The statement of Jiang did not eliminate the suspicion. As a result, on 27 November 1934, Jiang Jieshi, together with Wang Jingwei (Premier of the Republic), had to issued a joint statement, “Given today’s circumstances and times of China, there is no need and impossible to imitate the Italian and Soviet political system”.⁵ The same day, Jiang answered question of Japanese reporter of *Osaka Daily News* (每日新闻), which asked that whether he would like to become China’s Mussolini and Hitler. Jiang said, “China is under the conditions different from these countries, there is no need to implement dictatorship.”⁶

According to some memoirs of officials in Nationalist Party, on the contrary, Jiang Jieshi in private had a passionate interest in the state system of Fascist countries.⁷ The aforementioned Italian archives have proved the emotion of Generalissimo on Fascism. Besides, in August 1932, one of the military advisers of Germany wrote in these terms to a Nazi leader:

His Excellency Chiang Kai-shek has shown great interest in the development of the national-socialist movement, and he tries to obtain material on the entire organization of our party through his agents. One point is especially important to him: how our party leadership succeeds to maintain such strict discipline among its followers and to take harsh measures against dissidents or opponents, and does all this with such success. The material he wants to have does not only deal with the SA but with the whole party.⁸

All in all, Jiang Jieshi ideologically emphasized the “Three Principles of the People” of Sun

¹ Feng Qihong, *Fascism and the Politics of China in 1930s*, 90-92.

² Apparently, “Fascism” from China’s perspective at that time was not discussed separately but as a general concept to call both Nazism and Italian Fascism. “To be sure, admirers of Hitler’s Germany were also likely to be admirers of Mussolini’s Italy or Kemal’s Turkey – nations often grouped together because of apparent similarities of rigid government control, planned economic growth, and sense of national mission.” See Kirby, *Germany and Republican China*, 153. As Mussolini told Hitler in Berlin in 1937: “Although the course of our two revolutions may have been somewhat different, the goal they have sought and achieved is the same: the unity and greatness of a people.” “unity and greatness” were what many Chinese admirers of fascism saw as its end result. Quoted in Martin Kitchen, *Fascism* (New York, 1976), 83. And Kirby, 152.

³ *Dagong Bao*. Tianjin, 2 March 1934, Page 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 October 1934, Page 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 28 November 1934, Page 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 28 November 1934, Page 3.

⁷ However, according to recollection of Xiao Zanyu (萧赞育, Deputy Minister of Organization, and one of founders of the Blue Shirt Society), since 1935 Jiang Jieshi’s interest in Fascism began to subside, Jiang then often annotated “not worth a look” on the Fascist information files. Deng Yuanzhong, *History of the Three Principles of the People Earnest Action Society* (Taipei: Practice Press, 1984), 213.

⁸ Eastman, *Abortive Revolution*, 40.

Zhongshan¹, but strongly advocated learning Fascism in the technical practice of domination.² Moreover, the military action for “cleaning up Communists” of Nationalist Party was the main reason for Jiang’s keen interest in Fascist rule, because in the 1930s, the Fascist Party was the most effective one against the Communist Party. Teng Jie (滕杰), who first proposed the establishment of “Li xing she (力行社)” (Three Principles of the People Earnest Action Society, later as a part of the Blue Shirt Society), told Jiang that it was the Fascist Party that defeated the Communist Party, which had defeated the capitalist party in the past.

Therefore, the Fascist Party’s experience in defeating the Communist Party was bound to arouse the attention of the Guomindang which, since the end of 1930, practiced the “suppressing Communists” policy. In particular, since Guomindang had failed in the first and second siege operations, Jiang Jieshi reflected, “in the past we can not encircle and eliminate the red bandits, because our discipline and organization can not beat them, or even worse than theirs. The suppression is not a struggle of force but of organization, and it is necessary to conquer the red bandits from the organization”.³ Under this context, the Fascist Party aroused strong interest of Generalissimo Jiang.

In fact, one of direct uses of the Nationalist Air Force was to suppress the Chinese Communists in Jiangxi Province, where they had established Chinese Soviet Regime early in the 1930s.⁴ Even the Italian Aeronautical Mission had participated in the military actions against the Communists in Jiangxi.⁵

To examine the strong interest of Jiang Jieshi and the admiration of Guomindang for Fascism, it is necessary to refer two factors: Blue Shirt Society and New Life Movement, which were noted in the diplomatic archives between Fascist Italy and Nationalist China⁶ and were so frequently to be mentioned as the proof of Chinese “Fascism”. Then to understand the two factors perhaps helps to comprehend the cooperative relations between two countries.

¹ About Three Principles of the People, see Dr. Sun Yat-sen, *The Three Principles of the People. San Min Chu I* (Taipei: Government Informations Office, 1990).

² Feng Qihong, *Fascism and the Politics of China in 1930s*, 95.

³ Jiang Zhongzheng, “To wipe out the bandits we should work hard in the spirit, organization and discipline,” 24 April 1933, Speech in Nanchang, *Thought and Speech Collections of President Jiang*, Vol.11, 26.

⁴ Wen wen, *Secret Archives of Air Force*, 166.

⁵ Gao, *Flight Path of Air Force*, 163-164.

⁶ Telegrams refer to “camicie azzurre,” for instance, on June 12, 1935, Lojacono reported to Mussolini about the situation in China. “Situazione nella Cina settentrionale, migliorata dal punto di vista del pericolo di una azione militare con eventuale conseguente occupazione territoriale più o meno temporanea, deve invece considerarsi aggravata dal punto di vista della soluzione di inevitabile acquiescenza, che Governo cinese ha dovuto adottare di fronte alle domande delle Autorità militari giapponesi. Queste domande comprenderebbero, a quanto si dice, ritiro del cinquantunesimo corpo d’armata e delle divisioni seconda e venticinquesima dalla Provincia di Hopei, nonché scioglimento delle organizzazioni del partito nazionale e delle camicie azzurre a Pechino e Tientsin.” *IDDI*, Serie 8, Vol.I, N.369, 382-383. And on June 22, 1935, “Comunicazioni verbali dell’ambasciatore di Cina circa la vertenza cino-giapponese”: “per quanto riguarda l’Hopei: estensione della zona demilitarizzata in modo da comprendere Pechino e Tientsin; trasferimento della sede del Governo provinciale del Hopei da Tientsin a Paotingfu; la polizia nella zona demilitarizzata continuerà ad esser fatta dalla Cina; il Governo cinese non assume l’impegno formale di sostituire i funzionari del Hopei; se mai, vi procederà più tardi di sua iniziativa; chiusura delle sessioni delle «camicie blu» nel Hopei;” *IDDI*, Serie 8, Vol.I, N.423, 445-446.

2.6.2.1 Blue Shirt Society

The former element of “Fascism” in China – Blue Shirt Society – originated in the incident of Wanbaoshan, July 1931, when the Japanese intervened in a land dispute between Chinese and Korean farmers, a locale of Manchurian province. Under the pretext of protecting the Koreans from the Chinese, the Japanese military occupied Wanbaoshan, forcing the Chinese to abandon their farmland. The Wanbaoshan Incident was to become the prelude to the subsequent full-scale Japanese invasion of Manchuria that began with the Manchurian Incident of September 18, 1931. The Japanese assault on the north-eastern region of China coincided with a disastrous overflowing of the Yangtze River, which flooded at least four provinces in the central region of the Yangtze, making millions of peasants homeless. These swelled the ranks of the Chinese Communists such that the Red Army, seemingly overnight, doubled its size to almost 400,000. On November 7, 1931, the Communists installed the provisional government of the Chinese Soviet Republic in Jiangxi, thereby launching a formal challenge to the Nanjing regime.¹

The conjunction of natural disasters, Japanese invasion, and the Communist challenge exacerbated the already existing factional cleavages within the Guomindang. All this, along with the endemic problems of political corruption and financial insolvency, precipitated a crisis within the Nanjing Government. On December 15, 1931, forced to a political compromise by rival party faction members in Kwangtung,² Jiang Jieshi resigned from his posts as Chairman of the Republic and President of the Executive Yuan. The nation thereby lost the one leader possessed of unquestioned national stature.

What was later to become a full-fledged Renaissance Movement began in Tokyo in July 1931, in direct response to the Wanbaoshan Incident. A group of about twenty Chinese students³ in Tokyo, all graduates of the Whampoa Military Academy⁴, met to discuss the significance of Japan’s latest action. They concluded that the incident would merely be the beginning of more aggression by Japan. Two from among this group immediately returned to China with the express purpose of finding a way to “save the nation.” In October 1931 a second meeting was called in Nanjing. By the third meeting, held a month later, an informal office was established.⁵ It was during this meeting that the nascent organization found a name for itself – the *San min zhuyi lixing*

¹ Deng Yuanzhong, “A Preliminary Draft of the History of the Three Principles of the People Earnest Action Society,” part 4, *Biographical Literature*, 40, no. 6 (June 1982): 103.

² *From the Private Files of Chiang Kai-shek*, Chinese translation of a serial in the Japanese newspaper *Sankei Shimbun* (Taipei: Central Daily News, 1974), 8, 113.

³ The original founders were: Liu Jianqun, Deng Wenyi, He Zhonghan, Zeng Kuoqing, Feng Ti, Gui Yongqing, Liu Yongrao, Pan Youqiang, Huang Jie, Kang Ze, Dai Li, Xiao Yuzan, and Du Xinru (刘健群、邓文仪、贺忠寒、曾扩情、鄧悌、桂永清、刘咏尧、潘佑强、黄杰、康泽、戴笠、萧育赞、杜心如) – of varying class and provincial backgrounds. Deng Yuanzhong, “A Preliminary Draft of the History of the Three Principles Earnest Action Society,” *Biographical Literature*, part 3, 40, no. 1 (January 1982): 81-88. For biographical details of some of the Blue Shirt elites, see the twenty-eight articles, “Zhi dangnian chuanshuo zhong de ‘Shi san Taibao,’” 致当年传说中的‘十三太保’ (Recollections of the Legendary “Thirteen Princes”), serialized in *Ch’un-ch’iu* (The Observation Post Semi-Monthly), nos. 95 to 122 (16 June 1961 to 1 August 1962); and see Wen wen, *Secret Archives of Air Force*, 163-164.

⁴ From the mid-1920s, when Jiang Jieshi commanded the Whampoa Academy, its staff members and graduates who went on to achieve government or military posts counted among his most loyal supporters. What was called the Whampoa Clique had its primary source of strength in the military. With the organization of the Blue Shirt Society, however, this group also sought to expand its influence to the party and nation at large. Kirby, 158.

⁵ Gan Guoxun, *Blue Shirt Society, Fuxing Society and Lixing Society* (Taipei: Biographical Literature Press, 1984), 105.

she (三民主义力行社, Three People's Principles Earnest Action Society).¹ At the apex of the movement, in 1938, the membership of the *Lixing she* numbered more than 300, including Chiang Kai-shek, the original founders, and a number of cadres recruited from the movement's next ring.²

Between mid-December 1931 and the February 1932 the movement sought to establish organizational roots in the major cities in China. Meanwhile, Jiang Jieshi was informed of the formation of the society.³ Finally, on February 19, 1932, Jiang met with the founding members of the Renaissance Movement in Nanjing's Zhongshanling Garden. Thus it was that the organization that outsiders would later know as the Blue Shirt Society was formally inaugurated.⁴

As a patriotic organization formed to "save China," the Chinese Lixing Society was neither unique nor unusual for the times. After the Manchurian Incident innumerable patriotic organizations were formed, such as the Iron and Blood Army, the Anti-Japanese Association, and the Young Martyrs Corps.⁵ The Lixing Society shared the same sense of urgent patriotism. What distinguished the Renaissance Movement from these other groups were their success as a movement and their possession of a systematic, well-articulated ideology. The ideology of the Renaissance Movement, which found its full expression in the pages of the movement's monthly publication, *Qiantu* (前途, prospect), was articulated as early as 1931 in a rough draft prepared by Teng Jie (滕杰), one of the movement's founders.

China has expansive land, rich resources and plentiful population. All she needs is the leadership of a strong organization, one which, in accordance with the teachings of Sun Yat-sen, would realize the full potential of people and land, develop economic power, increase government effectiveness, strengthen the military. [...] [With this organization] the Communist threat and the Japanese invasion may be repelled. [...] [O]nly under the leadership and guidance of a powerful organization will the national character of the Chinese find [...] the strength to resist attacks.⁶

In effect, the ideology of the Chinese Renaissance Society articulated a program for the renaissance of China via the economic, political, and social modernization of Chinese society, a program necessitated by a series of unprecedented crises, which threatened China with the prospect of imminent extinction.⁷

Since the Blue Shirt Society was a secret organization within the Guomindang, whatever policies and programs it espoused would have to be carried out through the existing organs of the party government.⁸ In the words of one author on the Blue Shirts, "Its secretive nature makes it

¹ Deng Yuanzhong, "A Preliminary Draft," 106.

² Shen Zui, and Wenqiang, *Dai Li* (Beijing: Literature and History Press, 1980), 101; and Ch'en Tun-cheng, "Fuxing she, Lanyi she, Qingbai she" [The Renaissance Society, the Blue Shirt Society, the Blue and White Society], part 1, *Biographical Literature*, 34, no. 6 (June 1979): 118.

³ According to Gan Guoxun, one of the founding members of the *Lixing she*, the decision was made to inform Jiang Jieshi of the nascent organization in late December 1931 only when one of their own had threatened to inform. Since it was then a violation of a Guomindang regulation to form covert organizations (factions) within the party, the *Lixing she* members decided to "make a preemptive move" by notifying Jiang themselves. See Gan Guoxun, *Blue Shirt Society, Fuxing Society and Lixing Society*, 164.

⁴ The founding date of the *Lixing she* varies with each account, ranging from late February to early March of 1932. This date, that of February 29, is taken from an unpublished diary on the *Lixing she*, handwritten by Jiang Jieshi, which was provided to this author by the Nationalist Party Archives at Yangmingshan, Taipei.

⁵ Deng Yuanzhong, "A Preliminary Draft," 105.

⁶ Gan Guoxun, *Blue Shirt Society, Fuxing Society and Lixing Society*, 105.

⁷ Maria Hsia Chang, *The Chinese Blue Shirt Society*, 55-57.

⁸ This was accomplished through the infiltration, by individual Blue Shirts, of established party, government, and military institutions. With Blue Shirt elites holding commanding offices in these institutions, these organizations soon came "under the direction" of the Blue Shirts, and were used to promote and effectuate Blue Shirt objectives.

difficult [for the historian] to identify its precise activities, and to assess their political impact.”¹

Other authors, including surviving members of the society, have attributed at least four mass campaigns of the 1930s to the Blue Shirts. These were the New Life Movement, the National Voluntary Labor Movement (国民义务劳动运动, Guomin yiwu laodong yundong), the National Economic Reconstruction Movement (国民经济建设运动, Guomin jingji jianshe yundong), and the National Military Education Movement (国民军事训练运动, Guomin junshi xunlian yundong).² The last of the four, the Military Education Movement, was responsible, among other things, for huge mass projects that seem to anticipate Maoist China. In February 1937, for example, 60,000 people were mobilized to clear the Ch'in-huai River in two months. And in August 1937, 20,000 people were mobilized to construct a line of defense 107 miles long in a doomed effort to resist the Japanese onslaught on Nanjing.³

In March 1938 the Guomindang convened an Extraordinary National Conference at Wuchang where, in addition to other policy decisions, the decision was made to dissolve the Blue Shirt Society. The society was summarily disbanded in July, merging into a new entity, the Three People's Principles Youth Corps. No reason was ever given for the dissolution.⁴

The Blue Shirt advocated the “exaltation of the state,” “totalitarian controls,” “one-party rule,” and “glorification of the leader.” There appeared to be at least two discernible Blue Shirt factions. One faction was disposed to reject outright a democratic parliamentary system for China. The other retained Sun Zhongshan's objective of, ultimately, a democracy for China.⁵

Blue Shirts of the first faction saw no intrinsic merit in democracy. For them the critical criterion was a pragmatic and utilitarian one: China would model itself after the political system that proved to be most successful. In their judgment democratic government had been the most successful, therefore advanced, system of government. By the 1930s, however, this product of eighteenth-century West Europe had become totally bankrupt, giving all the evidence of its inability to address itself to contemporary problems.⁶ Nations, like England, France, and the United States, seemed to be helpless in the face of an economic crisis of unprecedented proportions: rising unemployment, a disintegrating social order, and a society whose very fabric seemed undone. In stark contrast to the paralysis of these parliamentary systems, single-party states such as Italy and the Soviet Union not only overcame their economic problems but became more and more developed. For these Blue Shirts, then, the evidence was clear. The twentieth century was a time for the ascendance of one-party dictatorships.⁷

A second more dominant Blue Shirt faction continued to find democracy intrinsically appealing. While it retained Sun Zhongshan's vision of democracy as the ultimate end, it nevertheless believed that democratic government was premature for China at that time. For these Blue Shirts a fully functional democracy required certain conditions that did not yet obtain in China. It required, minimally, political stability and security and an informed citizenry free from want. China, however, was neither stable nor secure, threatened as it was by disunity within and a militaristic Japan without. For this second Blue Shirt faction, then, China's particular circumstances made

See Gan Guoxun, *Blue Shirt Society, Fuxing Society and Lixing Society*, 164.

¹ Liu Huijun, *Jiang Jieshi and Dai Li* (Beijing: Unity Press, 2009), 20, 24.

² Gan Guoxun, *Blue Shirt Society, Fuxing Society and Lixing Society*, 165.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Maria Hsia Chang, *The Chinese Blue Shirt Society, Fascism and Developmental Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1985), 3-6.

⁵ M. H. Chang, *The Chinese Blue Shirt Society*, 17-18.

⁶ Editorial, “On Democratic Government”, 3, no. 7 (21 April 1933): 98.

⁷ Editorial, “More on Democratic Government”, *The Society Mercury*, 3, no. 9 (27 April 1933): 131.

necessary a traditional period wherein it would be governed by an authoritarian, single-party state, a “tutelary” state that would introduce order, secure unity, and create the economic conditions for the instauration of full democracy. Democracy, while postponed, remained the ideal form of government for China.¹

Jiang Jieshi and the Blue Shirts admired Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany and advocated the emulation of these two as models for China. According to the editorials and articles of these elites issued since 1933, the results of Fascist rule in Italy were extraordinary,² the Fascist dictatorship of Italy had in eleven years taken a broken and divided Italy and rendered it a leading power in Europe. There was similar talk of Germany’s National Socialist Party having achieved great success.³ What the Blue Shirts found so admirable in Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany was their ability to overcome certain problems that also afflicted China: economic underdevelopment, political disunity, and threats from without by hostile and powerful enemies. The Blue Shirts admired the Fascists not for their ideology but because they were successful.⁴

When the Blue Shirts spoke of a “fascism” that might save China, they were alluding not to the ideology of fascism but to its mobilizing and control capabilities. In the last analysis,

fascism must be understood to be devoid of specific content. Each society provides its own specific constituents. Without a doubt, China needs fascism’s organizational energy and discipline. China’s ideals, however, continue to be Sun Yat-sen’s San-min chu-i. China needs the Three People’s Principles, but effective organization is needed for their realization. Fascism affords that organization.⁵

2.6.2.2 New Life Movement

In addition to the organization, another element that triggered the admiration of Nationalist Party for Fascism was dictatorship. As it is mentioned before, the Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi requested for information on both Nazism and *Fascismo* in 1930s. For instance, according to his report to Mussolini on 21 May 1934, Boscarelli (the Plenipotentiary Minister in China) communicated:

In tutte le conversazioni che ho avuto con Chiang Kai Schek questi mi ha sempre lungamente e soprattutto parlato di fascismo.

Sembrava quasi che egli tenesse a farmi rilevare che le questioni particolari o tecniche di aviazione

¹ According to Liu Jianqun (刘健群), although the Chinese revolution “cannot depart from the *San min zhuyi*, the realization of which would mean [democratic] party government, at the present stage [of the revolution, the Chinese] cannot yet speak of the implementation of constitutional democracy.” See Liu Jianqun, *Reviving the Chinese revolution* (Nanjing: Central Military Academy, 1937), 3.

