

10 *The twelfth generation*

The most prominent figures of the 12th generation are Lodovico (of the green line of Valmadrera), and Giuseppe (of the blue line of Egidio). Both were to become Senators of the Kingdom.

The Giuseppe mentioned above was my grandfather, and was the one who had the most success in entrepreneurial activities outside of the family's traditional silk business.

Also of interest are the lives of certain women of this generation, especially that of the wife of Count Belgiojoso, Ernestina, or Auntie Mamà, as she was called.

The story of Giuseppe's younger brother, Luigi, is reserved for the next chapter.

PIERO GAVAZZI (1854-1932)

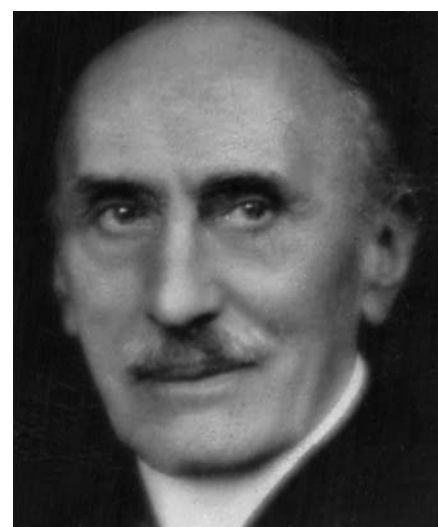
Piero was born in Milan on August 8, 1854, and died there on May 4, 1932. He graduated in engineering from the Polytechnic of Milan in 1875. Besides running the Pietro Gavazzi Company, it is he who was responsible for the founding and setting up of Gavazzi & Co., which manufactured ribbons and trimmings in pure silk and blended silk for hat factories. His address was Via Giuseppe Verdi no. 6 in Milan but he lived for some time with his brother Lodovico at n. 37, Via Monte Napoleone, and also in Valmadrera.

The Gavazzi & Co. Ribbon Manufacturers

This was a very successful company indeed. Interesting facts can be read about it in the information sheet of the 1900 Universal Exhibition of Paris. The company, based at no. 57, Foro Bonaparte, Milan, was established in 1881 and registered on February 7, 1882 by Lodovico in the General Register of Dealers and Tradesmen – Arts and Commerce. The first office of the limited partnership was at n. 7, Via Mazzini, in Milan.

On February 15, 1884 Pietro reconfirmed the company in the same register.

On June 2, 1898 a further record was entered that, by deed dated February 19, 1890, the term of the limited partnership Gavazzi & Co., having in Milan a business for the manufacturing of ribbons in silk, cotton and other fabrics, as well as linings for hats and similar products, was extended to include other limited partners, increasing the company capital to 370,000 lira. Pietro was the Sole Director and free partner¹.



Piero Gavazzi
(1854-1932).

¹ On January 9, 1886 the Mayor of Valmadrera sent to the sub-prefect of Lecco a list of the factories existing in the borough, in which it writes that the Gavazzi & Co. at Molino Inferiore manufactured silk ribbons and had 99 male workers and 85 female workers, plus 26 boys and 53 girls, for a total of 263 employees.



The ribbon factory
Gavazzi & C. in
Calolziocorte

The factories were totally mechanised. There was one factory in Valmadrera with 125 loom-operators plus 280 workers and another factory in Calolzio, in the province of Bergamo, with 100 loom-operators and 220 workers. The company, with over 300 power looms, was the most important in Italy for the manufacture of ribbons; it used the most advanced equipment and machinery, including machines for fixing, and the best methods for every stage of processing. In 1900 the factory in Calolzio was enlarged.

In 1897, Gavazzi & Co. received the First Class gold medal for industrial merit from the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce; in Turin (1898), the Diploma of Honour, and in Como (1899) a non-competition certifi-

cate of merit. In other events Piero was a member of the jury panel.