² Wang T’ieh-fu, “The Past and Present of Italy’s education,” *The Society Mercury*, 3, no. 17 (21 May 1933): 267.

³ Editorial, “Organization and the Leader,” *The Society Mercury*, 3, no. 15 (15 May 1933): 227.

⁴ M. H. Chang, *The Chinese Blue Shirt Society*, 21-22.

⁵ “Fascism and the Chinese Revolution,” *The Society Mercury*, 4, no. 25 (15 September 1933): 397.

ritenevano bensì la sua attenzione e che ad esse egli dedicava ogni sua cura ma che l'argomento che maggiormente lo interessava era il fascismo come dottrina politica e sistema di Governo.

Nell'ultimo colloquio avuto con lui nella sua residenza sul Yang-Tze, dopo avermi rivolto numerosissime domande sull'organizzazione del partito, sulla marcia della rivoluzione, sull'organizzazione della gioventù fascista, sullo Stato corporativo ecc. ecc., prendendo lo spunto da un accenno che io gli avevo fatto circa tre mesi fa a titolo personale mi disse: «come voi sapete io ho iniziato un movimento detto della «nuova vita» che mira al rinnovamento materiale e morale della Cina.

Vorrei che essa si ispirasse ai principi ed alle idee fasciste. Non potreste voi chiedere a Mussolini di dare una nuova prova delle sue simpatie per la Cina e per me aiutandomi anche in questo campo, con l'inviarmi delle persone che potessero aiutarmi consigliarmi e indirizzarmi in questo mio compito? Una specie di «missione educativa» che potrebbe far profittare la Cina dell'esperienza fatta dall'Italia?»

[...] Impressione da me riportata delle effettive qualità personali di Chiang-Kai-Shek e della sincerità della sua ammirazione per l'opera del regime, pur da lui imperfettamente conosciuta, mi induce a comunicare quanto precede a V. E. affinché possa considerare opportunità o meno di venire incontro ai suoi desideri.

Qualora tale opportunità venisse riscontrata mi permetterei di suggerire che invio della persona o delle persone idonee e atte a svolgere opera che dovrà essere loro affidata sia assicurato a titolo grazioso, sia perché nostra missione non abbia a apparire come un nostro desiderio di collocamento nuovi «esperti», sia perché a me sembra che essa, sotto l'aspetto politico e spirituale interessi noi stessi in misura uguale se non maggiore che la Cina.

Vorrei subordinatamente far presente a tale riguardo analogia di concetto che potrebbe riscontrarsi, nello stanziamento delle somme occorrenti, con quello cui è ispirata concessione di sussidio alle missioni cattoliche sotto il loro aspetto di strumenti di nostra penetrazione spirituale in questo paese.

Credo dover in pari tempo far cenno alle non lievi difficoltà che presenterebbero i programmi da svolgere giacché non sarebbe possibile o per lo meno prudente da parte di chi si accinge all'opera, di gettarne le basi senza essersi prima reso esatto conto delle caratteristiche sociali, economiche e spirituali del popolo che si tratterebbe di indirizzare su un nuovo cammino.

Al rapido acquisto di una tale conoscenza, che è la necessaria premessa di un futuro programma di lavoro, si presenta un ostacolo formidabile rappresentato dalla lingua e dalla specialissima psicologia orientale che rimane in gran parte impenetrabile anche a chi ha per contro risieduto per lunghi anni in questo paese e si è tenuto in frequenti contatti col suo popolo.

Ciò non pertanto aderire ai desideri espressi da Chiang-Kai-Shek mi apparirebbe sempre opportuno e vorrei aggiungere consigliabile.

Chiang-Kai-Shek si dimostra capace di apprezzare sforzi che vengono fatti per aiutarlo nell'arduo compito di riorganizzazione di questo paese, e di provare in forma positiva la fiducia che ripone in coloro che sanno acquistarsela.

Porre a contatto dell'uomo, che indubbiamente è oggi il solo che ha qui controllo effettivo di Governo, altri italiani che sappiano procurarsene la stima – come è avvenuto per Lodi – rappresenterebbe un altro passo della nostra penetrazione in Cina.

Se non temessi poi di esorbitare dal mio compito vorrei aggiungere un'altra ragione che mi persuade a sottomettere a V. E. desiderio di Chiang-Kai-Shek: la dottrina fascista non ha certamente bisogno né di apostoli né di missionari che vadano a divulgare per il mondo il suo Vangelo, giacché essa si impone soprattutto per i risultati ottenuti.¹

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol. XV, N.269, 287-289.

The requests of Jiang reflected a concern that Jiang felt both in and out of government: that the party and government, in addition to efforts in the military and economic realms, had to increase dramatically its political control over the nation if China were to become a modern state capable of resisting Japanese aggression. Jiang's own power had certainly increased with the Chinese Government reorganization in 1932, but he led a factionalized party that appeared to have lost the revolutionary zeal of 1926-27. Jiang told assembled military leaders at Lushan (庐山), Jiangxi Province in the autumn of 1933, that "the most important task is to rejuvenate our already dead revolutionary spirit!"¹ In berating the Guomindang as a "lifeless skeleton," Jiang Jieshi praised in comparison the "rising political parties in Western countries," whose revolutionary spirit had guided them to total control of their nation.²

The issues were laid out most clearly by leading intellectuals. They admired a "government of concentrated powers" (jiquan zhengfu 集权政府), declaring that the triumph of Nazism, together with that of Fascism in Italy and communism in the Soviet Union, had "dealt fatal blows to democracy, whose weaknesses have been starkly exposed."³ Because a "government of concentrated powers" was more competent and more efficient for the "current situation".⁴ They called for a "new model," technocratic dictatorship, arguing that a strong leader who governed for the good of the nation could make most effective use of China's trained elites.⁵ The basic impetus behind such a kind of calls for dictatorship was phrased best in late 1933 by Zhang Tingfu (张廷黻), then a historian at Tsinghua University. In supporting his own unique call for a centralizing autocracy modeled on those of early modern Europe, Zhang struck a distinctly modern note: "We want to get things done. We want to build roads, control rivers, construct iron foundries, build more and better schools. [...] We shall support a person who gets things done; we shall idolize him."⁶

Zhang Xueliang, the "Young Marshal" of Manchuria, who had been ousted with his troops from his homeland in 1931 by the Japanese. He returned from a study tour (1933) in Germany and Italy to declare that dictatorship was the only way to solve China's problems, and that Jiang Jieshi was the man for the job. He founded a small group "National Socialist Party (Guo she dang 国社党)" to work for this cause.⁷ As early as March 1934 twenty provincial and municipal Guomindang headquarters publicly urged that Jiang Jieshi assume the position of "Zongli (总理)," or director-general of the party. The title was that of Sun Zhongshan and had been retired on his death; it was also used on occasion to translate the German term "Führer" into Chinese.⁸ The apparent welling of support for a Fascist-style dictatorship in China was reflected in foreign views. Nevertheless, the public movement for dictatorship failed. It failed perhaps in good part because it was seen to be a screen behind which the Whampoa faction would attain a position of new eminence in an openly dictatorial state under Jiang Jieshi's leadership. In fact, apart from the Blue Shirts, even within the Nanjing Government there was little support. No other major faction was

¹ Jiang Jieshi, *Lushan xunlian zhi*, vol.1, 5. Cited in Kirby, 155. Note 61

² Cited in "Observations" (editorial), *People's Tribune* 12, no. 5 (1 Mar. 1936), 302. Kirby, 155. Note 62

³ Kirby, 156. Note 63

⁴ Kirby, 156. Note 64

⁵ Cf. Furth, *Ting Wen-chiang*, 216-218. Cited in Kirby, 156.

⁶ Zhang Tingfu, "Min-tsu fu-hsing te i-t'iao-chien"; idem, "Ko-ming yü chuan-chih," 2-5. Cited in Kirby, 156.

⁷ Wu Tien-wei, 5; Kao Chin-hsüan, "Does China need a dictator?" *People's Tribune* 8, no. 1 (1 Jan. 1935), 12-16. As cited in Kirby, 169.

⁸ Eastman, 172. For an example of this translation of "Führer" see Complete text of Hitler's speech on national policy, *KWCP* 12, no.31 (12 Aug. 1935). The term "yuanshou," however, was more commonly used to translate "Führer".

willing to openly support such a state and, in so doing, trade its existing influence for the principle of dictatorship, on the specific nature of which there was no agreement. The movement for dictatorial unity thus ended by showing how divided China still was then. Recognizing such a situation, Jiang Jieshi renounced any claim to dictatorship on November 27, 1934, in an extraordinary interview with a Japanese correspondence: “As China’s situation differs from that of Germany, Italy and Turkey, so there is no need for a dictator.”¹

If formal dictatorship was his goal in 1934, Jiang Jieshi failed in this attempt. While in 1938 he assumed the title of “Zongcai (总裁),” which would appear thrust upon him by the demands of the war against Japan. Jiang never relinquished his belief in the “leadership principle” or in his personal mission. “Wherever I go,” Jiang told Edgar Snow² during the war, “there is the government, the cabinet, the center of resistance. The outcome of the war will be determined not by the loss of a few cities, but by how the leader directs the people in resistance.”³

If in founding the Blue Shirt Society Jiang Jieshi had hoped to create a “Fascist movement” to revitalize China, he had made a second miscalculation. The secrecy of the organization led other political groupings to suspect and exaggerate its activities. The acts for which it received greatest publicity, such as the terror of Dai Li’s Special Services department, assured that the corps would promote more division than unity; for instance, the Guangdong ruler Chen Jitang (陈济棠) reacted in 1933 by arresting 74 suspected Blue Shirts and executing 9 of them.⁴ It is possible that, in inaugurating the New Life Movement two years after the formation of the Blue Shirt Society, and in the midst of the clamor for dictatorship, Jiang himself came to this realization. Although the New Life Movement could be seen as an attempt to give the Blue Shirts the mass organization they lacked – and Blue Shirts were indeed in the forefront of New Life activities initially – it was almost certainly also an attempt to broaden the movement for national revival beyond the boundaries of one political faction.⁵

Jiang Jieshi inaugurated “Movement to Achieve a New Life” at Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, on 19 February 1934. Briefly, its aim was to instill in the Chinese people a new social and political consciousness through a merger of Confucian moral virtues and the modern military ethic, through the simultaneous propagation of the ancient virtues of *Li*, *Yi*, *Lian*, and *Chi* (propriety, justice, integrity, and self-respect) (礼义廉耻), and the “militarization of the life of the people of the entire country.”⁶ Such a combination, Jiang said, was the secret of the ancient kingdoms of Ch’i and Ch’u. It was also “the primary cause of the strength of present-day Italy and Germany.” Jiang compared and contrasted Germany’s experience with that of China. Like China, Germany had been humbled militarily and subjected to unequal treaties and heavy indemnities. Unlike China, however, it had rapidly reasserted itself and was in the process of abrogating those treaties. The reason, Jiang asserted, was “spirit”. If a foreign nation was strong while China was weak, that was because the former had a “proper way of life,” specifically a proper spirit instilled in its people.⁷

¹ Cited in Hu Shi, “Do we need or want a dictatorship?” 89. As cited in Kirby, 170. On the failure of the movement see also Eastman, *Abortive Revolution*, 175-176.

² Edgar Snow (1905-1972), an American journalist, was known for his writings about Chinese Communism and Communist revolution, who gave a full account of the history of the Chinese Communist Party following the Long March. His book, *Red Star Over China* (1937), for example, was the best known.

³ Edgar Snow, *The Battle for Asia* (New York: Random House, 1941), 116. As quoted in Kirby, 176.

⁴ Eastman, *Abortive Revolution*, 78.

⁵ Kirby, 176.

⁶ Jiang Jieshi, “Xin shenghuo yundong zhi yaoyi,” 13-23. Kirby, 176.

⁷ Jiang Jieshi, “Outline of the New Life Movement (Xin shenghuo yundong zhi yaoyi),” 20. As quoted in Kirby, 176-177.

According to the introduction writing of Jiang Jieshi in June 1934, the New Life Movement aimed at revolutionizing the mode of life of the whole of the Chinese people. It sought by the application of the simplest and most effective methods possible to eradicate from the people whose habits were no longer suited to the times and to replace them with a new mode of living in accord with the spirit of the current age. In other words, the movement stood for the rationalization of the lives of the people, and it based on the traditional virtues of China as expressed in these characters: *Li*, *Yi*, *Lian* and *Chi* (礼义廉耻), meant briefly polite manners, chivalrous or upright conduct, honesty or a moral sense of right and wrong, and decency or an appreciation of moral values. These were general principles in the establishment of states.¹ The poverty of China was due to the existence of so many people who could not produce anything of their own and who lived on others. The productivity of the people had to be increased. The Chinese people had to develop their immense natural resources and avoided waste.

In advocating *Li*, *Yi*, *Lian* and *Chi* (礼义廉耻) as the code of daily conduct, the Chinese were inspired by the desire to “militarize” the life of people. When a nation could not fight for the defence of its soil against foreign invasion, it could not be considered a nation. China today was overrun by Communist-Bandits. Civil war had not yet been completely banished from the land. Chinese national territory was growing smaller and smaller every day. Imperialists joined with traitors and Communists in oppressing the people and undermining the country. If the Chinese people wished to deliver China from the present crisis and brought peace and order to the land, they had to prepare to “militarize” the whole country. Before this was possible, the people had to be trained in habits of orderliness, discipline, cleanliness, simplicity and accurate thinking. They had to be law-abiding, conscious of their responsibilities and ready to die for the country.²

Jiang Jieshi made no attempt to conceal his own admiration for authoritarian regimes during this period. In his *Outline of the New Life Movement*, written about the time in question, Chiang addressed himself to China’s need for rigorously controlling consumption, systematically inculcating the work and sacrifice ethic among the Chinese, and cultivating the civic virtues of loyalty and obedience among the nation’s citizenry. According to Chiang, National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy had achieved such effects in their respective nations. That, in his judgment, was the “primary cause” of their strength.³

Jiang’s desire to restore the spirit of the Chinese people, to forge an obedient, “militarized” citizenry through the practice of traditional Chinese values, had something for everyone. The Blue Shirts could admire the New Life Movement’s emphasis on the “militarization” of society. If they could not be expected to share the emphasis on traditional morality, even in the watered-down Confucianism of *Li*, *Yi*, *Lian*, and *Chi*, that element was more compatible with the views of Chen Lifu and the C.C. faction. “That even the Young Men’s Christian Association⁴ and other Christian elements were brought into the movement shows the inclusive, albeit inevitably confused, nature of the movement.”⁵ In the course of 1934, the various “cultural associations” of the Blue Shirts and the C.C. clique were assimilated into the larger New Life Movement. For all its seeming contradictions, the New Life Movement was an attempt to give Jiang Jieshi a position at the head of

¹ Chiang Kai-shek: *The New Life Movement*, 15-16.

² Chiang Kai-shek: *The New Life Movement*, 11-13.

³ Chiang Kai-shek, *Outline of the New Life Movement*, translated by Madame Chiang Kai-shek (distributed by the Association for the Promotion of the New Life Movement, Nanchang, Jiangxi, n.d.), 12.

⁴ YMCA, a worldwide organization based in Geneva, founded on 6 June 1844, aiming to put Christian principles into practice by developing a healthy “body, mind, and spirit.”

⁵ Kirby, 177.

a national movement that would include, but go beyond, the confines of party, government, and army.¹ The efforts of Jiang Jieshi in the New Life Movement were based on a strong belief that ethical principles (and their regulation) were what held a nation together, and on an equally strong belief that this truth had found its best contemporary realization in foreign countries, such as Germany and Italy. “How is it possible,” Jiang asked in March 1934, “that Turkey, Italy and Germany have been able to rapidly bring their revolutions to fruition and construct new nations while, on the contrary, our revolution today appears headed for failure?” The difference, he said, was between a population that knows *Li* and one that does not. Germany and Italy clearly knew *Li* (礼): “Among their entire citizenry, there is no one who does not respect and observe the social order, and strictly adhere to the laws and regulations of the collective. As a result, not only have their domestic enemies naturally succumbed, but all foreigners, in looking at this situation, cannot but be stricken with awe and respect.”² *Li* became the central elements in Jiang’s transformational efforts to mean obedience to law and regimented discipline. Its focus was now the modern state. As Jiang wrote nearly a decade later in *China’s Destiny*, “If the people do not thoroughly fulfill their duty toward the state, the state cannot be established, the nation cannot survive,” and only if the people were led to act as “fully qualified [...] citizens of the modern age” could the state be “reborn”.³

Jiang’s New Life Movement was a resounding failure. Its effort to mobilize the Chinese people as a “new citizenry” failed if only because mobilization in the sense of popular initiative was never sought. The dual emphasis on Confucian moral imperatives and Prussian-style discipline could never bring willing mass participation. “Mobilization” truly meant “regimentation” and, as the movement lost steam for want of a popular engine, came to mean only adherence to a small set of rules on popular hygiene. Even these, Jiang complained on the second anniversary of the New Life Movement, were being widely ignored.⁴

Jiang Jieshi’s synthesis was nevertheless original and personal. When he ventured into theory, he sought to combine specific aspects of different phenomena into a diagrammatic, sloganized whole. As he wrote in *China’s Destiny*, “My opinions regarding the state, the nation, and revolutionary reconstruction are fixed and unalterable. But I have no definite opinion regarding any theory or organization.”⁵

In Jiang’s thought, as in his personal life and style of government, “he selected what he wished from both East and West. The element of the Confucian tradition that remained strongest for him was the belief that morality and ethics were the foundations of a society. But this was now, it seemed, best exemplified abroad, where individual morality was directed toward and controlled by an authoritarian state, and the debt that Jiang’s thought owed to his perception of foreign countries was considerable.”⁶

¹ Kirby, 177.

² Jiang Jieshi, “Xin Shenghuo yundong zhi zhongxin zhuzhi,” 25. As quoted in Kirby, 178, 183-184.

³ Chiang Kai-shek, *China’s Destiny*, 201. As quoted in Kirby, 184.

⁴ Dirlik, 966. As quoted in Kirby, 184.

⁵ Chiang Kai-shek, *China’s Destiny* (New York, 1947), ed., Philip Jaffe, 224. As quoted in Kirby, 184.

⁶ Kirby, 185.

3 END OF COOPERATION: ETHIOPIAN ISSUE AND MANCHUKUO

In addition to the drawbacks and limitations of the two cooperative parties, the most significant reason that caused the end of cooperation lies in the fundamental contradiction between Fascist Italy and Nationalist China. The former was ambitious to realise its blueprint of expansion; the latter, on the contrary, as a helpless victim of imperialist expansion was struggling for survival. Therefore, when the Italo-Ethiopian conflict broke out, the emotion of Chinese desire of cooperation as well as its admiration towards Fascism declined. As the Fascist Italy recognized the puppet government of Manchukuo, there was no more possibility left for cooperation.

3.1 ATTITUDE OF CHINA TOWARDS THE ITALO-ETHIOPIAN ISSUE

The aggressive policy for Mussolini was not new in 1935; it was only in that year that he realized he could not pursue a dynamic policy in Europe. After the collapse of the Four Power Pact, “Mussolini became thoroughly disillusioned with Europe as an arena for the deployment of «Fascist dynamism» on behalf of Italian greatness. To deflect the minds of Italians from unemployment and apathy, the regime needed some dazzling success overseas.”¹

For Italy, the significance of Ethiopia first lies in geopolitics. Italy’s interest in east Africa was first established in 1869 when a shipping firm of Genova, taking advantage of the ease of transport provided by the Suez Canal. Early in 1920s, less than a year after the Fascists’ March on Rome, Mussolini decided to oppose Ethiopia’s application for membership in the League of Nations. In his view it was solely the concern of the three powers that bordered Ethiopia, among whom Italy had a paramount interest. In the first decade of his rule, Mussolini never expressed an interest in extending Italian influence in Ethiopia. According to George Baer, the people of Italy, dispirited by a series of defeats in battle in World War I and weary of futile exertions, were not prepared to support active colonialism in east Africa. “Mussolini instead turned his attention to establishing his own power, to consolidating his regime, to reviving the morale of Italians, and to asserting Italy’s position in European affairs.”²

Within the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Colonies, however, interest in Ethiopia had long remained alive since the 1915 Treaty of London.³ During the years 1930-1933, official

¹ E. M. Robertson, *Mussolini as Empire-builder: Europe and Africa (1932-36)* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 93.