The company, as the above-mentioned information sheet tell us, was represented by the following offices:

- Vienna: G. Forster, 18 Riemergasse;
- Berlin: Kuller & Hermann, 24 Grnstrasse;
- Barcelona: Giuseppe Guglielmi, Barbara no. 16;
- Costantinople: Altendorf & Wright;
- Alexandria, Egypt: Giorgio Calzetti;
- Como: Alessandro Galetti, Via Garibaldi no. 12;
- Milan: Central office, Via Meravigli no. 14.

In the *Guida illustrata descrittiva di Lecco e territorio*, published by the «Pro Lecco» Company in 1893, we read that the Gavazzi silk ribbon mechanical weaving factory of Valmadrera had a special importance in the weaving industry.

In their book *Le industrie della seta all'Esposizione Voltiana 1899*², R. Pinchetti and A. Lenticchia give us this description: «In addition, the company Gavazzi & Co. of Milan, if not the only company then certainly the main one presenting at the Voltiana Exhibition ribbons of pure and blended silk, displayed a varied collection of their speciality. The ribbons presented in the competition range in width from half a centimetre to approximately 20 centimetres. Among the types on display, both black and coloured, some were double-faced, others velvety, many were of watered silk and there were even a few pleated samples.

Regarding the merits, real and apparent, of the ribbons manufactured by this Company we reserve judgement, since it is not possible to examine them thoroughly through a display case window.

We feel it our duty, nevertheless, to emphasise that this very distinguished Company was also awarded a prize for industrial merit by the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, consisting in a first class gold medal with certificate».

Gavazzi & Co. soon became established in foreign markets as well, exporting on a large scale,

² Published by Tip. Cooperativa Comense, Como, 1990.

especially to England, and competing with the largest French, Swiss and German factories. At the beginning of the 20th Century the company was faced with great difficulties, especially due to the lack of certain complementary industries for producing dressings, cardboard articles, etc., which foreign companies had at their disposal, and which they had to produce themselves with special equipment.

Today the Gavazzi Ribbon Factory still exists and is owned by the Torrani family, the children of Maria Orsola Gavazzi (of the Valmadrera branch, born on July 4, 1908). It is now, however, a small thing compared to the extensive turnover of its parent company, which specialises in woven fibre glass, with considerable commercial success.

The manufacturing centres are still in Calolzio Corte, where the original factory was located, and in Arcore.

The Italian Insurance Company and the Accident Insurance Company

The end of the 19th Century was characterised by the rapid growth of industrialisation and an increase in the number of workers; consequently, industrial accidents also became more frequent, making the need for protection more urgent.

The main companies chose to enter the new sector of insurance, and this involved creating a specialised company organisation, which would be dedicated exclusively to insurance.

Pressed by this new necessity, in 1898 the Adriatica Insurance Company founded in Milan the Italian Insurance Company, with an initial capital of 5 million lira. The Chairman was Carlo Compas de Brichanteau and the Managing Director was Giovanni Pavia. Later, from 1899 onwards, Ermanno Diez took over the position of Managing Director and Piero became Chairman³.

The company dealt with insurance and re-insurance in the accidents and public liability branches.

Also in 1898 the Italian Fire Insurance Co-operative created the Accident Insurance Association, again in Milan. This association, of which Piero was Chairman, specialised in collective insurance and flourished under the guidance of General Manager Natale Cesaris.

Other activities

In 1886 Piero became, along with his brother Lodovico, a member of the Town Council of Valmadrera, of which he was later to be Mayor (1906).

In addition, he was a member of the Italian Industrialists' Association for the Prevention of Industrial Accidents and of the Co-operative Committee for the Assistance of Emigrant Workers in Europe and the Near East.

From 1891 to 1896 he was a member of the board of directors of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Trades.

³ The Board of Directors was composed of: Piero Gavazzi, Chairman; G. Biraghi, E. Amman, P. Bonacossa, C. Castellini, E. De Angeli, M. De Vecchi, F. Dubini, F. Dumontel, L. Erba, E. Gadda, E. Gerbi, C. Mangili, A. Nathan, G.B. Pirelli, A. Riva, E. Sala, C. Saldini, R. Sigg and P. Vallardi.