² See G. W. Baer, *The coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War*, 11.

³ According to article 13 of 1915 Treaty of London, “If the other Powers [Britain and France] should increase their African colonies at Germany’s expense, an appropriate agreement shall be made to secure to Italy some corresponding and equitable compensation, and that specifically in the regulation in her favour of the boundary

Italian interest in Ethiopia waned. There was no sense of common purpose among the ministries in Rome, and as a result no coherent policy was created for dealing with Ethiopia. Nevertheless, Raffaele Guariglia, political director for Europe, the Near East, and Africa and a close adviser to Minister of Foreign Affairs Dino Grandi during these years, observed that for reasons of history, geography, and political opportunity, Ethiopia was the only region available to Italy in Africa for fresh colonial expansion. Guariglia thought that Ethiopia might be of some economic importance to Italy as a source of raw materials, and that it might become valuable in absorbing Italian emigrants.

According to Guariglia's advice, before embarking on preparations for invasion, Italy tried to gain prior approval from Britain and France. Britain and Italy used to have some problems on colonial settlement. Whereas when the conquest of Ethiopia became the major and immediate goal, Italy reversed her arrogant stand of early date and accepted the delineation of the frontier proposed by Britain in July 1934. "Italians, for their part, were well satisfied. Concession of a remote and unimportant desert frontier was a small price to pay if the reward was better relations with the Britain."¹ France and Italy were separated by conflicts of policy and of interest since 1920s. But after 1933, in the face of resurgent Nazi Germany, new needs emerged, and two Latin sisters began to come closer together at last. In 1934 France's worst fears were realized. The specter of a rearmed Germany turned into a reality that would have to be dealt with. This situation made Italy stand in a strong bargaining position.

Mussolini, speaking in Milano on October 6, 1934, announced that French-Italian relations had improved: "An entente with France would be very useful and very fruitful."² Negotiations for a French-Italian entente opened on November 1, 1934. Mussolini made a remarkable concessions on colonial question. On January 1, 1935 the Italians peacefully accepted the humiliating sop of a small and worthless portion of desert and a minuscule stretch of Red Sea coast. In return, France promised to gratify Mussolini's desires—assurance that France would give Italy freedom of action in Ethiopia.

The disillusionment with the Disarmament Conference in May 1934 rendered Mussolini witness the opening of a new arms race in Europe and the start of a new era in international affairs. On May 28, 1934, Mussolini published an article entitled "*Verso il riarmo*". The collapse of the Conference, Mussolini wrote, meant the end of the prestige of the League of Nations and the beginning of a "prewar" scramble for alliances in preparation for war. In this new international anarchy it was necessary for Italy to rearm, in order to assure its own national survival.³ The failure of his grand European plan and the feebleness of conference diplomacy caused Mussolini to decide that the success of Italy's foreign policy, the success of his own ambitions, would now have to depend on Italy's acting alone to maintain its position in the world. In the middle of 1934 Mussolini thus launched Italy on a course of independent nationalistic militarism. In August 1935 London and Paris went so far as to offer Rome a privileged economic position in Ethiopia together with the right to appoint Italian advisers to the country's civil service, army, and police, the traditional prelude to the establishment of a protectorate.⁴

questions between colonies of Eritrea, Somaliland and Libya and the contiguous French and English colonies." Baer, *The coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War*, 11.

¹ Baer, *The coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War*, 68.

² Benito Mussolini (a cura di Edoardo e Duilio Susmel), *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*(Firenze: La fenice, 1958), XXVI, 358.

³ Benito Mussolini (a cura di Edoardo e Duilio Susmel), *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXVI, 224-226.

⁴ William R. Keylor, *The twentieth century world: An international history*, 157.

On the morning of October 3, 1935, with no declaration of war, vanguards of three of General Emilio De Bono's army corps crossed the Ethiopian frontier, and Italian planes bombed Aduwa and Adigrat. The Italian Ethiopian war had begun.

In November, the League of Nations condemned Italy's aggression and imposed economic sanctions. The response of the League was swift and uncompromising. Since Ethiopia was a member of the League of Nations, public opinion in Great Britain lashed out at this overt violation of national sovereignty and pressured the government into invoking the principle of collective security. Within a week Italy was declared an aggressor state, declared to have violated its obligations under the Covenant and thereby to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League. Some sanctions were instituted. An arms embargo, a prohibition against loans and credit to Italians, the stopping of imports from Italy, these were put quickly into operation and worked to undermine the Italian economy.

Yet on the critical question of extending sanctions to prohibit exports to Italy of coal, steel, and above all, oil, the leaders of the League delayed, whose delay was crucial. In London and Paris the horror of broadening the conflict and the fear that Mussolini might be provoked into reacting violently against them overrode British and French commitments to the system of collective security. In December 1935, the League negotiated a secret plan for the partition of Ethiopia that they thought would appease Mussolini. For British government, it was soon clear that they were not going to extend the embargo against Italy to include the vital resources of modern war—coal, steel, and oil. Then on March 7, 1936, encouraged by the weakness he saw around him, Hitler marched into the demilitarized Rhineland in violation of the Locarno Treaty and the Versailles Treaty as well. Britain and France, hoping to salvage something in their relations with Italy, began to try to make their peace with Mussolini. No further sanctions were implemented. On May 9, 1936, Ethiopia was proclaimed part of a new Italian empire and then on July 15, 1936 sanctions imposed against Italy in November 1935 came to an end.

The interpretations about Italy's invasion in Ethiopia focus on two points:

- 1) because of economic crisis;
- 2) motive of propaganda.

Until 1930s Mussolini had not cared about foreign policy because of the need to reinforce internal power. Once it became apparent, however, that his bid to reform Italian society had failed, Fascism attempted to become progressively more totalitarian and to reduce the period necessary for fascisticizing the masses to a minimum. In this attempt it turned to foreign policy. "Foreign policy becomes increasingly the keystone of fascist policy beginning with the Ethiopian war."¹ In other words, Mussolini utilized foreign policy to reinvigorate his flagging quest to create a fascist society. By the mid-1930s, whatever social reforming zeal Italian fascism had initially possessed was exhausted, in a sense, "military imperialism supplanted social change as the *raison d'être* of

¹ Renzo De Felice and Michael A. Ledeen, *Fascism: an informal introduction to its theory and practice* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1976), 79.

Italian fascism.”¹ The war was willed primarily by Mussolini because something had to be done to restore the prestige of the Fascist regime in Italy, which had steadily declined during the six years of world depression. The depression fundamentally changed fascist foreign policy. “In 1934 Mussolini found himself faced with intensifying popular discontent, which called for release before it could become a threat to the dictatorship. The world economic crisis of the early 1930s hit Italy with great force.” Mussolini designed the war with Ethiopia as a “safety valve for this mounting social and economic stress”.² In short, the Ethiopian war was the way out of domestic stagnation.³

The Ethiopian adventure was merely a continuation of the Duce’s bid for propaganda successes. As some of the contemporary historians said, “Jealousy, aggravated by his natural egotism, drove him to attempt to match the German dictator and so to embark on a series of adventures”.⁴ Mussolini “was merely intoxicated out of his senses by the militaristic blustering which he had started and in which Hitler was now outbidding him.”⁵ Mussolini was trapped by his own propaganda into believing that the conquest of Ethiopia would help solve Italian economic problems.⁶

The dispute between Italy and Abyssinia – Wal-Wal incident of 5 December 1934 – started to draw the Chinese Government’s attention since Abyssinian appeal to the League of Nations. The Gazette of Foreign Ministry of Nanjing Government expressed their point of views on this issue⁷:

1) Geographic observation – that was a border dispute between Italy and Abyssinia. Abyssinia was an independent kingdom, rich in natural resources. Italy with a view to develop its industry and to promote the production saw Abyssinia as an ideal destination of exporting goods and importing raw materials. Bordering with the Italian colonies – Eritrea and Somalia, if Abyssinia had a good relationship with the two colonies, it would be beneficial to the development of the Italian industry and to the colonial economies.

2) Historical observation – the two countries had a deep historical relationship since 1858. Since Italy lost in the conflict of 1896, Abyssinia’s independence was recognized by Italy, though not willing. Italy under the Fascist Regime became powerful. In order to stimulate national consciousness and enhance patriotism Italy had to exact revenge for this humiliation. Indeed, Italy’s intention of Abyssinia was not new. As a result of London secret treaty in 1915, and for the agreement in the First World War with Britain and France, in addition to the current international situation, it was Italy’s golden opportunity.

Therefore, the authorities of Foreign Affairs got a conclusion that the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia was unavoidable. Although Abyssinia had brought the dispute to the League of Nations,

¹ Alan Cassels, “Switching Partners: Italy in A.J.P. Taylor’s *Origins of the Second World War*”, in Gordon Martel, ed., *The Origins of the Second World War reconsidered: the A.J.P. Taylor debate after twenty-five years* (Winchester, Massachusetts, 1986), 80.

² Baer, *The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War*, 31-33.

³ See Gaetano Salvemini, *Sotto la scure del fascismo: lo Stato corporativo di Mussolini* (Torino: F. De Silva, 1948).

⁴ Ivone Kirkpatrick, *Mussolini: a study in power* (New York: Hawthorn books, 1964), 192.

⁵ A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (London, 1962), 88.

⁶ Denis Mack Smith, *Mussolini* (London: Paladin, 1983), 190.

⁷ “Observation of the Dispute between Italy and Abyssinia,” *Official Bulletin of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nanjing National Government*, Vol.8, No.5, May 1935, 121-123.

there was nothing could hinder Italy's determined annexation. It could predict that the military actions of Italy might be after the fall because of the summer heat, frequent heavy rain, and extremely difficulty to march in Abyssinia.

In August 1935, Minister of Finance, Kong Xiangxi, who was then also working as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, met with the Italian Ambassador in China, Lojacono. Kong asked about the Abyssinian question, expressing confidence in peaceful solution. At that time, because "si fanno paragoni frequenti tra azione giapponese in Manciuuria e azione italiana in Abissinia," Lojacono responded, "ho pregato Kung confutare tale paragone cui conseguenza sarebbe che, se l'Italia è eguale a Giappone, Abissinia è eguale a Cina il che è assurdo; Cina infatti essere madre civiltà Estremo Oriente e vittima di un popolo dello stesso sangue e dello stesso livello, mentre l'opposto di tutto ciò ricorre nel caso dell'Abissinia di fronte all'Italia."¹

According to the report received from the Chinese delegate of the League,² the Chinese Government was informed that the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia affected not only the peace and war question between these two countries, but also future of the League of Nations, the peace of Europe and even the peace of the world. On the surface, it was the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia. In fact, it was the conflict between Italy and Britain, more exactly was a struggle between supporting and opposing the League of Nations. Therefore, it was such a serious problem that no one could stay out.

The Chinese delegate observed that step by step Italy was seeking to hold the Abyssinia. Geographically, the Italian territory was small but with a large population, thus the resources could not fulfill the need, and outward development had become its long-standing intention. Under Mussolini's rule, the government made propaganda of outward expansion to the public. For Mussolini only the outward expansion could meet his wishes. He advocated that "outward expansion affected the issue of life and death in Italy."³ Under the current international situation, only Abyssinia could be its target of expanding territory. And because of the defeat of the Abyssinia War in 1896, under the rule of Mussolini, Italy could not tolerate flaw and national shame like this remaining in its history. So the Italian would be bound to conquer Abyssinia. Actually Italy was not only opposed to the intervention of the League of Nations, but objected any third party to involve in. If the League intervened, Italy would withdraw from the League of Nations, devoting itself to act alone, which was not what we wanted to see.

The report particularly referred to the Japanese assistance to Abyssinia. Although it was true that Abyssinia, who was oppressed by Italy, was a backward country. There was nothing to rely on but the terrain and the militancy of the people. Confronting the oppression of Italy, Abyssinia did surprisingly not give in, which might be resulted from the British attitude, even the Japanese Government which was intending to make Europe uneasy, helped the development of Abyssinia. Consequently the attitude of Abyssinia appeared to be tougher.

On Italy's part, since China had not yet made decision to support which one party in the League, Lojacono actively contacted with the authorities of the Chinese Government. On 4 September

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 8, Vol.I, N.695, 713.

² "Observation of the League of Nations dealing with the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia," *Official Bulletin of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nanjing National Government*, Vol.8 No.9, September 1935, 73- 74.

³ *Ibid*.

1935, he had a conversation with Wang Jingwei¹, the Premier of the Republic of China, talking about the attitude of China with regard to the question of Ethiopia. Lojacono noted,

tuttavia atteggiamento suo Governo può sempre avere un peso morale specialmente per il fatto che una parte opinione pubblica cinese continua a mettere innanzi una pretesa assimilazione dell'azione giapponese in Manciuria con quella italiana in Etiopia, traendone la conseguenza che Cina debba essere spinta a deplorare politica del Governo fascista compromettendo seriamente sua cordialità di rapporti con noi.²

Lojacono explained and justified the Italy's actions in Ethiopia,

Ho trovato Wang Ching Wei molto sereno nel distinguere chiaramente ragioni della nostra politica, soprattutto dopo che io gli spiegai che l'Italia trovasi ridotta a sostenere sino all'ultimo suo prestigio perché Inghilterra aveva incoraggiato resistenza etiopica e aveva parlato di assurde sanzioni contro le quali avevamo volontà risoluta e mezzi per reagire.

Ho aggiunto che se la questione iniziale poteva avere qualche lato delicato per la Cina, bisognava ora capovolverla per vedere nella fierezza delle risoluzioni Governo del Re, sorretto dal popolo italiano tutto in piedi e unanime, l'esempio di una nazione illustre che respinge prepotenza di una altra nazione avvezza a dominare. Gli ho quindi spiegato che l'Italia contava non solo sui Governi amici, ma soprattutto su quelli di buon senso per evitare errore di volere salvare la pace con la guerra, facendo di una operazione [coloniale] come tante altre, che hanno portato la civiltà tra i [popoli], una conflagrazione europea e forse mondiale.³

Wang Jingwei replied that the Chinese Government would not object Italy on this issue. Under current situation Wang "voleva innanzi tutto porre sopra ogni altro i rapporti della Cina con l'Italia," and asked Lojacono to tell Mussolini that "Governo cinese non avrebbe in alcun caso partecipato ad alcuna deliberazione contraria all'Italia."⁴

On 20 September, Chinese Embassy in Rome communicated to Nanjing about the domestic need of Italy, and the attitudes of Britain and France, concluding that the war between Italy and Abyssinia would be unavoidable.⁵ Adopting the aggressive policy towards Abyssinia, Italy's domestic economic crisis was a significant reason. By virtue of Mussolini's Fascist Regime – political centralization and economic domination – this country developed rapidly. However, in 1930, for the financial crisis: reduction of revenue, increasing expenditure; namely, imbalance of the two aspects, Italy had to issue abundant domestic bonds as a remedy. In spite of governmental domination in industries, the revenue was reducing year by year. As a result, there were a large number of unemployed people in 1932, about hundreds of thousands.

Italy's downturn of domestic economy was caused by its narrow market, both domestic and colonial. Though possessing Lybia, Eriterea, and Somalia, which were mainly barren deserts, Italy's investment and management often, outweighed the benefits. Under this context, to develop its capitalism, Italy had to obtain market to export and raw materials to import. Moreover the

¹ Wang was in office as the Premier of the Republic of China from 29 January 1932 to 1 December 1935, preceded by Sun Ke (Sun Fo), succeeded by Jiang Jieshi.

² *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.32, 28.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ "Italo-Abyssinian dispute and the Trend of International Politics," *Official Bulletin of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nanjing National Government*, Vol.8 No.9, September 1935, 63-68.

excessive population required new territory, but the world territory had long been carved up by the other imperial powers. For the survival of country and national development, Italy had to adopt aggressive policies, even if it might cause bloodshed war and conflict with other countries.

The British attitude, according to Chinese delegate, was inconsistent towards the issue of Manchuria and of Abyssinia. Britain this time had taken an active stance on this issue, claiming to uphold the spirit of the League of Nations and to respect the principle of the Covenant, charging Italy, and proposing sanctions to prevent Italian military action. It seemed to be quite faithful to the maintenance of the League. Such an attitude was in contrast to the former one taken by the British towards Japan. It could be seen that Britain's attitude towards the League of Nations was entirely dependent upon its own interests and benefits.

France, on the other hand, felt a more complex mood on this issue, though it appeared to be negative and indifferent. As a matter of fact, it was France who had prompted Abyssinia to join the League in 1923. To acquiesce in the Italian action would make France itself embarrassed, and would damage the European peace mechanism. Besides, the French shared economic interests in Abyssinia. If Italy annexed Abyssinia, which would strengthen the Italian national power, the frame of Europe based on the system of Versailles would change of course. In other words, the relation between France and Italy could be described as the ends of balance: when one became stronger, the other was weaker, and vice versa. In addition, standing on the front against Germany together with France, Italy devoted herself to Africa, and then Central Europe might be in danger. Germany would accelerate the merger of Austria.

Apparently China, on the occasion of Abyssinian dispute, complained about the British partiality, for which Mussolini tried to convince China to abandon the League. Mussolini asked Lojacono to convey his "amicizia personale" for Jiang Jieshi and for China,

la Cina ha un forte motivo morale per abbandonare la Lega delle Nazioni. [...] Abbandonando la Lega, la Cina ha tutto da guadagnare niente da perdere, poiché nel momento del pericolo non è stata difesa dalla Lega. [...] anche Italia molto probabilmente sarà costretta ad abbandonare la Lega.¹

Then Mussolini donated an airplane to Jiang Jieshi in September 1935 with a view to consolidate the friendly relationship with Nanjing. Whereas China's insistence on staying in the League disappointed Mussolini later, especially in the economic sanctions against Italy.

By October 1935 a force of over 200,000 Italians, along with some 200 Italian journalists, was presented in Eritrea and Somalia, ready for war.² The invasion began at dawn on 3 October 1935. The first step included the demanded symbolic victory – revenge for what ardent nationalists regarded as Italy's shame, what De Bono delicately called "the unfortunate events of 1896."³ Within two weeks the northern front was established as planned, concluding the first phase of the advance. There was no resistance, for the Ethiopian troops withdrew unengaged at the emperor's command. De Bono set about preparing logistical support from the rear and consolidating a defensive position in case of an Ethiopian counterattack. Mussolini sent a telegram to Gabriele D'Annunzio, who had publicized the notion of the shame of Aduwa: "Fascist Italy has freed itself of its sackcloth." Meanwhile, the League gathered at Geneva. Mussolini was preoccupied with

¹ *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.172, 155.

² Baer, *Test Case*, 13.

³ Emilio De Bono, B. Miall, trans., *Anno XIII: The Conquest of an Empire* (London: Cresset, 1937), 223.

what this might bode. The orders he sent to De Bono stated, “Halt on the line conquered and await events on the international plane.”¹

On October 7, all members of the League Council except Italy decided to adopt the report of a committee appointed two days earlier to examine the responsibilities of the League now that the act of aggression had formally taken place. Italy was to be condemned under Article 12 of the Covenant which provided for the peaceful settlement of international disputes.² As a result, all members of the League were under obligation by treaty to apply Article 16 – the only time that this article was ever invoked in the history of the League, and on 10 October a Coordination Committee was established to facilitate measures taken by those states who intended to apply sanctions. This standing conference of League members was a voluntary grouping of forty-nine states, not an organ of either the Assembly or the Council. It was guided in its work by a subcommittee of delegates from leading states, the Committee of Eighteen, in which the dominant influence was wielded by the representatives of Britain and France.

The French Government, however, feared that strong leadership would appear in Rome as specifically anti-Italian and that the collective action their leadership would ensure might provoke Mussolini to war in the Mediterranean. That Italy would be defeated in such a war was never in doubt, but no government wanted Italian bombers over its homeland or ships, and the French Government doubted that its country would support a war against Italy in such a case. The service chiefs in London warned that Britain's capacity for imperial defense would be crippled while Japan was showing aggressive intentions in the Far East. Britain recognized that the League was at a turning point, that any delay in implementing Article 16 would cause fatal demoralization. In this dispute, whether London liked it or not, Britain's predominance in the Mediterranean, in northeastern Africa, along the Red Sea, and, above all, over the Suez Canal, made it the determining power. As Britain went, others, including France, would follow.³

By 19 October the Coordination Committee had adopted five proposals, four for sanctions and one concerning mutual support, and had transmitted them to member governments with a view to facilitating the execution of their obligations under Article 12. Four measures were established against Italy: an embargo on arms and ammunition, prohibition of loans and credits, refusal to accept Italian exports (except books, newspapers, maps, and printed music), and an embargo on certain war-related materials the major part of which customarily went to Italy from members of the League. In addition, a declaration of mutual support was urged, by which economic losses incurred by states supporting Article 16 would be offset by other sanctionist countries.⁴

On the occasion of League's discussion about the sanctions against Italy, the Italian Embassy reacted immediately and actively in China. Ambassador Lojacono reported to Mussolini on October 21, informing that the Embassy had sent to the Chinese Foreign Ministry a memorandum “sulla opportunità per la Cina di salvare sua amicizia per noi piuttosto che utopia ginevrina, di cui Cina stessa ha avuto così disgraziata prova, e sulla convenienza per questo Governo di dichiarare che non può esercitare contro paese amico sanzioni concrete che non furono esercitate a favore Cina.” Lojacono emphasized three points to Mussolini:

¹ Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, vol. 27, 277, 298.

² Gaynor Johnson, “Philip Noel-Baker, the League of Nations and the Abyssinian Crisis, 1935-1936,” G. Bruce Strang, ed., *Collision of Empires. Italy's Invasion of Ethiopia and its International Impact* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), 59.

³ Baer, *Test Case*, 20, 22.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

- 1) le relazioni di amicizia inalterata verso Italia;
- 2) lo stato delle provincie periferiche, sulle quali il Governo di Nanchino non esercita controllo sufficiente per imporre esecuzione sanzioni e rinuncia alla speculazione che sarebbe riservata ai rapporti commerciali;
- 3) quesiti posti da Chang Kai-Shek per avere assicurazione esecuzione nostre forniture starebbero a dimostrare che non è considerata da lui eventualità di agire di propria iniziativa contro importazione italiana in Cina.¹

As a matter of fact, Lojacono realized over a few days in the conversation with Chinese Minister of Finance Kong Xiangxi, that China was still under the illusion of the League.² He informed Mussolini that,

Illusione ginevrina e speranza ottenere seggio Consiglio della S.d.N.³ hanno fatto qui rialzare azioni della Lega delle Nazioni e di riflesso influiscono sull'atteggiamento del Governo cinese di fronte al problema delle sanzioni, alle quali questo Governo non sembra alieno dall'associarsi formalmente, nella speranza che la prova di vitalità fornita dalla Lega delle Nazioni a favore dell'Abissinia possa valere anche a favore della Cina, la quale perciò non vuole costituirsi manchevole in questo momento verso Ginevra.⁴

Kong Xiangxi assured Lojacono that “argomenti relativi alla non convenienza per la Cina di applicare contro Paese amico sanzioni concrete che non erano state applicate a favore della Cina erano fortissimi”; and Kong was personally convinced that “S.d.N. non avrebbe mai fatto nulla in avvenire per la Cina, ma che Cina doveva evitare che Lega delle Nazioni motivasse in avvenire propria inefficienza in Estremo Oriente col pretesto del mancato appoggio cinese nell'attuale applicazione delle decisioni ginevrine.” Kong as the Minister of Finance, from a personal perspective, intended to “mantenere integre relazioni commerciali con l'Italia,” but unfortunately he was not the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Lojacono replied to Kong:

non valeva a carico di un Paese come l'Italia e che sarebbe stato errore grave credere che la vitalità di Ginevra nel Mediterraneo (ove del resto poteva anche finire in un buco nell'acqua) ritardasse una ripresa di

¹ *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.441, 416.

² Article IV of the Covenant stipulated that the Council shall be composed of three different kinds of members: 1) permanent members – the Great Powers, which deemed to be directly affected by all matters within the sphere of action of the League; 2) non-permanent members – the temporary members chosen by the majority of the Assembly from time to time in its discretion; 3) special members – during the consideration of matters specially affecting the interests of such states. China first received her non-permanent seat on the Council in 1920. While she failed to gain re-election in 1923, and had to relinquish her seat to Czechoslovakia. In 1924 and 1925, China continued to put forth her aspirations for the Council seat, arguing that proper Asiatic representation on the Council was needed and that by virtue of her vast territory, teeming population, great potentiality and ancient civilization, China should receive adequate consideration. Over the next few years, China experienced several failure in requests for a non-permanent seat on Council. Because of the Manchurian crisis, for three years, China had the privilege of having a representative on the Council to argue this case whenever opportunity offered. See Lau-King Quan, *China's Relations with the League of Nations*, Chapter II.

³ Premier of Republic of China Wang Jingwei told Lojacono about Chinese insistence on the League, as Lojacono reported, “Governo cinese dovrà passare pure ad atteggiamento definitivo per rivolgere ogni sforzo a realizzare quelle poche speranze che gli rimanevano ancora per salvataggio del seggio. Wang Ching Wei mi ha detto che se questa speranza non sarà per realizzarsi, certamente significato esclusione Cina dal Consiglio della S.d.N. colpirà intero continente asiatico, perchè, dopo ritiro Giappone, la Lega delle Nazioni non potrebbe trascurare immenso peso cinese in Asia senza dimostrare di voler distinteressarsi del tutto di questo continente, aggravando disillusione gravissima già sorta nel 1932.” *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.207, 191.

⁴ *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.498, 464-466.

vitalità in Estremo Oriente, ove la mano di Ginevra aveva dimostrato di non potere giungere. [...] che in ogni caso vi erano tanti modi di applicare sanzioni e che altro era negare crediti e armi e altro rompere relazioni commerciali.¹

Having received the report of Lojacono, Mussolini agreed to support Chinese desire to obtain a seat in the League Council, aiming at taking advantage of Sino-Japanese conflict to distract the British attention from Ethiopia. Mussolini said:

In occasione Suo imminente incontro col Generalissimo, prendendo le mosse dalla questione seggio Cina in Consiglio, V.E. vorrà coltivare, nel modo che riterrà più appropriato, speranze Cina nella S.d.N. (speranze che sembrano rinascere costà) nel senso che, qualora Giappone commettesse nuove violazioni territorio o sovranità cinese, tutto sommato, converrebbe alla Cina fare appello alla S.d.N.; potrebbe infatti darsi che, da un lato atteggiamento assunto dalla Lega nella vertenza italo-etiopica e, dall'altro, interessi inglesi che verrebbero lesi nella vallata Yang-Tze, inducessero Ginevra essere in Estremo Oriente meno blanda che in passato. In ogni caso mossa cinese verrebbe a mettere Lega in grave imbarazzo.

Aggiunga che R. Governo da parte sua continuerà appoggiare, nella apposita Commissione che tornerà riunirsi sotto presidenza delegato italiano verso fine novembre, richiesta Cina di un seggio in Consiglio.

Mi rendo conto che se Cina torna guardare con fiducia a Ginevra più difficilmente potrà essere distolta dallo applicare sanzioni nei nostri riguardi. Ma, prima di tutto, vantaggi che deriverebbero a noi dal rimettere in questo momento S.d.N. di fronte a una vertenza cino-giapponese sarebbero assai maggiori che inconvenienti eventuali sanzioni cinesi e poi sanzioni anzidette, seppure dovessero essere applicate nella forma, potrebbero essere vuotate di contenuto limitandole nella loro estensione e nella loro applicazione pratica, secondo idee espresse da V.E. a codesto Ministro delle Finanze e da lui divise in massima.²

On November 2, after having had conversation with Chinese Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi, Lojacono conveyed the point of view of Chinese Government to Mussolini. The Chinese Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs said, "che era con grandissimo rincrescimento che Cina si trovava nel dilemma della fedeltà alla Lega delle Nazioni ovvero della fedeltà all'Italia amica." Yet the Chinese Government was convinced that the Duce "avrebbe compreso come situazione esistente in Estremo Oriente creava alla Cina necessità riporre sue speranze sopra aiuto mondo occidentale, cui appoggio non potrà manifestarsi da parte di alcuna Potenza singolarmente presa bensì attraverso accordo collettivo, e che se pure queste speranze erano minime non era possibile a questo Paese rinunziarvi." The Vice-Minister explained to Lojacono,

fra le varie domande della Lega delle Nazioni per le sanzioni nessuna concerne la Cina, salvo quella del boicottaggio delle esportazioni italiane, e che Governo cinese non poteva da una parte approvare le altre domande e rifiutare poi questa unica che lo riguarda, senza dimostrare di prendersi gioco della Lega delle Nazioni. Che quindi Governo cinese aveva risposto favorevolmente alla applicabilità di questa sanzione «in linea di principio» e senza indicare data in cui intende metterla in azione. Ciò per mantenersi in atteggiamento assolutamente passivo fino a che Lega delle Nazioni non gli imponga una data di inizio.¹

¹ Ibid.

² *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.549, 523-524.

¹ *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.552, 525-528.

When the Chinese Vice-Minister announced that “Cina avrebbe continuato a vendere all’Italia tutto ciò non compreso nelle liste delle materie vietate, e principalmente carbone,” Lojacono responded “noi potevamo valerci del carbone e di altre materie cinesi in quanto ci sia possibile pagare con compensazione di merci italiane introdotte in Cina e che quindi avvenire commerciale fra i due Paesi dipendeva da possibilità eludere boicottaggio merci italiane, anche con l’aiuto delle Autorità cinesi.” In short, Lojacono had confidence in the Chinese spirit that “continuasse essere amichevole verso Italia in queste gravi contingenze che costringono Cina a mettersi formalmente fra Paesi che condannano Italia.”¹

During the conversation with Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi, Lojacono at first submitted an expression of warm friendliness of Duce, “per sforzi compiuti verso riorganizzazione questo Paese [Cina] e lotta contro comunismo”. Despite all difficulties, the Duce had instructed to “garantire che tutti gli impegni assunti da parte nostra per forniture alla Cina saranno rispettati.”²

As regards the adherence to sanctions against Italy, Generalissimo Jiang, according to the observation of Lojacono, “non avesse forse chiara preparazione sulle cose da dire”. Lojacono communicated to Mussolini,

Chang Kai-Shek mi ha chiesto (forse perchè non pronto ad una migliore risposta) a che punto fossero trattative tra l’Italia e Francia e Inghilterra per una pace in Abissinia. Gli ho risposto che non avevano fatto un passo avanti. Egli mi ha detto allora che era consigliabile mettere termine rapidamente allo stato di incertezza regnante in Europa. Gli ho risposto che lo ringraziavo del consiglio ma che tutto dipendeva dalle soddisfazioni che Europa darà alle aspirazioni ed all’onore del Popolo italiano. Ancora una volta egli ha insistito che, nell’interesse del Popolo italiano, era opportuno che l’Italia si mostrasse più arrendevole. Gli ho detto che Popolo italiano preferiva morire piuttosto che rinunciare al successo e che era disposto, se il cerchio si stringeva troppo, a romperlo con le armi. Ad una monotona ripetizione che urgeva far presto, ho risposto che non potevo interpretare questo suo atteggiamento se non come un augurio di immediata vittoria dell’Italia.

Come V. E. vede, questo principio non è stato facile ma lo attribuisco non tanto da un vero proposito di Chang Kai-Shek di dire delle cose inopportune, quanto al fatto che egli non avesse forse chiara preparazione sulle cose da dire. Ammiratore, come sono, dei soldati e dei contadini non faccio torto a Chang Kai-Shek dicendo che in tutto il colloquio egli non mi è apparso più di un semplice contadino cinese, asservito da soldati europei.³

With regard to the sanctions, the Generalissimo reiterated the statement of Chinese Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, and “augurava successo all’Italia”.

Consequently, Mussolini to some extent was enraged by the adherence of sanctions of Chinese Government, at least in the telegram. On November 23, Mussolini telegraphed to Lojacono, announcing,

Adesione Cina alle sanzioni vuol dire un fiero colpo inferto alle relazioni italo-cinesi. Si rechi da Chang Kai-Shek e gli dica a mio nome che se Cina non modifica suo atteggiamento io sarò costretto a rettificare tutta la politica seguita sino ad oggi e in tutti i settori, ivi compreso quello della larga ospitalità concessa in Italia ad ufficiali e ingegneri cinesi. Un Paese sanzionato non può essere prodigo.¹

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

¹ *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.701, 672.

Meanwhile, *Capo di Gabinetto* Aloisi had a talk with Chinese Ambassador in Rome Liu Wendao; Aloisi emphasized “sulla cordialità degli attuali rapporti italo-cinesi e sulla utilità per entrambi che essi si mantengano tali in avvenire,” for which “è necessario che il Governo cinese in questa occasione faccia al più presto, e possibilmente prima del 1 dicembre, una dichiarazione per noi soddisfacente circa le sanzioni. La nostra amicizia per la Cina, comprovata dall’ospitalità che offriamo ai numerosi aviatori cinesi in Italia, potrebbe subire un grave colpo nel caso che la Cina si rifiutasse di corrisponderci con un gesto amichevole in questa circostanza.”¹

Liu Wendao promised to convey this information to Chinese Government, reiterating “i soliti argomenti relativi al conflitto col Giappone, che pesa in modo pressochè esclusivo sull’atteggiamento cinese in qualunque settore politico, e quindi anche in quello delle sanzioni.”²

Aloisi was convinced that since the League had taken no measures like sanction against Japan, China had no obligation to abide by the sanction resolution this time. He advised Liu Wendao to think about:

proprio la preminenza della politica giapponese sull’atteggiamento cinese doveva decidere in questa circostanza il Governo cinese in nostro favore, dato che due anni or sono, in occasione della vertenza cino-giapponese, nessuno aveva pensato ad applicare sanzioni contro il Giappone dopo che esso era stato condannato a Ginevra. Tale precedente conferiva ora al Governo cinese una piena libertà nella politica delle sanzioni, tanto più se si tiene conto dell’amicizia disinteressata che in questi ultimi anni si è andata formando tra i nostri due Paesi. [...] il Giappone, da parte sua, si è mantenuto perfettamente estraneo alla campagna sanzionista contro l’Italia, il che deve contribuire a rendere agevole la posizione attuale del Governo cinese.³

Over the next several months, Fascist Government continued to convince Nanjing to change mind on this issue. While China asserted that she had to rely on the League in the face of increasingly serious Japanese threats. For instance, Lojacono attempted to persuade Chinese Government, saying “Cina, oppressa da un vicino prepotente, meglio di ogni altro comprenderebbe situazione dell’Italia di fronte oppressione britannica nel Mediterraneo.” Yet the latter’s explanations “sono state intonate sempre all’idea fondamentale della necessità della Cina di aggrapparsi alla tavola di salvezza della Lega delle Nazioni di fronte alle minacce giapponesi sempre più gravi di giorno in giorno.” Authorities of Nanjing said “Cina, se fosse libera da minaccia sulla sua stessa esistenza, sarebbe moralmente a fianco dell’Italia.”⁴

As a result, Lojacono proposed some considerations for how to react to the “fiducia della Cina verso la Lega delle Nazioni”. To overcome the disadvantages of Chinese sanctions, Lojacono wrote to Mussolini:

soluzione potrebbe avere invece per base seguenti fatti:

- 1) necessità di sospendere nostri sforzi verso la Cina che sono destinati rimanere sterili in questo momento e che ci impongono esodo capitale valute e prodotti fabbricati con materie difficilmente rimpiazzabili in Italia;
- 2) opportunità di una politica di avvicinamento al Giappone, come unica forza al mondo capace di aiutarci a deviare pressione britannica nel Mediterraneo;

¹ *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.715, 692.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.II, N.772, 742-743.

3) considerando azione giapponese in Cina dovesse essere oggetto di deliberazione internazionale, impossibilità morale per l'Italia di associarsi ad una qualsiasi misura, sia pure platonica, che assomiglia alle iniquità che oggi si escogitano a nostro danno e quindi necessità di non essere legati in questo senso da una politica filo-cinese.¹

When the Fascist Government was studying the solutions, the Chinese Government paid more attention to the unfairness of the sanctions established by the League. Above all, it was an illusion, as the Chinese authorities of Foreign Affairs said, that the justice and axiom of the world could be restored by virtue of current sanctions against Italy. In fact, given the indifferent attitude of the League towards Sino-Japanese conflict, China realized that regarding the Covenant and the so-called sanctions only if it benefited the leading countries, i.e. Britain and France, it could be implemented, otherwise it was rather a “waste paper”. The economic sanctions against Italy began on November 18, 1935, but the effect could not be determined. Actually, the Chinese Government believed that Italy was not the only victim of this economic sanctions. “Since the failure of capitalism, the Marxist heresies became rampant. Italy obtained a new social foundation from the climax of the Fascism. Unexpectedly it occurred the so-called economic sanctions. Although we do not agree with Italy- Abyssinian War, especially in the case of Italian aggression, but we are aware of the selfishness of this economic sanctions [supported by Britain against Italy], about which we concern and the consequences of economic sanctions will damage both sides. All member states will in the short term confront a large number of unemployed panic. [...] The goal of a real peace of the world, can not be achieved only through the sanctions against the invaders. Of course, Italy ought to be sanctioned, yet the acts of invasion similar to Italy, even larger, and more serious, why the world’s major institution of peace stand idly by?”² Obviously, the Chinese authorities felt disappointed with the League in dealing with Japanese case.

In spite of the adherence of China to the sanctions against Italy, on December 26, Mussolini still instructed the Italian Embassy in China to maintain the friendly relations with Nanjing Government. He said that the Fascist Regime would “non alterare rapporti amichevoli tra i due Paesi mi inducono soprassedere decisioni circa ospitalità che Italia offre ufficiali e allievi cinesi e mantenere ancora Cina nella lista Paesi non sanzionisti.”

Infatti, oltre ragioni contingenti, indicate precedentemente, e cioè spingere Cina rivolgersi Società delle Nazioni e sollevare questione Trattato Washington Nove Potenze, va tenuto presente che, nonostante passaggio sotto controllo giapponese vasti territori del Nord, è ovvio che Cina rimane sempre importantissimo campo per affermazione italiana.

Conviene pertanto mantenere posizioni acquisite per metterle a profitto quando situazione sarà tornata normale.

Queste direttive si ispirano beninteso al concetto della difesa e possibilmente dello sviluppo dei nostri interessi in Cina, non a quello di dare carattere anti-giapponese alla nostra azione costà.³

Up to May 1936, Fascist Regime had tried several times to convince China to propose immediately in the League lifting the sanctions. The Chinese Foreign Ministry replied that after

¹ Ibid.

² “Observation of the League’s economic sanctions against Italy,” *Official Bulletin of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nanjing National Government*, Vol.9 No.1, January 1936, 45.

³ *IDDI*, Serie 8, Vol.II, N.917, 904-905.

careful considerations China decided to remain consistent with all the other countries on sanctions with a view to expect the Covenant of the League of Nations to be implemented. “Italy is our friend, but after all, we cannot sacrifice our position, which will fail ourselves in the future when we need to ask for sanctions [against Japan].”¹ Euphemistically, the Chinese Foreign Ministry informed Mussolini that China was convinced that long-term sanctions would harm all countries. The Chinese Government felt a lot of sympathy for the Prime Minister Mussolini’s intention. While China was neither a member of the Executive Council of the League nor a member of the Committee of Thirteen and Eighteen countries; it was inconvenient to propose the lifting of the sanctions. Moreover, China’s former attitude towards the League of Nations was ardent, and now such a proposal of lifting would cause people to misunderstand.