He was board member of the Italian Association of the Industry and Commerce of Silk⁴, and of the «Fire and Life Insurance Co-operative».

Piero was also the initiator and designer of the monument erected in honour of King Humbert I, who was killed on July 29, 1900.

The monument was unveiled in Piazza della Chiesa, in Valmadrera, on September 14, 1902⁵. The Honours Committee for King Humbert I was made up of Piero and other prominent figures of Valmadrera.



Orsola Stabilini
(1855-1929),
wife of Piero Gavazzi.

The marriage with Orsola Stabilini

Piero married Orsola Stabilini (31.10.1855 - 30.7.1929), the daughter of Filippo Stabilini and Rachele Panigatti.

The first child of Piero and Orsola, Maria, died in her sixteenth year, in 1896. The diary of Ernestina (the future Aunt Mamà), Piero's first cousin, who was 24 years old at the time, gives us this account: «Wednesday, September 16, 1896 – On Sunday evening we left for Casargo to attend Maria's funeral! We slept in Lecco and in the morning at four o'clock, under a terrible downpour, we took a carriage and crossed the Valsassina region.

We shall never forget the exemplary resignation of the whole family.

Orsola is a true model of a Christian martyr. She herself had dressed her little angel and placed her in her coffin. Then, while encouraging her Piero to be strong, she accompanied her to the church and the little chapel, where they sat with her until nightfall and then took her to Valmadrera.

What virtue and what strength there was in that grief-stricken mother! Aunt Angela was also admirable. Vittoria, Lodovico and the others had less courage and were unable to control their terrible grief.

Yesterday was the day of the funeral in Valmadrera, but certainly the procession of Casargo, formed of only a few close relatives and pious mountain people, spoke more to the heart than the immense procession of acquaintances and friends, who had returned from their summer residences to fulfil a religious duty but, even in the midst of such grief, could not help adding an air of worldliness to the event!

Poor Maria - an angel predestined for heaven! Knock always and obtain, with your prayers, a little comfort for your poor parents and your good grandparents!

Mother gave me a few words to read at the tomb in Casargo, but I was crying so hard that it was impossible for me to pronounce a single word.

One of the Stabilini family read that sad farewell in my stead, which was greatly appreciated by Orsola, Aunt Angela and Piero».

⁴ During this office he was signatory of a petition to Parliament for a bill, already approved by the Senate and presented to the House, regarding measures for accidents at work, in occasion of the session of May 26, 1892. The document contested several points of the bill, which referred to the silk industry as «an industry that in itself is not hazardous and is still suffering a profound slump, the solution to which, unfortunately, appears far off». It goes on to say that «the institution of compulsory insurance may result overly burdensome and therefore become detrimental to the workers, possibly making it necessary to further lower the already low salaries».

⁵ The monument was 8 m high - 2 m elevation in tuff, 2.25 m base, including frames, and 3.30 m for the obelisk, which had a base of 0.55 m in width. It was sculpted by Carlo Villa.



Period postcard showing the square of Valmadrera.

LODOVICO GAVAZZI (1857-1941)

Lodovico was born in Milan on July 17, 1857. He was famous most of all for having been first a member of Parliament and subsequently a Senator of the Realm, but he also played a very important role in the industrial and political life of the period.

He dedicated a great amount of energy to the silk-throwing factory in Valmadrera and, having by this time become an influential representative of the silk industry sector, was presented as a candidate in the political elections of 1892.

On April 22, 1881 Lodovico married Vittoria Stabilini (13.5.1859 -16.12.1944), the daughter of Filippo Stabilini and Rachele Panigatti, and therefore sister to Orsola, Piero's wife.

In 1941 they celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary with their very numerous offspring (who totalled almost a hundred). The event was recorded in the newspapers.