To convince China, the Italian Foreign Ministry even offered the condition that with the Chinese declaration of cancelling or suspending the sanctions, Italy would agree immediately to abolish the unequal treaties and returned the concession to China. Nevertheless, considering the “special relationship” with the League – China had done in the past and, would appeal to the League in the future, entrusting it to stop the aggression – the Chinese Government was forced to upset Rome. “Although it has not yet succeed, but the evolution of international political trends can not be expected; we should, after all, always maintain the opportunity to change the situation, albeit in hardship. With respect to the sanctions against Italy, if we take initiative alone, we will lost the position sustained over past few years, subsequently lost the sympathy of dozens of countries. Not only because we desire to join the Council of the League, but also for the principle we had insisted not to recognize the puppet Manchukuo. If we cancel the sanctions alone, when we resort to the League in the future, there will be no moral aid to obtain. Although Italy treated us friendly, it is beyond the reach when we need an urgent help.”²

In short, any other country could withdraw from the sanctions as the first one and did it alone, it was not China. China did not want the other countries to misunderstand that she had gave up the position opposed to recognition of puppet Manchukuo, which would offer Japan an excuse to attack China and make the Chinese situation more difficult. Nanjing Government was very willing to think of a method to prompt an early end of sanctions, for instance, to contact confidentially with Geneva, London and Paris. “At the same time, we hope Italy could have more patience, not withdraw from the League of Nations. Thus we still have opportunities for mutual assistance in the collective actions.”³

Therefore the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China communicated message to Rome, proposing three points:

- 1) Italy abolished the unequal treaties and returned concession in order to obtain the sympathy of Chinese public opinion;
- 2) In accordance with the principle of Sun Zhongshan (he had advocated to unite the nations who treated China as equals), China would advise to cancel the sanctions;
- 3) to advise but not an arbitrary removal, nor a recognition of Italy’s position in the eastern part of Africa. Namely, China agreed to vote for ending the sanctions without recognizing Italy’s

¹ “Statement of Foreign Ministry regarding the implementation of the League’s economic sanctions against Italy,” *Collection of Historical Archives and Documents of the Republic of China*, Series 5, Part 1, Foreign Affairs (2), 1362- 1364.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

sovereignty over Abyssina. Lojacono replied that the Italian Government understood that China was in a difficult position, so would not ask China to cancel immediately the sanctions, but only wanted that the Chinese representatives in the League would vote for lifting the sanctions.¹

The Coordination Committee of the League met on 6 July 1936 and proposed to participating governments that measures be lifted on 15 July, eight months to the day after they had begun. To a cheering crowd below his balcony Mussolini said: "Today [...] a white flag is hoisted in the ranks of world sanctionism. We would like to see it not only as a sign of surrender but also as a symptom of the return of common sense." Civilization and justice had triumphed, he said, "both in Africa and in Europe."²

Although the divergence in the sanctions used to enrage Mussolini, the cooperation between Fascist Italy and Nationalist China continued in 1935 and 1936. Notwithstanding, the issue of Ethiopia was manipulated as a potential bargaining chip by Japan in exchange for Italy's recognition of its puppet regime – Manchukuo, which was in stark contrast to the fundamental principle of Chinese Government. After the recognition of Manchukuo, in political perspective, there was no possibility left for maintaining cooperation between the two countries.

3.2 RECOGNITION OF MANCHUKUO

After occupation in Manchuria since the end of 1931, to conceal her real designs, which made her overthrow the civil administration of every place occupied by her troops, and to replace it by puppet organizations of her own, Japan engineered a spurious "independence movement" and utilized these same puppets as the alleged representatives of the people in demanding secession of the Three Eastern Provinces from China. On March 1, 1932, the puppets proclaimed the establishment of the "State of 'Manchukuo.'"

A declaration of independence, every line of which betrayed its origin, stated that the decision had been made "after thorough deliberations for several months past and after a number of meetings held by the leaders of Fengtien, Kirin, Heilungkiang, and Jehol Provinces, Harbin Special District, and also those under the various banners of Mongolia." A number of Chinese notables were either coerced into joining the bogus regime, or bought over, and Henry Pu Yi, who had been kidnapped from Tientsin during the disturbance fomented there by the Japanese early in November, 1931, was placed at the head as Chief Executive. With incontinent haste Japan on September 15, 1932, formally recognized the "independence" of Manchuria and puppet State of "Manchukuo," her own creation. The same day a protocol was signed between Japan and the puppet regime, whereby Japan took upon herself responsibility of co-operating with the

¹ Ibid.

² Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, Vol. 28, 23-26.

“Manchukuo army” – which is none other than the Japanese Imperial Army itself – in the task of assuring national defence of the occupied territory. Thus Japan by her own act created a fictitious personality, sustained it solely by her own money and arms and, under a “Manchukuo” *alias*, proceeded with her predatory plans against China.

The subsequent formal inauguration of a monarchy on March 1, 1934, effected no real constitutional changes in the character and power of the shadow Government, the actual repository of power being still the Japanese Government’s representatives, while the “policy” of Changchun (or “Hsinking” as it is sometimes called) continues even to the smallest detail to be directed from the councilchambers in Tokyo.¹

The strongest pressure is being exerted, both diplomatically and militarily, by Japan to coerce China into giving formal recognition of the puppet regime in Manchuria. By devious methods Japan is working also to secure both *de facto* and *de jure* recognition for “Manchukuo,” from whatever source this may be forthcoming. With this end in view, Japan for several months past has been seizing every pretext for disseminating rumours that Washington, London, Berlin, Paris, Warsaw and other capitals are seriously pondering the question of throwing overboard the “non-recognition” doctrine which they, along with over forty other States, solemnly and deliberately subscribed to at Geneva on February 24, 1933. Rumours from such obviously dubious sources, however, have been contradicted in every instance, official denials being not only prompt to nail the lie but also to reaffirm loyalty to the League’s decision.²

Although the whole world is out of sympathy with her at present, it is nevertheless Japan’s hope that, in time, the international existence of “Manchukuo” will come to be accepted throughout the world as inevitable, that the present opposition will wear itself out, that bribes and lavish promises of economic advantages on the one hand, and secret pressure (directly and indirectly applied) on the other, will foster sympathy for the recognition move, and that *de facto* recognition will be eventually accorded, to be followed by *de jure* recognition in due course.³

It is essential, however, in the interests of international security and good faith, that Japan’s hope should not be realized, however long she may be content to await its fruition. After the demonstration of aggression and callous disregard for treaty covenants to which the world has been treated since September 18, 1931, it would be dangerous in the extreme for any nation to turn a blind eye to the Manchurian situation, or in the smallest degree connive at Japan’s lawlessness. It is essential that wars of aggression, renounced in solemn and unequivocal terms in treaties, should have no place in the intercourse of civilized nations. It is essential that a powerful nation shall be bound by international law as much as a weaker one – indeed, even more so, since it cannot be coerced into obedience. It is essential that a puissant State shall recognize the sovereign rights of a weaker neighbour over its own territories, instead of sending its armed hordes to pillage and burn, and commit wholesale devastation, murder and all the other horrors of war. In short, it is essential that nations, no less than individuals, should be amenable to Law.

However, much certain interested parties may wish to believe in their ability to make profit out of official recognition of the puppet regime in Manchuria – a fact they have been led to expect by the “promises” of Japanese diplomats and other propagandists – they certainly cannot close their eyes to the implications of such recognition. Such a step will mean that the recognizing State approves and condones Japan’s violations of China’s sovereignty, and Japan’s violations of

¹ T’ang, *The Puppet State of “Manchukuo”*, 12-13.

² *Ibid.*, 20.

³ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

obligations under treaties and international law; that it identifies itself with Japan's dishonour; and that it becomes the latter's accomplice. Such a step will mean putting a premium upon lawless aggression; it will constitute a perpetual precedent for States desiring to ignore inconvenient treaty obligations; and, of course, it will mean a clean sweep of the last remaining vestiges of the binding nature of the League Covenant, the Nine-Power Treaty, and the Pact of Paris as well as administering the *coup de grâce* to the League of Nations.¹

At that moment, the President of the Executive Yuan, Wang Jingwei voiced the attitude of the Chinese Government towards the puppet regime in his declaration of March 1, 1934, when he characterized Pu Yi's assumption of the "Imperial" title as an act of high treason against the Chinese Republic, and affirmed that China would take an inflexible stand against any step implying, or savouring of, recognition of "Manchukuo." "The same may be said of the European and American Powers," added Wang, "with whom the principle of non-recognition of 'Manchukuo' has become an ironclad rule of international morality, and deviation from or violation of which must surely reflect on the national honour of the State concerned." That the President of the Executive Yuan has not misplaced his confidence in the honour of these Powers to refuse to be accessories to Japan's international breach of faith and treaty violations is thus far proved by the instant contradictions of lying propaganda which have been forthcoming from the capitals of the world.²

Self-respect and self-interest, no less than altruistic motives, dictate that every nation shall take no step which will prejudice or militate against China's attitude. For China came to the League as the acknowledged trustee of international order and justice. She stands for a principle that represents the common weal. She has kept the Covenant, she has offered and still offers in unambiguous terms to adopt and carry out any programme that may be formulated, and applied by the League for the peaceful adjustment of her differences with Japan. She has placed herself unreservedly in the League's hands. China asks only to be allowed to work out her destiny in peace, and free from external interference – in the words of the Nine-Power Treaty "the fullest and most unembarrassed opportunity to develop and maintain for herself an effective and stable Government." That the justice of her case is undeniable is the view of the 42 nations who voted unanimously for the League resolution of February 24, 1933. On the other hand, Japan, one of the signatories of the Covenant, the Peace of Paris, and the Nine-Power Treaty, has ravaged China's territory, destroyed her territorial and administrative integrity and her political independence, while Japan's occupation of Manchuria, so long as it lasts, will be a continuous threat to China's very existence as a nation.³

¹ Ibid., 27.

² See Appendix II of *The Puppet State of "Manchukuo"*.

³ T'ang, *The Puppet State of "Manchukuo"*, 28-29.

3.2.1 Italy's attitude towards Sino-Japanese conflict 1933-1935

The intervention of the League in Sino-Japanese conflict during 1931-1932, disappointed China and offered an excuse to Japan for its withdrawal from Geneva. The Fascist Government, however, through the collective intervention, succeeded in establishing the foundation for its economic and military cooperation with Nanjing Government over the next four years. Because of the desire for expanding her interests in China, Italy's attitude towards Sino-Japanese conflict during the cooperative years appeared to be quite neutral and moderate.

On May 28, 1933, Mussolini communicated to Ambassadors in London, Paris, Washington, Moscow and Berlin regarding the Sino-Japanese issue. The situation of the Far East, Mussolini said, seemed to be characterized by:

- 1) tregua armi conclusa da parti contraenti;
- 2) trattative dirette in corso tra due parti per conclusione accordo;
- 3) proposito Giappone continuare trattare direttamente con la Cina;
- 4) desiderio Cina intervento Potenze nel regolamento del conflitto, sebbene Governo cinese non abbia fatto sinora alcun passo formale in tal senso;
- 5) possibilità costituzione nel nord Cina amministrazione separatista ligia interessi giapponesi;
- 6) minaccia prestigio e interessi Potenze europee e Stati Uniti che deriverebbe da accordo diretto sino-giapponese il quale tenderebbe escludere influenza europea e americana in Cina.¹

Mussolini called their attention to bear in mind the foregoing points, "quanto potesse risultrarle su ogni eventuale azione che codesto Governo si proponesse svolgere a difesa suoi interessi in Cina."²

At the same time, Mussolini gave instructions to *l'Incaricato d'Affari* in China, Filippo Anfuso about Italian interests in this country. He felt appreciated that the Nanjing Government and Rome had achieved an understanding as regards that "tanto adesso quanto in futuro Italia è interessata nella stessa misura delle altre grandi Potenze a tutti i regolamenti di questioni in Cina e in Estremo Oriente in generale, per i quali la Cina dovesse fare ricorso ad altre Potenze, così come è avvenuto a Shanghai". Besides, Mussolini said, the Italian Government "converrà naturalmente continuare a seguire da vicino atteggiamento ministri Gran Bretagna Francia e America in guisa da poter partecipare con loro, analogamente a quanto fu fatto durante il conflitto di Shanghai, a qualsiasi azione che dovesse venire localmente svolta dai rappresentanti diplomatici suddetti in relazione all'attuale situazione nel nord Cina."³ Briefly, since the Shanghai Incident had set an example for Italy's participation, Mussolini was willing to follow the step of Britain, France and America, played a role as a Great Power in the Sino-Japanese affairs.

Mussolini delivered a speech to Eastern students on December 22, 1933, announcing the Italian mission in building a new connection between the West and the East. Mussolini noted that in the

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XIII, N.723, 774-775.

² *Ibid.*

³ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XIII, N.737, 790-791.

past centuries, the West had misunderstood the significance of the East. “Si formò e si diffuse l’opinione di un’Asia nemica dell’Europa, mentre, in realtà, si trattava di una particolare mentalità formatasi in certi paesi di Europa, che era incapace o indifferente a comprendere l’Asia. Per essa l’Asia era solo un mercato di manufatti, una fonte di materie prime.” The civilization “a base di capitalismo e liberalismo nei secoli scorsi ha investito tutto il mondo. Il fallimento di essa si ripercuote perciò in tutti i continenti. Interessa quindi tutti i continenti la reazione contro la degenerazione liberale e capitalistica, reazione che trova la propria espressione nella fede rivoluzionaria del fascismo italiano, che ha lottato, che lotta, contro la mancanza di anima e di ideale di questa civiltà, che, negli ultimi secoli, ha avuto il sopravvento nel mondo.”¹

From Mussolini’s point of view, with the Fascist revival in Rome and the Mediterranean, “rinascita soprattutto spirituale, si volgono a riprendere la loro funzione unificatrice. È perciò che la nuova Italia – questa Italia – vi ha qui convocati.” Therefore on the occasion of crisis of relations between the West and the East, Mussolini asserted: “Come già altre volte, in periodo di crisi mortali, la civiltà del mondo fu salvata dalla collaborazione di Roma e dell’oriente, così oggi, nella crisi di tutto un sistema di istituzioni e di idee che non hanno più anima e vivono come imbalsamate, noi, italiani e fascisti di questo tempo, ci auguriamo di riprendere la comune, millenaria tradizione della nostra collaborazione costruttiva.”²

A few days later, Mussolini issued an article on *Popolo d’Italia* of 18 January 1934, titled as “Estremo Oriente,” in which he discussed about the affairs of the Far East, involving Soviet Russia, the United States as well as Japan and China. This article was stimulated directly by the speech of Litvinov, Soviet Commissioner of Foreign Affairs, who had addressed on December 29, 1933. Litvinov announced that Japan’s current policy was the darkest cloud on the international political horizon. He accused Japan of having violated the Washington Agreement and the Covenant of the League of Nations, which was a real threat on the border. Therefore, Russia was forced to take the necessary countermeasures and Japan was isolated and opposed even by the capitalist world that did not like the Soviet Russia. Thus two armies faced each other at the border between Russia and Manchuria: the danger of war existed.³

“Esaminiamo alla luce dei fatti,” Mussolini wrote, “i principali protagonisti di quello che può essere il grande dramma intercontinentale di domani.” He recognized the remarkable achievements of Japan in the late 19th century.

Nessun dubbio che il Giappone attraversa in questo momento un periodo di «dinamismo imperialista». È tra il 1860 e il 1870 che il Giappone, pure restando fedelissimo alle sue tradizioni millenarie, assorbe tutti i progressi della civiltà occidentale. Oggi, la sua attrezzatura industriale non ha nulla da invidiare a quella delle più progredite Nazioni dell’occidente. Altamente prolifico, il Giappone è un popolo sobrio, con forti virtù guerriere e una capacità illimitata di sacrificio. Le sue forze militari rappresentano un complesso formidabile di uomini e di mezzi, per terra e per mare.⁴

Confronting with such a powerful Japan, Mussolini questioned “Quale sorte attende la Cina?” Although he believed that China could be framed and trained to become a good soldier. The

¹ A Roma, in Campidoglio, nella sala di Giulio Cesare, la mattina del 22 dicembre 1933, Mussolini presenzia la seduta inaugurale del primo convegno studentesco asiatico. In tale occasione, il Presidente del Consiglio pronuncia, prima in italiano e poi in inglese, il discorso qui riportato (Da *Il Popolo d’Italia*, N. 304, 23 dicembre 1933, XX)

² Ibid.

³ Benito Mussolini, *Scritti e discorsi, dal gennaio 1934 al 4 novembre 1935*, 24.

⁴ Ibid., 24-25.

situation in the Far East, as Mussolini observed, was by no means favourable for China.

tutte le grandi Potenze dell'occidente tormentate dalle loro crisi interne, economiche e politiche, si sono rassegnate al fatto compiuto. L'accordo Litvinov-Roosevelt ha una sua importanza, ma di natura prevalentemente morale: è un avvertimento dato al Giappone, ma niente autorizza a credere che esso è destinato a modificare il «fatto compiuto», niente autorizza a credere che Russi e Americani si batterebbero insieme, se il Giappone attaccasse la Russia o procedesse ad ulteriori conquiste in Cina. La verità è che il Giappone non è più vincolato da accordi di ordine internazionale, ed ha le mani libere sia per la pace come per la guerra. La scelta dipende da lui. La pressione della cosiddetta opinione pubblica internazionale, non ha alcuna influenza su un popolo dalla psicologia chiusa e militare qual'è quella giapponese, e su classi dirigenti che credono nello spirito guerriero come alla più alta espressione della virtù di una razza. Si può anche pensare che dopo la conquista della Manciuria, il Giappone abbia bisogno di un periodo di raccoglimento e di attesa.¹

Namely, Mussolini was convinced that it was a best opportunity for Japan to expand its power in the Far East especially in China, without strong constraint from international community.

In addition, Mussolini admitted that the Manchurian crisis had forced the East to approach the West. "Il cannone che tuonava in Manciuria rintonava in Europa, con una immediatezza singolare. Sembrava straordinariamente vicino." To resolve the crisis, Mussolini suggested,

Pensavo ad un incontro sistematico, a una collaborazione metodica dell'occidente con l'oriente e soprattutto ad una più profonda conoscenza reciproca fra le classi universitarie, veicolo e strumento per una intesa migliore fra i popoli. Roma come già fece nel suo passato millenario può assolvere questo compito delicato e di somma importanza, facilitato dalla mirabile rapidità delle odierne comunicazioni che ha reso in un certo senso «tascabile» l'intero globo terracqueo.²

All in all, for facilitating the cooperation with China, Mussolini clearly stated the difficulty confronted by China in this period, especially from its strong, firm and militant neighbour, heavily armed Japan. Mussolini implied that such a confrontation provide for the West, exactly for Fascist Italy, with an opportunity to intervene. He, of course, attempted to convince China on this point, for the other Great Powers was struggling in the quagmire of domestic problems. Fascist Italy was available for establishing such a new connection between East and West.

3.2.2 Recognition of Manchukuo

As mentioned in the first chapter, Italy was never ever stand on Chinese side with respect to the Sino-Japanese conflict. It appeared to be neutral and moderate only because the Fascist Regime was devoting itself to taking advantage of every opportunity of cooperation and expanding its

¹ Ibid., 26.

² Ibid., 27.

interests in such a vast territory. From 1935 onwards, the fact that Fascist Italy militarily invaded in Ethiopia, although she denied the similarity between two invasions, was bound to smash its so-called conciliatory and peaceful policy towards China. In other words, Fascist Italy was bound to approach Japan instead of China after its invasion in Ethiopia. The recognition of Manchukuo was its bargaining chip for obtaining Japanese recognition of Empire of Italy.

The turning point of Italian China policy was the year 1935, not only for the Ethiopian issue, but also for the fact that the Fascist Regime was concerning about rapprochement between Japan and China. Since the beginning of 1935, the Foreign Ministry of Fascist Regime had received informations from China regarding the eventual rapprochement between Tokyo and Nanjing administrations. On February 16, 1935, Suvich (il Sottosegretario agli Esteri) communicated to Lojacono, Ambassador in China about the confidential information he had received from Moscow:

in recenti colloqui tra personalità cinesi e giapponesi Giappone ha negoziato per ottenere da Cina seguenti impegni:

- 1) acquistare materiale bellico solo da Giappone;
- 2) accettare istruttori militari solo da Giappone;
- 3) non contrarre prestiti esteri senza consenso Giappone.¹

Although the Ambassador of China in Rome later denied this information, “che voce fatta circolare circa impegno cinese di assumere consiglieri esteri solo da Giappone è del tutto infondata.”² The Foreign Ministry of Italy was still convinced that the rapprochement between the protagonists of the Far East was ongoing.³

The report of Lojacono sent to Mussolini on 25 February offered a synthesis of the Sino-Japanese conflict. On the one hand, Japan, Lojacono noted, “tende a fare della Cina un campo riservato alla propria azione esclusiva, sia come mercato di consumo e sia soprattutto come serbatoio di uomini e di risorse naturali da sfruttare profittando della condizione di inferiorità e di disorganizzazione della Cina per asservirla al programma giapponese di predominio in Asia e nel mondo.”⁴

On the other hand, China, Lojacono continued, “tende a resistere a questo piano di asservimento, guadagnando tempo per organizzarsi con l'aiuto di varie nazioni e mai di una sola per quel minimo di consistenza, costituendosi Potenza capace di contrastare nuova usurpazione Giappone in modo che questo venga trovarsi non più dinanzi a platonici voti di Ginevra ma dinanzi all'eventualità di conflitto, che una volta scoppiato potrebbe determinare un fronte anti-giapponese mondiale.”⁵

Indeed, Japan preferred a violent tactic to impose its will rather than patient and peaceful actions. In this regard, China, as Lojacono observed, “finché non sarà in grado opporre una resistenza qualsiasi dovrà adottare tattica dilatoria e evasiva senza mai dare risposta nettamente contraria alle pressioni diplomatiche giapponesi per non scatenare quell'azione di forzamento da

¹ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XVI, N.601, 636-637.

² *Ibid.*

³ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XVI, N.651, 685-686.

⁴ *IDDI*, Serie 7, Vol.XVI, N.652, 686-687.

⁵ *Ibid.*

essa temuta.”¹ Although the three questions mentioned by Suvich could not be affirmed at current moment, Lojacono affirmed another factor that for inevitable struggle against the communists and reconstruction work, the Nanjing Government really needed weapons and money, “se Europa e America continueranno a disinteressarsi dei bisogni finanziari della Cina, questo Governo diventerà sempre meno capace di resistere alle intimidazioni russe e allettamenti del Giappone.”²

The observations of Lojacono reflected two points: 1) Lojacono had not yet given up the endeavour to search for possibility of penetration in China; 2) the rapprochement between China and Japan had been of some eventuality. As Lojacono advocated here,

Sarebbe proprio all'interno di questo settore che noi dovremmo quanto più possibile incunearci anche nell'ipotesi di cessazione delle pregiudiziali anti-giapponesi della Cina facendo valere di fronte all'uno e all'altro di questi due popoli particolare nostra posizione di grande Potenza europea [...] qui nel quadro di una politica mondiale nuova e che vuole lavorare largamente sotto il sole ma senza essere legata ad alcun particolare obiettivo contro un qualsiasi Paese dell'Asia.³

Nevertheless, the invasion facts of Japan broke up Lojacono's illusion about possible expansion of Fascist Italy in China. The Japanese was proved to be exclusively dominating Power in that vast country. The rapprochement between Japan and China, from the Fascist Italian point of view, was almost certain.

Japan's occupation of Manchuria and Rehe was completed when the Tangku Truce was signed in the spring of 1933. Rehe, facing another Inner Mongolian Province of Chahar on the west and the North China Province of Hebei on the south, became the frontier of the newly formed puppet state of Manchukuo. If Japan were to advance further into China from the territory she had already occupied, her advance would be from Rehe westwards into Chahar or southwards into Hebei, besides the other route which linked Manchuria with the rest of China through the narrow corridor of the Liaoning Province around Shanhaikwan on the eastern end of the Great Wall.

On 17 April 1934, the Japanese Foreign Ministry issued the “Amau Statement” warning the Powers who subscribed to the Nine-Power Treaty that the Japanese Government would not tolerate any interference with her plans in China. Although Minister Hirota later explained, upon inquiries, to the American Ambassador Grew, that the “Amau Statement” had been issued without his approval or knowledge, the fact remained that the “Amau Statement” truly represented Japan's policy towards China. Already, it appeared possible that Japanese ambitions in regard to China had not been satisfied by her occupation of Manchuria and Rehe. Very shortly thereafter, in May and June 1935, there took place two incidents, of trifling importance when compared with the demands based by the Japanese upon their occurrence, which resulted in the position of the National Government of China on both the Hebei and the Chahar fronts being substantially weakened.

First, the Hebei incident: in the middle of May 1935, two Chinese newspapermen were assassinated by unidentified assailants in the Japanese Concession in Tianjin. The journalists were said to have been pro-Japanese in sentiment. Umezu was then Commander of the North China

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Garrison Forces, and with his approval, certain demands were presented by his Chief of Staff to General He Yingqin (何应钦), head of the Chinese military organization in Beijing (Beijing). On 10 June 1935, the incident was settled, in which the Chinese authorities agreed to withdraw the Chinese 51st Army from the province of Hebei; to close the party offices and to ban all party activities of the Nationalist Party in that province, and to ban all anti-Japanese activities in that province. The above settlement was the so-called “Ho- Umezu Agreement”.

Next, the North Chahar incident: in June 1935, about the time when the Hebei incident was being settled by the “Ho- Umezu Agreement”, four members of the Japanese Army entered the Changpei District of Chahar Province. That was the southwestern part of Chahar, a little to the north of the Great Wall. As they did not have the required permits from the Chahar Provincial Government, they were taken to the headquarters of the Chinese Divisional Commander, who communicated with the general in command of the Chinese 29th Army. The latter ordered their release and that they were allowed to continue on their projected journey to Kalgan and Beijing, but with the warning that the appropriate permits had to be obtained in future. The matter was at first taken up by the Japanese Consul at Kalgan, who represented to general Ching, Deputy Commander of the Chinese 29th Army, that the Chinese Guards had insisted on searching the Japanese personnel, had pointed rifles at them, had detained them some four or five hours at Divisional Headquarters, and had thus insulted the Japanese Army. Very shortly thereafter, the Consul stated that the matter was very grave and was beyond his power to settle. The matter had been transferred to the Kwantung Army. Dohihara, then attached to the Kwantung Army, was appointed to negotiate with General Ching. In the end, they were agreed that the commander of the regiment concerned and the judge advocate of the division concerned should be dismissed and punished.

These measures, one would have thought, should have amply met the occasion, if these officers had been in the wrong. By far the most important provisions of the agreement, however, were those which followed, and they were largely, if not wholly, unconnected with the incident. All units of the Chinese 29th Army were to be withdrawn from the districts north of Changpei, that is to say, from substantially the whole of Chahar Province. The maintenance of peace and order there was to be entrusted to the Peace Preservation Corps, an organization of the nature of a police force. In the future, no Chinese were to be permitted to migrate to and settle in the northern part of Chahar province. No activities of the Nationalist Party were henceforth to be permitted in Chahar province. All anti-Japanese institutions and acts in Chahar Province were to be banned. That was the so-called “Ching-Dohihara Agreement”.

With the two incidents, two autonomous governments were supported by the Japanese in 1935: the Inner Mongolian autonomous government and attempt to set up a North China autonomous government.

In the beginning of 1935, Prince Teh, the leader of the Mongols of Inner Mongolia, was striving to set up an autonomous Mongolian Government there. It should be noticed that there then followed the so-called “Ho-Umeze” and “Ching-Dohihara” Agreements of June 1935, the latter of which substantially affected the northern part of Inner Mongolia, the province of Chahar. As a matter of fact, the Japanese authorities had an interview with Prince Teh at which the Prince promised close cooperation with Japan and the Japanese Government promised financial

assistance to the Prince. In December 1935, two battalions of cavalry were sent to assist Prince in taking over the northern part of Chahar Province. On 11 February 1936, Prince Teh transferred the seat of his autonomous regime from Pailinmiao, in Suiyuan Province, to West Sunito, and Japanese civilians were sent there to act as advisers to him. There is a significant cable, dated 2 October 1935, from the Secretary General of the Japanese Embassy at Beijing to Foreign Minister Hirota inter alia to the following effect: “the Japanese Forces’ Mongolian Policy is making steady progress as I and Consul at Changchiakou repeatedly reported to you. The other day Major General Dohihara made a trip from Changchiakou to Changte and back and saw the Governor of Chahar Province and Prince Teh; his mission was no doubt to promote the Inner Mongolian self-government.” References will also be found in the Japanese Army plan for dealing with North China, transmitted to the Japanese forces in China on 13 January 1936, which make it plain that this Inner Mongolian Autonomous Government was supported and controlled by the Kwantung Army.

As for the second autonomous government, in September 1935, Dohihara was sent by the Kwantung Army to Beijing with orders to set up an autonomous regime in North China. Dohihara, together with some other officers considered that “Anti-Communism” should be added as a slogan to the objective of creating an autonomous regime in North China.

It is proved that when inducements failed to produce an autonomous government, Dohihara, in November 1935, betook himself to threats of force, and even to the issue of an ultimatum for the purpose of procuring the establishment of such a government; and that the Kwantung Army backed up his threats by concentrating a striking force of tanks, mobile troops, and airplanes at Shanhaikwan at the eastern end of the Great Wall, ready to advance into the Beijing-Tianjin area.¹

At the same time of Japanese abundant “achievements” in China, Fascist Italy also devoted herself to consolidation of dominion in the Ethiopia. The Fascist diplomats encouraged the fear of war, fed the hope of settlement, and helped postpone the day of reckoning on the oil sanction during the end of 1935 and the beginning of 1936. As a result, the report of the expert committee on the technical conditions governing trade in and transport of petroleum was delivered on 12 February 1936. The experts were not expected to give an opinion on the oil sanction as an instrument of collective security. In the end, on the afternoon of 5 May 1936 Badoglio entered into the collapsed city of Addis Ababa. That evening Mussolini appeared on the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia to announce the end of the war, proclaiming, Ethiopia was Italian. “It was indeed a solely Italian victory – over Ethiopia by arms and over legalistic, sanctionist Europe by patriotic self-discipline and strong leadership. Italy was a colonial power of consequence now, the main rival to Britain in the eastern Mediterranean and in northeast Africa.”²

The British and French warned against a unilateral declaration of annexation. Mussolini’s argument for annexation was that the emperor had fled because the country was in rebellion against him. Italy was moving into a vacuum left by a discredited and now absent central authority. None of affairs affected Mussolini as he pushed his advantages to the limit. There was to be more to his triumph than conquest and annexation. Another *adunata* was announced for 9 May. There,

¹ See Website: <https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/PTO/IMTFE/IMTFE-5a.html>; about the two incidents and autonomous governments also see Peng Dunwen, *The National Government’s Policy towards Japan and its Changes: From the September 18 Incident to the July 7 Incident* (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2007), 216.

² Baer, *Test Case*, 103, 205, 275.

amidst enthusiasm raised to fever pitch, with his words broadcast throughout the peninsula by radio, Mussolini announced in a famous speech, not only annexation, but an empire. And not only an empire, but a new emperor – the King of Italy.¹

In October 1936, Fascist Regime put the recognition of Manchukuo on its agenda of foreign affairs. First step was “scambio di rappresentanti consolari per l’Etiopia e per il Manciukuo”. Ciano (Foreign Minister since 9 June 1936) telegraphed to Auriti, Italian Ambassador in Tokyo, asking the latter to convey the following message to Japanese Foreign Minister:

sto esaminando con favorevole interesse proposto scambio di rappresentanti consolari per l’Etiopia e per il Manciukuo. Importa conoscere se, nelle intenzioni del Giappone, come presumo, il console giapponese in Etiopia verrebbe munito di regolari lettere patenti da intestarsi naturalmente a S.M. il Re d’Italia e Imperatore d’Etiopia e come dovrebbero essere eventualmente intestate le lettere patenti per il nostro console nel Manciukuo. Lasci ancora intendere che ciò potrebbe preludere, magari a breve scadenza, ad un nostro riconoscimento del Manciukuo in cambio del formale riconoscimento dell’Impero.²

Thus it started the negotiation between Imperial Japan and Fascist Italy on “l’eventuale contemporaneo riconoscimento dell’Impero Italiano d’Etiopia e del Manciukuo”. During the negotiations, Auriti noted that the military circle had shown keen interest in the closer relations between Japan and Italy. He reported to Ciano,

Credo preferibile non sollecitare risposta perché prima proposta è stata fatta dai giapponesi e credo convenga non dare noi impressione che il nostro interesse sia maggiore che il loro.

Addetto militare mi riferisce che in conversazioni da lui avute con ufficiali di Stato Maggiore del ministero della Guerra, questi si sono mostrati a conoscenza del colloquio di V. E. con Sugimura e hanno dichiarato che circoli militari desiderano vivamente che tali colloqui si concretino in risultati positivi per più stretti legami fra i due Paesi. Ho pregato addetto militare far comprendere loro come prove di nostra buona volontà siano già state date al Giappone e come spetti ora al suo governo di corrispondere ad esse in modo efficace.³

In respect of exchange of consuls, as Auriti said, although it was difficult “per il primo riconoscimento del Manciukuo da parte di una grande Potenza,” at any rate, “almeno per il momento, sia preferibile io mi astenga dal tornare qui, tanto su tale questione, quanto, come ho già telegrafato, su quella del semplice scambio di consoli, lasciando che la situazione maturi da sé.”⁴

On 14 November, Auriti informed Ciano that authority of Manchukuo agreed to accept the Italian consul, and the Japanese government had no objection “ad intestare lettere patenti per il console giapponese in Etiopia a S.M. il Re d’Italia ed Imperatore di Etiopia.”⁵

In the conversation between Ciano and Sugimura, Ambassador of Japan in Rome, the latter communicated:

1) The Japanese Government had come to the decision to transform the Legation at Addis

¹ Baer, *Test Case*, 277.

² *IDI*, serie 8, vol.V, N.186, 209.

³ *Ibid.*, N.261, 296-297.

⁴ *Ibid.*, N.302, 342. G184

⁵ *Ibid.*, N.409, 455. G 189

Ababa into a Consulate and asked the Government of H.M. the King of Italy, Emperor of Abyssinia, to take equivalent steps.

Ciano said, "This is considered equivalent to recognition of the Empire, for the Japanese Government makes no distinction of any importance between recognition *de facto* and recognition *de jure*. The Ambassador, in the course of making his communication, asked for assurances for Japanese interests and trade in Abyssinia, which I did not fail to provide."¹

2) The Japanese Government informed Italy that the Hsing-King Government² had expressed its pleasure at the opening of a Consulate in Manchuria at Mukden. The Japanese Ambassador advised the following procedure: to instruct Auriti to send a note to the Ambassador of Manchukuo in Tokyo asking for an exequatur for the new Consulate.

Ciano indicated that "The Japanese Government draws attention to the advisability of keeping the two gestures distinct so that they may not appear to be a case of a *quid pro quo*."³

The Japanese Ambassador was also anxious to inform Ciano that Japanese Government wished to achieve a consolidation of the good relations which had been established between Italy and Japan, by tightening the bonds which united the two nations in the economic, cultural, political, military fields, etc. Ciano replied that an agreement with Japan was both desired and hoped for by the Italian Government. In particular, before leaving the Japanese Ambassador was eager to express his own pleasure and that of his Government at Italian policy which aimed at combating the Bolshevik peril in the world by means of the struggle being waged in Spain.⁴

In the same month, Ciano communicated to Lojacono on reasons for the Italian Government's decision to set up a consulate-general in Manchuria, maintaining also, in any case, a friendly attitude toward China. Ciano suggested putting the following phrases on the first place in the telegram to Chinese Government:

l'Italia, Potenza ad interessi mondiali, anche in questa occasione non può non ispirare sua azione a principii di un sano realismo e non può quindi continuare ad essere assente da una regione politicamente e commercialmente importante come Manciukuò. Decisione istituire R. consolato generale Mukden corrisponde appunto a tale esigenza.⁵

In addition, Ciano emphasized to "far rilevare che atteggiamento vigile difesa assunto da governo fascista nei riguardi nella minaccia bolscevica rende necessario un osservatore vicino alla frontiera orientale sovietica." Despite that, "Ciò naturalmente non significa che R. governo intenda modificare suo atteggiamento di benevolo interessamento verso Cina. La vecchia collaborazione, alla quale l'Italia ha dato tanto apporto accompagnato spesso da non lievi sacrifici e che non ha trovato sempre corrispondenza da parte cinese, sarà mantenuta ed anzi accresciuta ma ci auguriamo che Cina voglia finalmente fare anch'essa qualche passo incontro a noi."¹ It can be seen that the key word "Great Power" as well as anti-bolshevism was made use of as the

¹ Ciano's *Diplomatic Papers*, 68-69.

² Hsing-King, seat of the Manchukuo Government.

³ Ciano's *Diplomatic Papers*, 68-69.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

⁵ *IDDI*, serie 8, vol.V, N.452, 505.

¹ *Ibid.*

motive of Italy's rapprochement with Japan.

With the establishment of consulate in Manchukuo, Fascist Italy and Japan started to negotiate for a commercial agreement concerning Ethiopia¹ and Manchukuo,² though the Fascist Regime soon realised that was not an easy matter, because of the fact that “Cosiddetto porto aperto in Manciuuria è stato finora tale soltanto per i giapponesi, i quali non solo hanno frapposto ogni ostacolo allo stabilimento di nuove ditte straniere ma sono anche andati gradualmente eliminando quelle colà esistenti e la stessa Germania³ non è rimasta finora soddisfatta del modo col quale è stata data esecuzione dal Manciuukuo al suo accordo commerciale⁴.”

When the Chinese Government asked whether the establishment of Italian consulate in Manchukuo entailed recognition of Manchukuo, Lojacono denied and explained “nomina nostro console Mukden [...] non contenevano riferimento alcuno al riconoscimento e che istituzione nostro consolato in città diversa dalla capitale e mancato invio di qualsiasi rappresentante con carattere diplomatico, confermavano che non vi era riconoscimento formale.” Lojacono then requested a statement of the Foreign Minister in order to “dire che intesa tra l'Italia e il Giappone non implicano alcun riconoscimento del nuovo regime in Manciuuria.”⁵

To respond the Lojacono's request, Ciano on December 12 stated as follows:

R. Governo non ha finora preso in considerazione eventualità di procedere al riconoscimento formale del Manciuukuo. R. Governo ha deciso di istituire un R. consolato in Mukden allo scopo di assicurare ai nostri interessi in quella zona la stessa adeguata protezione di cui già godevano interessi di altre Potenze. Se per tale istituzione è stata necessaria una presa di contatto col governo mancese, ciò non ha tuttavia modificato nostro ben noto atteggiamento verso la Cina. Anzi, intesa stabilitasi fra Italia e Giappone potrà in definitiva tornare utile alla stessa Cina in quanto contribuisce ad allontanare dall'Estremo Oriente pericolo comunista alla cui minaccia Cina non può rimanere indifferente.⁶

In short, Ciano indicated two considerations of Italian Government in this regard: 1) the other Powers had obtained interests in Manchukuo except Italy, thus as a Great Power, Italy could not

¹ With its victories in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and 1895 to win Taiwan, the Russo-Japanese War a decade later, and Korea's annexation in 1910, Japan joined the imperialist world dominated by the western powers. The Japanese looked to Europe's African holdings to find models on how to conquer and control colonies. They also thought their empire should lead the world's “coloured peoples” and block the West's colonial penetration into Asia. At the same time, the Japanese also wanted to join the West in Africa's economic exploitation. Seeing Ethiopia as a potential gateway, in the mid-1890s the government particularly attended to that country's dispute with Italy that culminated in 1895 and 1896 with the First Italy-Ethiopia War. For Europeans living in the Social Darwinist world of the early 20th century, Japan's rise as a formidable military and economic power provoked racial fears of the “Yellow Peril.” By 1933 and 1934 in the depths of the Great Depression, Tokyo's plans for Ethiopia fell within the broader scope of its basic commercial policy. On March 18, 1934, Mussolini proclaimed Italy's destiny for expansion. He justified his military buildup in Eritrea and Somaliland by denouncing Japanese penetration of Ethiopia and the modernization of Ethiopia's military. See J. Calvitt Clarke III, “An Alliance of the ‘Coloured’ Peoples: Ethiopia and Japan,” G. Bruce Strang, ed., *Collision of Empires*, 247.