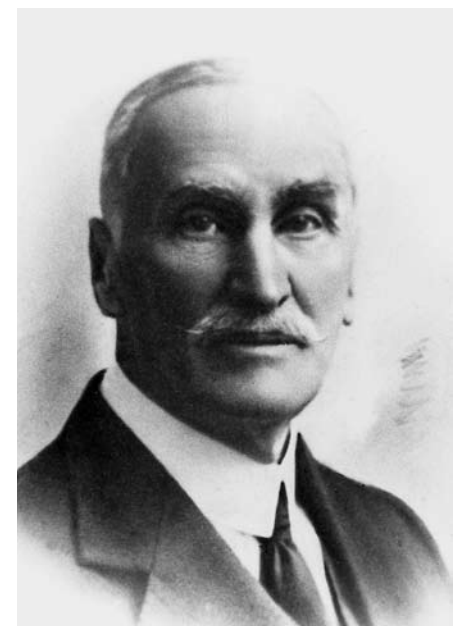
He lived first in Milan, at n. 14 Via Cusani, then at n.37 Via Monte Napoleone (both Gavazzi houses), and later at n. 10 Via Bigli; from 1903 to 1920 he lived at n. 7 Via Fatebenefratelli, and then at n. 35 Via Moscova, all within a couple of kilometres of each other, in the centre of Milan.

He had his office in n. 8 Via Verdi, next to La Scala. He also lived at n. 35 Viale Majno, with an office at n. 12 Via Solferino (1931), while keeping the «silk office» in Via Cusani, at n. 14.

He followed world events closely, and paid particular attention to what was happening in the countries beyond the Alps.

In 1893 he went to the United States, and on his travels through the country he made a number of visits to industrial complexes, exercising his considerable observational skills.

He later travelled to Russia to procure fuel oil for his engines.



Senator Lodovico Gavazzi (1857-1941).



Vittoria Stabilini
(1859-1944),
wife of Lodovico Gavazzi.

In 1910 he travelled to Canada to sell the silk from his factories.

Lodovico was a successful man who matured in an environment that blended strong Catholic values and a Liberal view of the economy.

He belonged to a great number of institutes and associations, including the following: the Association of Italian Industrialists and Silk Traders; the Lombard Society for Fishing and Farming; the Co-operative Committee for the Assistance of Emigrant Workers in Europe and the Near East; the Italian Alpine Club; the People's Association; the Italian Red Cross; the Italian Dante Society, and the Italian Industrialists' Association for the Prevention of Industrial Accidents.

He was Chairman of the Charitable Institution for the Blind and Needy of the Province of Como; the Vonwiller & Co. Bank; The Eritrea Company; Piero Gavazzi Lt and Viscosa of Pavia.

He was Vice Chairman of the Italian Colonial Society and Piero Gavazzi Silk Manufacturers.

He was Board member of the Italian Discount Bank (member of the Central Committee); the Italian Banking Society (later to become part of the Italian Discount Bank), the Italo-British Society and the Italian Silk Society.

In 1896 he is recorded as having been a member of the Town Council of Valmadrera (together with his brother Piero)⁶.

In 1897 he is recorded as having been in the Committee of honour for the monument to Giuseppe Parini in Bosisio (headed by Count Lodovico Melzi d'Eril).

He died in Bellano at the age of 85, on November 5, 1941.

Election as a Member of Parliament

In November 1892 Lodovico was elected to the lower house of Parliament in the Moderate-Liberal faction of the Lombard Right Wing, which represented the interests of the new entrepreneurs.

His antagonists were very varied figures. One was the lawyer Mario Martelli, a former Constitutional supporter, then liberal, and later radical, who at the time, however, was sup-

⁶ From an extract of the Council meeting minutes: «Councillor Gavazzi Lodovico, while casting no doubt whatsoever on the observations made by the Chairman and by Councillor Carlo Ciceri regarding the religious education provided by the teaching staff, suggests that such should follow the relative final exams, as established in article 325 of the Casati Law of November 13, 1859.