² *IDI*, serie 8, vol.V, N.498, 552.

³ Il ministro Lojacono aveva già riferito su le reazioni provocate nelle sfere cinesi dall'accordo tedesco-nipponico che, rendendo più difficili le reazioni dell'U.R.S.S., si riteneva avrebbe consentito maggiore libertà al Giappone nella sua penetrazione in Cina. Tuttociò, secondo il ministro Lojacono, avrebbe spinto i dirigenti cinesi a ricercare una più stretta intesa con l'Unione Sovietica e con la Gran Bretagna, anzichè indurli ad una maggiore arrendevolezza di fronte a Tokio (T. 11678/332 R. del 27 novembre). *IDI*, serie 8, vol.V, N.509, 562, footnote.

⁴ Accordo per regolare il commercio tra Germania e Manciuukuo del 30 aprile 1936 (testo in MARTENS, vol. XXXVI, 350-353).

⁵ *IDI*, serie 8, vol.V, N.509, 562.

⁶ *IDI*, serie 8, vol.V, N.579, 652.

still be absent; 2) Italy instituted the consulate with a view to combat Communist threat in the Far East which would benefit China as well. Given the fact that the Anti-Comintern Pact between National Socialist Germany and Imperial Japan on 25 November 1936¹, it is not surprised to see the Ciano's announcement about combatting Communism in the Far East.

In February 1937, as Ambassador Lojacono's imminent departure, the Chinese leaders confirmed the friendly relations between China and Italy. Generalissimo, as Lojacono reported to Ciano, "dopo avere accennato lealmente alle difficoltà sorte a causa della S.d.N., ha riconosciuto sforzi compiuti da ambedue parti per cancellarne ogni traccia in modo da rendere oggi rapporti italo-cinesi perfettamente sereni e fiduciosi. Egli mi ha pregato di far conoscere a S.E. il Capo del Governo e a V. E. che confida sempre nell'amicizia personale loro e nell'assistenza dell'Italia." Madame Jiang Jieshi, wife of Generalissimo, "accennato alle difficoltà della successione Lordi aggiungendo che considera oramai Scaroni perfettamente a posto e come elemento che lavora per la Cina ispirando senso fiducia e sicurezza." Lojacono noted in particular,

Non bisogna infatti omettere che definizione politica italiana verso Cina, Giappone e Manciukuò, lungo da peggiorare nostra situazione in Cina, le ha dato una maggiore ragione di rispetto e di apprezzamento ed ha anche accresciuto possibilità per governo fascista di rendersi utile alla Cina di fronte al Giappone.²

Apparently, Lojacono had realised that to maintain the friendly relationship with China Italy in fact might have to tactfully deal with three parties: China, Japan and Manchukuo.

On the night of 7 July 1937, Chinese and Japanese troops opened fire in the vicinity of the Lugou (or Marco Polo) bridge, a crucial access-route to Beijing. What began as confused, sporadic skirmishing soon escalated into a full-scale battle in which Beijing and its port city of Tianjin fell to Japanese forces (July–August 1937). The retreat of Chinese force, to some extent, disappointed the Fascist Foreign Minister, Ciano, who wrote in his Diary:

Molta sicurezza della vittoria in Cina. Anch'io sono d'accordo. In definitiva i cinesi scapperanno. E quando cominciano a scappare, non li ferma più nessuno. Accelerato l'accordo anticomunista.³

With this disappointment, Fascist Regime's attention started to be diverted to Manchukuo. From July 1937 onwards, Cortese, the Italian consul-general in Mukden actively contacted with the authorities of Manchukuo – i.e. authorities of Kwantung Army – to strengthen and develop the relations between Italy and Manchukuo. He had first conversation with General Tojo, head of the General Staff of Kwantung Army, during which the latter reiterated "la formula secondo cui in realtà Giappone, nonchè combattere Cina, mira liberarla dalla piaga del comunismo di importazione straniera, che rende vano ogni sforzo verso indispensabile collaborazione dei due popoli. Oggi questo ha dovuto fare ricorso alla maniera forte."¹

The authority of Kwantung Army hoped to achieve an early and concrete result of the best way

¹ The pact recognized that "the aim of the Communist international, known as the Comintern, is to disintegrate and subdue existing States by all the means as its command; convinced that the toleration of interference by the Communist International in the internal affairs of the nations not only endangers their internal peace and social well-being, but is also a menace to the peace of the world desirous of co-operating in the defense against Communist subversive activities". See Ernst Presseisen, *Germany and Japan: A Study in Totalitarian Diplomacy 1933-1941* (Springer, 2013), 237.

² *IDI*, serie 8, vol.VI, N.159, 204.

³³ Ciano, *Diario (1937-1943)*, 37.

¹ *IDI*, Serie 8, Vol. VII, N.229, 275-276.

to develop the relationship between Italy and Manchukuo, which at that time “assumerebbe per il Giappone, e particolarmente per ambienti militari, un significato di straordinaria importanza dovuta alla loro influenza su future relazioni tra l’Italia e Giappone.”¹ Fascist Government proposed to achieve an agreement with Japan on following lines:

- 1) Riconoscimento della sovranità italiana su Etiopia.
- 2) Conclusione trattato di commercio sul tipo di quello tra Germania e Manciukuo². Per quanto riguarda quantitativi, sarebbero stabiliti per ora in base ai dati posseduti e con successivi ritocchi ogni anno in base all’esperienza.
- 3) Scambio di notizie da fornire alla stampa due Paesi per sventare manovre e false notizie di agenzie straniere.
- 4) Scambio di informazioni concernenti attività internazionale e politica.
- 5) Dichiarazione intenzioni iniziare quanto prima studio e trattative per creazione fabbrica italiana di aeroplani, nella cui costituzione apporto italiano sarebbe rappresentato da tecnici, mano d’opera specializzata macchine, ecc. Su questi punti, avrebbe dovuto richiedere altre amministrazioni che si sono riservate una proposta concreta, precisazioni.
- 6) Istituzione nelle rispettive capitali di rappresentanze diplomatiche, le quali servirebbero anche da strumento per applicazione accordo.
- 7) Durata di un anno, rinnovabile.³

Subsequently, these lines were under negotiations. Regarding point 3 and 4, they achieved a broad agreement. On the economic part, Cortese reported to Ciano, “si erano intestarditi a voler ricalcare accordo con Italia su quello tedesco-mancese, il quale impone Germania determinate cifre acquisto pari quadruplo vendita e saldare differenza in valuta. Dimostrandosi che Germania può concedere tale favore perché sua bilancia avversa col Manciukuo è compensata da sua bilancia favorevole col Giappone – il che non avverrebbe nel nostro caso – ho posto come condizione assoluta la parità fra acquisto e vendita e l’assenza di ogni impegno a una determinata cifra di acquisti. Il meccanismo degli scambi avverrebbe nella forma *clearing*.”⁴ In other words, Fascist Government attempted to share the interests of Manchukuo as many as Germany had obtained based on equal trade.

The point 5 of the aircraft engine factory, the Italian consul-general of Manchukuo communicated that such a factory,

era prevista nel quadro del nuovo piano quinquennale, la cui esecuzione, il fatto nuovo della guerra, ha per ora rinviato. Poiché però ho avuto notizie che, malgrado sospensione piano quinquennale, è allo studio impianto di una fabbrica di autocarri, ho chiesto fosse spostato in questo campo concessione prevista al numero 5. Ho dichiarato essere questa una condizione necessaria all’accordo, sia l’uno sia l’altro per avviare una collaborazione sullo stesso piano di quello della Germania, che ha fornito macchinari e ingegneri all’impianto altiforni Anshan, e sia per far conoscere in questi Paesi grado perfezionamento cui è giunta nostra industria.¹

¹ *IDI*, Serie 8, Vol. VII, N.229, 275-276.

² Trattato per il commercio tra Germania e Manciukuo del 30 aprile 1936 (testo in MARTENS, vol. XXXVI, 350-353).

³ *IDI*, Serie 8, Vol. VII, N.229, 275-276.

⁴ *Ibid.*, N.371, 445-447.

¹ *Ibid.*

The point 5, as Cortese predicted, “rischia di tirare per il lungo le trattative,” but the other points “sembrano oggi non lontane da una conclusione”. He expressed opinion on Italy’s participation in the industry of Manchukuo:

Né credo che portata e importanza partecipazione a impianto di una industria siano tali da risarcire i rischi. Giacché dove vi sono i giapponesi installati, la partecipazione effettiva a una gestione industriale, e cioè partecipazione con il carattere della continuità e della possibilità di controllo, non è concepibile, specie se si tratta di un ramo di produzione collegata alla difesa nazionale.

In realtà, anche nel caso di partecipazione all’impianto, tutto si riduce in definitiva a semplice vendita di macchinari, con in più l’ingaggio di tecnici per un determinato periodo, perché i tecnici giapponesi, appena capaci, prenderebbero il posto. Dopo di che si è messi fuori. Esodo avvenuto in questi 5 anni di pressoché tutte le imprese capitalistiche che erano prima installate in Manciuria non lascia illusioni al riguardo. Del resto di stessi tedeschi nella partecipazione all’impianto di Anshan non hanno preteso più che semplice fornitura macchinari e ingaggio a termine del personale tecnico.¹

Apart from Japan, the main competitor in Manchukuo was Germany. Although the consul saw that in Manchukuo there were “nuove occasioni vanno sorgendo dagli sviluppi della guerra in Cina,” whereas “Tedeschi ed americani, potenti industrialmente e da tempo impiantati nel Paese, e tedeschi forti anche per la circostanza di essere gli unici legati al governo mancese da un accordo, si trovano in condizione eccezionalmente favorevole.” Italians were actually, as Cortese stated, “ultimi venuti in Manciuria e industrialmente pressoché sconosciuti, avremmo bisogno di una buona spinta per portarci avanti più o meno in linea con gli altri e sfruttare l’occasione.”²

Accordingly, Cortese suggested two measures involved:

1) to conclude an agreement as soon as possible, Cortese was convinced “unico *atout* nelle nostre mani da cui sia possibile stabilizzare questa spinta è la possibile conclusione rapida di un accordo più vasto e completo di quello tedesco, e con clausola anche politica, concessione, questa, dell’unica cosa che ancora gli altri non hanno ancora dato – ma che il governo tedesco in forma privata potrebbe ancora dare prima di noi – e a cui i due governi giustamente tengono, facendola beninteso pagare con *clearing* più favorevole di quello tedesco, e cioè bilanciato e senza impegno da parte nostra di maggiori acquisti, nonché con concessione immediata di una buona fornitura derrate alimentari e concessione da loro parte di partecipazione ad altri impianti.”³

2) to deal with supplies, “dati i bisogni della motorizzazione dell’esercito giapponese e i piani futuri di attrezzamento economico nel Manciukuo e Nord Cina potrebbe rivelarsi di assai vasta portata e durata.”⁴

In conclusion, the negotiations regarding industrial participation of Italy, Cortese was convinced, “anche se momentaneamente staccate dall’accordo, potrebbero ugualmente proseguire per la loro via arrivando forse a migliori condizioni, sia per la fiducia derivata dall’accordo, sia per la diretta impressione che forniture in forma privata darebbero della nostra potenzialità industriale e sia

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

soprattutto per avere già vinto gli impedimenti e messo in moto la ruota degli scambi.”¹

To respond, Ciano telegraphed on October 20, saying:

il forte sbilancio tra le importazioni e le esportazioni tra Italia e Manciuria rendeva impossibile una soluzione basata sul *clearing* e che pertanto restava come unica possibilità interessante «quella di far valere preponderanza nostri acquisti regolati in divisa, per assicurarsi importanti forniture pagabili a loro volta in valuta forte. »²

The same difficulties as Italy had confronted in the cooperation with Nationalist Government; namely, lack of strength of capital and economic foundations, the Italian participation had to be limited to the range of supplies payable.³

Although the economic cooperation between Italy and Manchukuo seemed to be limited, the recognition was finally done in November 1937.⁴ Before that, the Fascist Government used to convince the National Government to accept the mediation of Italy and Germany in the recent Sino-Japanese conflict. Ciano recalled in his diary about his conversation with Chen Gongbo⁵:

L’ho trovato, invecchiato, e, fuori del suo mondo, molto meno brillante di quanto non lo fosse nei miei ricordi. Ho con lui svolto questa tesi: il Giappone vi travolgerà militarmente, le democrazie non vi daranno nessun aiuto pratico. La sola salvezza per voi si può trovare nei negoziati diretti per il tramite italo-tedesco. Tanto prima, tanto meglio. Ho capito che i cinesi contano sull’ampiezza del territorio, ma non ricordano che i punti vitali della Cina sono sul mare o sui fiumi e che la flotta nipponica agisce incontrastata. Ha telegrafato a Chiang Kai-shek il mio punto di vista.⁶

Chen even asked Ciano to “sondare a Tokio,” in Ciano’s name, “le condizioni eventuali di pace”. Ciano, however, wrote “Mi ha lasciato capire che il riconoscimento del Manchukuo potrebbe venire accordato.” Moreover, in the conversation between Mussolini and Chen Gongbo, with Ciano’s presence, the Duce reiterated “L’unica via d’uscita è la mediazione italo-tedesca. Nessuna speranza nelle armi cinesi: meno ancora in quelle straniere.” In addition, Ciano wrote on 19 November:

Può darsi che ci si avvii verso la mediazione. A Shanghai sono depressi. Cora [Ambasciatore d’Italia a Chongqing] telegrafa che ha visto T. V. Soong [Ministro degli Esteri] per la prima volta depresso. La cosa mi

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., footnote.

³ Cortese said to Ciano on 25 November: “Permettomi esprimere convinzione che il vasto mercato di prodotti industriali brevettati e di licenze di fabbricazione costituito dalla Manciuria e Nord Cina resterà probabilmente riservato, anche dopo completati i primi impianti, a quelle Potenze che si saranno assicurata la collaborazione in questa prima fase del programma di industrializzazione della Manciuria.” See “Eventuale partecipazione della Fiat al programma di penetrazione economica in Manciuria,” *IDDI*, Serie 8, Vol. VII, N.618, 727-728.

⁴ On November 8, Shanghai fell to the Japanese. China had committed some of her best troops to the protracted battle for this great seaport and although those troops had fought long and well, they had suffered severe losses, in both men and material. The weakened Chinese forces were unable to put up much resistance to the Japanese with their superior equipment and air support, and rapidly fell back. The Chinese losses at Shanghai made the fall of the capital at Nanjing almost a foregone conclusion. Then Jiang Jieshi transferred the capital of National Government to Chongqing. About the early years of Second Sino-Japanese War see David Murray Horner, *The Second World War: The Pacific* (Taylor&Francis, 2003); James C. Hsiung, *China’s Bitter Victory: The War with Japan 1937-1945* (New York: M. E. Sharpe publishing, 1992); Peter Harmsen, *Shanghai 1937: Stalingrad on the Yangtze* (Casemate, 2013).

⁵ Chen Gongbo (陈公博), sent by Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi to Italy.

⁶ Ciano, *Diario (1937-1943)*, 57.

colpisce perché T. V. Soong è un forte. Ho telegrafato a Cora di parlare con lui secondo le istruzioni che mandai il 28 ottobre e sulla linea dei miei colloqui con Chang-Kung-Pao.¹

The Japanese Government informed Rome that Japan was preparing to recognize the Franco regime, and asked for Italy's recognition of Manchukuo. Yet, Ciano replied that "Io non avrei nulla in contrario, allo stato degli atti, ma converrà concordarsi con Berlino."² Tokyo asserted that:

Vi sono forse altri Stati fin da ora pronti a tale riconoscimento ed egli vorrebbe che l'Italia non fosse seconda a nessuno.³

Prior to make decision, Ciano sent telegram to Berlin in order to ask for the attitude of Germany regarding a *de jure* recognition of Manchukuo, "per la possibilità che si presenta di piazzarci favorevolmente nello Stato mancese ed infine per ricambiare il leale atteggiamento nipponico nei confronti della questione etiopica, il Duce sarebbe favorevole a procedere senz'altro al riconoscimento del Mancukuo".⁴

Up to the end of November, the German Government replied that Germany:

1) non, poteva da parte sua procedere al riconoscimento ora;⁵

2) non aveva però obiezioni a che Italia, volendolo, procedesse al riconoscimento per conto proprio.⁶

On 27 November 1937, Ciano informed Berlin that Italy had decided to proceed with the recognition of Manchukuo and to leave the League of Nations. November 29, Ciano issued formal communication to both Tokyo and Mukden about Italy's decision on recognition. He wrote in diary on 28 November:

Domani, si riconosce il Manchukuo. L'ho comunicato stamani a Hotta, che ne è stato molto lieto. Stiamo guadagnando terreno. La politica leale e benevola che conduciamo ci lega gli amici, che le incertezza e i tentennamenti ci allontanerebbero.⁷

That recognition resulted in the crisis of Italo-Chinese relations. The Ambassador of China in Rome requested for explanations on November 30, and he feared that such an act would hinder Italy's eventual mediation in the Sino-Japanese conflict. Ciano, on the contrary, convinced the Chinese Ambassador "La Cina dovrà, per far la pace, riconoscere il Manchukuo. L'Italia, col suo gesto, le ha facilitato la cosa."¹ In Ciano's opinion,

¹ Ibid., 58-59.

² Ibid., 57.

³ *IDDI*, Serie 8, Vol. VII, N.568, 669-670.

⁴ *IDDI*, Serie 8, Vol. VII, N.572, 672-673.

⁵ On 16 November 1937, Konstantin von Neurath, German Foreign Minister, replied to Rome that the Chancellor was absent in Berlin and would return on 23, yet from his point of view, the recognition of Manchukuo: "1) In questo momento comprometterebbe definitivamente rapporti con Cina, allo stesso tempo diminuendo (contro interessi stesso Giappone) possibilità italo-tedesche di amichevoli pressioni su Nanchino per una intesa diretta con Tokio; 2) Dovrebbe comunque avere come contropartita concessione di equo privilegio pel commercio rispettivi Paesi nel Mancukuo." *IDDI*, Serie 8, Vol. VII, N.573, 673.

⁶ *IDDI*, Serie 8, Vol. VII, N.572, 672-673.

⁷ Ciano, *Diario (1937-1943)*, 61.

¹ Ibid., 63.

A settlement in the Far East would be useful in order to maintain Japan's military power intact for any future anti-Russian operation. On the other hand, it must prove acceptable to China too, for having offered resistance which was rendered possible by the 'critical period of disembarkation,' she has no means of halting the Japanese advance.¹

As a matter of fact, after the Italy's recognition of Manchukuo, Japan appeared to be more inclined to make the Germans instead of the Italians as "latori di un messaggio" to Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi. As Ciano indicated,

Hirota² ha incaricato i tedeschi a farsi latori di un messaggio a Chang-Kai-Shek, contenente le condizioni di pace. Noi siamo stati informati con due giorni di ritardo e ciò si è spiegato col fatto dei nostri cattivi rapporti con la Cina che ci rendono poco atti a far da pacieri. Ma i rapporti son cattivi proprio per la nostra lealtà con i giapponesi! Ho chiamato Hassel³ e Hotta ed ho detto loro che intendiamo partecipare alla fase successiva delle trattative. Hassel mi ha detto che tale è anche l'intenzione del suo Governo. Ma in fondo era felice della contrarietà: ogni volta che c'è un ostacolo tra noi e Berlino, ne è contento.⁴

Despite that Ciano was unhappy with Japan's neglect of Italy's role in mediation, he would always bear in mind the relations between Japan and Britain. As Nakano, the Japanese special envoy⁵ said to him "tra il popolo giapponese e la Gran Bretagna non potrà esserci mai amicizia".⁶ The unfriendliness between Japan and Britain, of course, would be beneficial to Fascist Italy. Ciano stated:

The alliance of three military empires the size of Italy, Germany and Japan, throws an unprecedented weight of armed strength into the balance of power. England will have to reconsider her position everywhere.⁷

With the recognition of Manchukuo, the brief cooperation between Fascist Italy and Nationalist China finally ended with the withdrawal of all the experts and military missions in China. As Scaroni recalled,

Ciò che per noi della Missione andava malissimo; anche perché dall'Italia giungeva qui la «bella» notizia, secondo la quale «la completa comprensione spirituale raggiunta tra l'Italia e il Giappone andava vieppiù consolidandosi in una alleanza vera e propria.» A danno della Cina che ci ospitava; naturalmente. Madame a sua volta piglierà la palla al balzo per dirmi che se veramente l'Italia per prima riconoscerà lo Stato fantoccio del Manchukuo, messo in piedi dal Giappone, lei stessa non sarà più in grado di aiutare ulteriormente la nostra Missione. Oltre 10.000 chilometri quadrati di territorio, coi suoi 30 milioni di abitanti, sarebbe una bella perdita anche per un paese come la Cina, che pur vanta 9 milioni e mezzo di chilometri quadrati di superficie e valuta la

¹ *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, 142-143.

² K. Hirota, Ministro degli Esteri del Giappone.

³ Ulrich von Hassel, ambasciatore tedesco a Roma.

⁴ Ciano, *Diario (1937-1943)*, 73-74.

⁵ Nakano, del Dragone nero del Giappone. Era latore di un messaggio al Duce del Principe Konoe [Presidente del Consiglio giapponese].

⁶ Ciano, *Diario (1937-1943)*, 71.

⁷ Galeazzo Ciano, *Hidden Diary, 1937-1938* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1953), 27.

sua popolazione a 500 milioni di anime.¹

At that time, the signing of the protocol containing Italy's adhesion to the Anti-Comintern Pact took place in Rome. On November 6, 1937, in the Palazzo Chigi, Ciano, Ribbentrop and Hotta put their signature to the document and immediately published the text which referred to the 1936 protocol and drew attention to the statement that Italy had been considered "an original signatory" along with Germany and Japan.²

In fact, Madame Jiang (Song Meiling) used to hope that Mussolini could maintain the policy of aeronautical mission, albeit the pressure of Japan. Scaroni said,

Per cominciare, Madame mi pregherà di telegrafare a Mussolini, in nome del Generalissimo, per chiedergli se in caso di conflitto ufficialmente dichiarato dal Giappone egli intende ritirare la Missione Aeronautica. La risposta non poteva essere che ovvia: ma lei vuol saperlo direttamente dal Duce, e subito. [...]

Madame s'è arrabbiata per la mancata risposta di Mussolini e ancor più per il discorso sibillino fattole dal nostro Ambasciatore Cora; il quale le ha parlato di «cattivi rapporti tra Italia e Cina.» Per colpa di quest'ultima, naturalmente.

«We don't beg – Se volete rimanere, bene; ma una risposta Mussolini ce la deve dare.»³

However, the reply of Mussolini was a decision to withdraw them. On December 19, 1937, the head of Italian Aeronautical Mission in China, Scaroni arrived in Hong Kong, leaving for Napoli (the other officers, under-officers and specialists travelled with their families), marked the end of his four years of stay in China. He commented in his memoir on the Fascist policy and his mission,

Così, alle angherie cui eravamo soggetti per effetto della spietata concorrenza commerciale, dovremo aggiungere le conseguenze negative di una nostra politica che ci portava sempre più contro la Nazione che ci ospitava. E questo per favorire un paese imbevuto di una mistica pazzesca, che nulla di buono porterà all'Italia.⁴

Tutto bene quindi per il ... Giappone e per l'Asse Roma-Tokyo-Berlino; tutto bene insomma per la politica italiana di «Grande Potenza». Assai meno bene invece per la più modesta politica di espansione aeronautica nostra nel lontano Oriente. Povera Missione, che a noi pareva tanto importante! Spazzata via come una farfalla investita da un ciclone, gonfiato dal più fanatico spirito di pazzesche ambizioni e di brama di conquista e di dominio.

Ma che vuole da noi il nostro Governo? Forse gioca il solito giochetto machiavellico e noi siamo destinati a farne le spese con mortificazioni d'ogni genere.⁵

At the same time, the last mediation of Germany in Sino-Japanese conflict ended with failure. In the spring of 1938, Hitler also decided to withdraw all the German advisers in China and stop selling arms to China.¹ The Nationalist Government, therefore, started to rely on the United States,

¹ Scaroni, *Missione militare aeronautica in Cina*, 36-37.

² *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, 140.

³ Scaroni, *Missione militare aeronautica in Cina*, 36-37.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹ About German mediation see James T. C. Liu, "German Mediation in the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-38," *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol.8, No.2 (1949): 157-171; Thomas Leroy Lauer, *German Attempts at Mediation of the*

Britain and Soviet Union from then on.¹

Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1938, Ph.D. dissertation of Stanford University, 1973; Feng Djen Djang, *The Diplomatic Relations between Germany and China since 1898* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936).

¹ About the assistance of US and the Soviet Union to China see Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-38* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964); Herbert v. Dirksen, *Moscow, Tokyo, London* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952); G. F. Kennan, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1941* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1960); Charles B. McLane, *Soviet Policy and the Chinese Communists, 1931-46* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

CONCLUSION

To answer the questions proposed in the beginning about “anni d’oro (golden years)”, as the conclusion, the synthesis can be drawn as follows:

First, to answer the question I have mentioned above in the introduction, which regarding the period of the first half of 1930s were called “golden years,” or this piece of history only justified that it was another failure of penetration policy of Fascist Italy, I prefer to argue that it seems to be a special period of bilateral relations comparing the former phases of communication between Italy and China. Prior to this period, for China, Italy was another imperialist Power who had come to China later than the first wave of Great Britain and France. It was in this period that Italy played a role of partner and a role of model to realize modernization. As a consequence, diplomatic legations of two countries were elevated to Embassies; diplomatic missions, the military missions in particular, and officials, experts in various fields exchanged more frequently than any other prior phases; the diplomatic communication was enhanced both in quantity and in quality. In relative sense, that those years were called “golden years” is reasonable. However it is also true that the “golden years” were motivated by an attempt of penetration of Fascist Regime. Moreover, the attempt was in the end proved to be a fact that the ideal was full, but the reality was very skinny. In other words, the Fascist Regime had drafted a blueprint for its penetration in China, while they found finally that they had overestimated the strength of both themselves and their object. For instance the economic agreement negotiated between two countries was never implemented because of the Italian scarcity of capital, the timidity of Italian entrepreneurs, together with the split, inefficiency, corruption and chaos within the Nanjing Government. In this sense, it can be seen as a failure.

Second, to answer the question about why it was the period from 1933 to 1937 that the partnership and cooperation could be possible, I argued for three points:

1) The Japanese armed invasion in China since September 1931 offered Fascist Italy an opportunity to involve in Chinese affairs. The Manchurian crisis firstly appeared as a scene for Fascist Regime to play its policy of “Great Power” and so-called “determining weight”. Besides, due to the pressure of Japanese invasion, asking for the assistance of Western Powers became an urgent need for poor and weak China, especially the military assistance, which gave the possibility to the presence of the Italian military missions and experts in China. Also, after the Manchurian crisis and battles in Shanghai, there was a temporary ceasefire between Japan and China in this period until 1937 that the full-scale Sino-Japanese war broke out. Consequently, the cooperation and diplomatic communication could proceed under a relative peaceful circumstance.

2) During the inter-war years, world politics seemed to be a multi-polar system. Europe, especially the Western Europe was still as a centre of world politics, in which Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy could be viewed as so-called major Powers. At the same time, the

Soviet Union, the United States and Japan was of increasing significance in the new multi-polar system of world politics. Since the Great Depression in 1929 and the rearmament of Germany, the old major Powers who possessed a greater share of interests in China, Britain and France in particular, had little time to take Chinese affairs into account, which offered more space for Japan and also gave Italy an illusion that this might be a chance for expansion.

3) The Chinese elites, had tried hard to implement the Western political theory in China for decades of years in order to construct and modernize a centralized and powerful government, felt increasingly disappointed and suspected about the original democratic system of classical Western Powers. They were forced to draw their attention to the other successful countries, such as Italy and Germany. I would not to judge whether it was true that the Blue Shirt Society and the New Life Movement were “Fascism” or not in the light of the ideological criteria of nowadays. What I want to say is that it is not important (concerning this period of history at least) how the people of later generation evaluate those “Fascism”, what is important is how people thought at that time. In other words, later people gave this label and tried to understand it. How people thought at that time determined their policy and action. Thus I attempt to reveal the considerations of Nationalist elites and understand their admiration for Fascist Regime. It was the admiration and urgent need for a model of successful modernization placed a base at which the partnership and cooperation in this period came to be possible.

Third, the cooperation between Fascist Italy and Nationalist China was doomed to be a brief period at that time. The factor of Japanese invasion came to be both the starting point and ending point in respect of Italo-Chinese cooperation. From the beginning, Japan was the only state of order and modernization from the Italian point of view. The Fascist Regime had in the end good reasons to choose Japan instead of China when Italy had to give up one as a partner; needless to say that Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan had so much in common on expansion. Thus they reached an understanding about exchange the recognition of Ethiopia and Manchukuo.

Apart from that, illusion of Nationalist Government vis-à-vis the League of Nations influenced its policy decision towards Italy. As a matter of fact, from the beginning, Fascist Italy and Nationalist China stand on the opposite two sides of the League. Fascist Italy was the revisionist of the Versailles-Washington System, including the League of Nations which presided by Great Britain and France. Nationalist China, on the contrary, longing for a permanent seat in the Council of the League and bearing in mind an illusion of justice and collective interests, with no doubt hoped to maintain it as the third party to intervene in Sino-Japanese conflict, and to force Japan to compromise.

Fourth, the China policy of Fascist Italy was characterized by the keyword “propaganda”. Although the Fascist Regime asserted that Italy had interests in China which could not be neglected, its cooperation policy towards China, in fact, was rather motivated by propaganda of Fascism. As I have examined above that the economic agreement was not implemented, the interests obtained by Italy in the end were still limited. The only part of partial success was the military missions in China, including acceptance of Chinese military officers to Italy, showed more significance of propaganda than realistic benefit, though there existed purchase agreement

accompanied with those military missions. Fascist Italy enjoyed the admiration of Nationalist China; goal of propaganda thus was achieved through those military missions as well as the educational mission of Fascism.

All in all, on the part of Nationalist China, in 1930s, two factors make the cooperation possible:

First and foremost, the mission of reconstruction. Due to decades of chaos and disorder, the Nationalist Party was very eager to achieve political unification, economic consolidation, and strengthening military power, which were bound to obtain the assistance of Foreign Powers. As a result, the Nationalist authorities had attempted to moderate the emotional nationalism which was overwhelming at that time. They preferred peaceful measures – negotiations with Great Powers – to revise the old unequal treaties and to restore the complete sovereignty step by step instead of making use of force, violence, boycott etc. Thus the foreign policy of National Government, in principle, was characterized by conciliation and cooperation, even when she was confronted with the Japanese large-scale invasions, negotiations and mediation of third power became her instant reaction. Indeed, in the first half of 1930s, the League of Nations played such a “third power” role in Chinese foreign affairs which took the relations with Imperial Japan as the essential question.

To understand the Chinese belief in the League of Nations, it is necessary to refer to the Chinese philosophy of foreign affairs, which was in full harmony with the League of Nations in spirit as well as in letter. As a matter of fact, ever since the beginning of civilization, Chinese political thinking has been aiming at perfecting a world order which embraces all mankind and has peace as the final goal. This philosophy is embodied in the Confucian teaching of “Da Tong (大同),” which means Great Commonwealth or Great Unity. Its foundation is based on reason, justice and a feeling of sympathy toward all mankind. Such an ideal has been cherished by the Chinese people for centuries prior to the formation of the League.¹ Nurturing in this philosophy of peace based on reason and justice, when President Wilson presented the draft Covenant unanimously agreed to by the Commission on the League of Nations, Dr. Gu Weijun (Wellington Koo) made the following remarks in the plenary session on February 14th, 1919:

Speaking for a third of the total population represented here in this conference, and therefore, of the proposed League, it is fitting that I should add a word of endorsement to the project now before us. Not only the substance of the provisions of the draft Covenant, but the spirit underlying this whole document: the spirit of fair-mindedness and friendship, and of concord and conciliation [...] It will always be China's pleasant duty to co-operate with other Powers in the organization and development of the League of Nations, one which, in my mind, will be the greatest institution mankind will have seen.²

The threat of Japanese ambitious imperialism was the second factor which prompted the cooperation between Nationalist China and the Western Powers. It can be seen that the Nationalist leaders were convinced that more foreign Powers involved in Chinese affairs, more security they

¹ One of the characteristics Confucius deals with world peace is the principle of reciprocity, which means equality of relationship and a standard for common observation. In other words, “do not do unto others what you will not others do unto you”. Liang Chi-Chao, *History of Chinese Political Thought* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Co., 1930), 7, 42.

² As quoted in Lau-King Quan, *China's Relations with the League of Nations*, Ph.D dissertation of New York University, 1936.

might obtain. In other words, they wanted to use the European-American forces to counter Japan which in the 1930s had become the top dangerous imperialist in China. Those European-American countries had more interests in China, they would be more active to suppress the exclusive ambition of Japan towards China. As a result, the Nationalist Government asked for assistance and cooperation not only to Britain, France, and the United States, but also to Germany and Italy. That was a major significance of so-called “Open Door” policy in Chinese perspective.

Confronting Japan’s invasion, however, the international situation left Nanjing Government few options. The British tended to sympathize with Japan, blaming the Chinese for trying to undermine Japan’s position, which was based on treaties, and denounced Chinese talk of going to war as foolish. The French Government likewise did not view Japan’s actions with any sense of opprobrium and did not want the League to become wrecked on an issue that was not an act of war on Japan’s part. More importantly, the French authorities worried about Germany. Although for the moment, a European crisis was not imminent, the French did not want to be preoccupied with the distant Sino-Japanese dispute as a crisis should break out closer to home. Besides, confronting Japan could ultimately threaten French Indochina, and given the hostility toward Communism and Comintern activities, France did not want to discourage the Japanese from pushing northward.¹

The two non-League members – the United States and the Soviet Union, the former, as it reeled from the Great Depression, could not entirely sympathize with Japan’s economic and demographic problems that justified Japan’s expansion into Manchuria. Nevertheless, Washington hesitated to brand Japan an aggressor, for it did not want to be dragged into war. Japan’s actions were immoral but understandable, since it needed to preserve order on the continent to protect her vital security interests against Bolshevism. Since Japanese expansion into Manchuria posed no security threat to the US, Washington rejected economic sanctions or military actions against Japan. As for the Soviet Union, relations between Nanjing and Moscow had not been restored due to the Generalissimo’s policy of suppressing Communists. Indeed, the Soviets worried about the creation of a Japanese colony on its border and the potential for Japanese expansion into Mongolia. While the fact then was that no other power wanted to restrain Japan, it seemed to be impossible for Moscow alone to counter Japan. As a result, the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Japan.² Under this situation, Italy’s participation in collective mediation vis-à-vis Sino-Japanese conflict became acceptable especially for helpless Nanjing Government.

In fact, the cooperations with Germany and Italy, in 1930s were of particular importance for the Nationalist Government. Take the Italy for example, as aforementioned, the interests of Italy in China were indeed quite limited before 1932, thus the question comes: why did Nanjing Government seem very enthusiastic about Fascist Italy’s participation in China’s reconstruction? The reason mainly lies in the Chinese admiration for “Fascism”. Although it is true that Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi publicly denied the possibility to implement “Fascism” in China, the archives in this dissertation had proved his particular interest in Fascist party, dictatorship,

¹ Stephen G. Craft, *V. K. Wellington Koo and the Emergence of Modern China* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 100.

² Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East, 1933-41: Moscow, Tokyo and the Prelude to the Pacific War* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 5-8; Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-73* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 200-201.

organization, education, mobilization and so on. Exactly, he intended to achieve a combination – to utilize the effective organization of Fascist Party, method of state mobilization, militarization of people and centralization of political power (actually, the dictatorship), at the same time to insist on the Chinese theory (traditional moral and ethics as well as theory of Three People's Principle). Guomindang, in short, had seen the Communism defeated democracy, yet Fascism defeated Communism; thus they believed the "Fascist" regime could help to suppress Chinese Communism which was viewed by Jiang Jieshi as the most dangerous threat to Nanjing Administration, even more than Japan. That was the policy so-called "domestic stability takes precedence over resisting foreign invasion". Until 1936, Generalissimo Jiang had spared no effort to eliminate Chinese Communists army. The Air Force which was recently set up in 1933-34 with assistance of America and Italy was ordered to bomb the Red Army instead of resistance to Japanese invasion.¹

On the part of Fascist Italy, its motive of expansion at first was certainly to gain economic interests in such a huge market like China. Particularly, in 1930s, the international situation in the Far East seemed to be favourable for Fascist Italy's penetration in China: the rise of Japan was changing the pattern of old semi-colonial dominion of Britain, France and America in China, especially the attention of Britain and France was drawn back to Europe as the revival of Germany; the competition between US and Japan made Fascist Italy more comfortable because she did not have to counter Japan alone in the Far East. As a result, the Fascist Government decided to take this opportunity. However, in the end, as the Japanese exclusive ambition towards China developed to a full-scale war, the Fascist Government's eyes accordingly transferred to the puppet regime Manchukuo. In this sense, the China policy of Fascist Government was fairly opportunistic.

As a matter of fact, the Japanese aggression exposed the contradictions between the dominant internationalist rhetoric and the material interests that the Great Powers held in China. Since both Britain and France were afraid of endangering their large economic interests in the Far East by blatantly opposing Japanese military power,² Italy, by contrast, was unrestrained by the intention to defend the established economic interests in China, considering that her interests there was so limited. Consequently, the Italian foreign policy towards China seemed to enjoy a larger degree of autonomy; namely less vested interests in China enabled Fascist diplomacy to carry on a more flexible foreign policy, based on a pragmatic, impartial approach, aimed at preventing the clear-cut prevalence of either China or Japan before 1936.³ Due to the fact that from 1926 onwards, the Fascist foreign policy was characterized by a change in the nature of Italian expansionism: centralization and state intervention came to dictate foreign economic policy and the free trade orientation was gradually abandoned,⁴ the brief cooperation with Nationalist China also reflected this character. The result was that those major industries, military industry in particular, were subject to foreign policy, which in the end was proved to be marginal benefit of Fascist Italy.

¹ Wen wen, *Secret Archives of Air Force*, 166.

² Ann Trotter, *Britain and East Asia 1933-1937* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 1.

³ Serri, "Fascist Imperialism and the Italian Arms Trade," 438.

⁴ Luca de Caprariis, *Fascism and Italian Foreign Policy: 1922-1928*, Ph.D dissertation of University of Wisconsin-Madison (April 1998), 107.

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