After some discussion between the Chairman, who was of the idea that the need for special measures did not exist, and Councillor Gavazzi Lodovico, who maintained that articles 315 and 325 of the above Law should be observed, the latter formulated and asked the Chairman to put to the vote the following Agenda: The Town Council, in view of the request presented to this Town Council Office by several heads of family that religious education would be taught in the local schools; in view of articles 315 and 325 of the Law on Public Education, dated November 13, 1859, and of the Regulations no. 623 dated October 9, 1895, establishes: religious education will be provided in every class of our local elementary schools by their respective teachers, and at the end of each semester the schools will hold the exam indicated in art. 325 of the Law dated November 13, 1859.

At this point the Chairman left the room, not intending to take part in the voting, and the Chair was taken by Senior Councillor Gavazzi Piero, with the number of members present reduced to 13.

No modification being proposed to the said Agenda, the Chair put it to the vote and it was approved by 11 votes to 2».

ported by a clerical-moderate coalition and by the newly-formed *Cronaca*; the other was a lawyer, Ernesto Pozzi of Acquate, the brother of Dr. Giovanni, a veteran of Garibaldi's campaigns, advocate of progress and mutual aid, professed anti-clericalist, and one of the founders of the Republican Union of Lombardy.

Pozzi seemed bound to win. From Milan the poet Ferdinando Fontana came to lead his friend's election campaign and published a special issue entitled *The Devil in Lecco*. From Caprino Bergamasco the poet, journalist, writer and librettist Antonio Ghislanzoni published a supplement of his newspaper *La posta di Caprino* in support of his friend, whose political ideas he did not share (Ghislanzoni was a Moderate), but whom he admired so much that he dedicated one of the issues of his *Literary Fancies* to him.

The hopes of Pozzi's supporters lay in the newly-formed Socialist organisation, the extreme Left Wing. In turn, however, the Socialists also published a special issue, *The Electoral Kerbstone*, with the heading: «None of these three gentlemen can represent us».

Lodovico's backers wasted no time in responding to Fontana's publication and printed their own pamphlet, entitled *The Devil in Lecco receives open letters for Mr. F. Fontana*. This referred to a letter by Giulio Fiocchi, the founder of a large munitions factory, who claimed that the 12-hour workday in the silk factories was normal, that Gavazzi had introduced a paid 15-minute break, and that he paid teachers to hold evening schools in Valmadrera and Sunday schools in Bellano and Valmadrera. Fiocchi added that he himself was accustomed to working not less than 11 hours a day, and was eager to demonstrate that it was possible to work for 13 or 14 hours a day without feeling overly tired or disgusted. «Take the word of those of us who have tried – it is possible to work regularly for more than 12 hours without suffering either physical or moral damage».

As the Leftist leader, Mario Cermenati, failed to obtain the votes of the extreme Left Wing, Lodovico was elected at the first ballot. The local businessmen had also formed a special electoral constituency in order to support him better.

The progressive parties, in their various gradations, proved to be so divided among themselves at the electoral meeting that Lodovico was faced with no great difficulty. In addition, owning three modern spinning factories in various villages of the constituency, such as Valmadrera, Bellano and Malgrate, provided him with a ready-made electoral base.

Several of the townsfolk lodged an appeal (a copy of which is kept in the Library of Brera), but to no avail; likewise, the last comment made by Fontana during the heated debate, in which he went so far as to insinuate the invocation of demonic powers, probably had the opposite effect. «El vero Diavol in difesa di pitocch – contra a tutti i gimacch – che se lassen menà a bev dal Fiocch – e dai sò letter ... fiacch» («*The true Devil in defence of the beggars – contrary to all the smart-alecks – who let themselves be treated like children by Fiocchi – and his feeble letters*»).

As we have seen, Lodovico's most prominent backers included all the largest industrialists of the district (Antonio and Carlo Badoni, Giulio Fiocchi, Giuseppe Cima, the Corti brothers, Domenico Sala, Graziano Tubi and others), from both the silk and the metallurgical sectors. This may appear contradictory, seeing that the protectionist interests of the metallurgical

industrialists by no means coincided with the widespread Liberal sentiments in the silk sector, of which Lodovico was a fervent advocate. Evidently, however, the metallurgical industrialists preferred to delegate their representation in Parliament to a man like Lodovico, with his unwavering moderate, conservative faith, rather than risk an independent candidacy.

We must not forget, moreover, the remarkable personal electoral power of Lodovico. In addition to the almost unanimous support of the villages where his factories were located, in fact, as a practising Catholic he was also able to count on the votes of the faithful who, especially in Valsassina, went to vote in spite of the papal prohibition termed the *non expedit*. This capacity to attract the Catholic vote would have been less successful in religious agnostics such as Falck or Fiocchi.

The entrepreneurs of the Lecco district, consistently with the recent past, had always supported industrialists from the Right Wing.

In Parliament, in fact, Lodovico was to sit among the members of the Lombardy faction, alongside some of his predecessors, such as Rubini and Prinetti, his personal friend, with whom he shared the same political leanings, until the M.P. from Merate entered the Zanardelli-Giolitti cabinet as Foreign Minister.

In 1892 (as in the subsequent elections) Lodovico won most of his votes in the rural constituency, which was politically somewhat behind the times and more vulnerable to favouritism and clericalism. He was defeated in Lecco, however, where he gained fewer votes than Pozzi and Martelli.

In 1895 the elections took place in an atmosphere of great tension, following the harsh Crispin repression, first of the Sicilian political groups and later of the Socialist Party and the Workers' Organisations.

Only two candidates ran in the elections – the Republican Pozzi, firmly supported by the pamphlet *L'Adda*, which had been revived in 1894 under the direction of Luigi Cermenati, and Lodovico. The latter presented himself as opposed to Crispi, although during the previous legislature he had at times voted in favour of government policies, backing the recourse to states of emergency and military justice.

Martelli, however, decided not to run because, as *L'Adda* sustained, he would have had to do so as a pro-government candidate.

Once again, Lodovico was a clear winner, with as many as 2,041 votes against the 719 for Pozzi.

In commenting the results, *L'Adda* emphasised that «the most important and intelligent towns of our constituency gave that name [Pozzi] the majority of votes» and so did not hesitate to speak of moral victory, complaining, however, that «when a political constituency such as ours, with its pin-point structure, is composed of an intelligent and thinking pinhead and a long tail which has no political education whatsoever and which stupidly allows itself to be enticed by cheap mirages and even cheaper, immediate gain, it is not possible to entertain, in the context of a political struggle, any hope of victory».

On the subject of the political composition of the constituency, it is interesting to recall that in 1895, in an article entitled *Our Victory*, *L'Adda* alluded to the political backwardness of the surrounding rural towns – a subject that was to come up again in 1900 and 1904 as an explanation for Cermenati's lack of success.

One of the major strong points of Lodovico was represented, as we have mentioned, by the veiled support he received from the clergy of the villages of the constituency, despite the fact that the *non expedit* had not yet been called off. In fact, even though there is no official evidence of any agreement or alliance between the Clericalists and the Moderates, and in spite of the proud abstensionist proclamations of *Il Resegone*, the parish priests, especially in Valsassina, frequently became loyal supporters of Lodovico. This moderate deputy, in fact, as a zealous and practising Catholic, was seen by them as the least of several evils, especially when compared with the progressive candidates, who had no qualms about flaunting their anti-clericalism or, more correctly, their own religious agnosticism.

The 1897 elections were again characterised by an extreme polarisation of the competing powers – the moderate candidate, in fact, was contrasted by the groups of the far Left. These did not, however, concentrate on one name only, and therefore, while the supporters of middle class democracy once again presented the lawyer Pozzi, the Socialists decided on a show of strength and presented a high-profile candidate, Angelo Cabrini.

This was also the first appearance on the political scene of Mario Cermenati, who was later to become Lodovico's greatest rival.

The elections of March 21, 1897 marked another triumph for Lodovico, with the industrialist and moderate powers of the constituency re-asserting their supremacy. It was not until the following elections, in fact, that the Liberals and the Democrats were to form a coalition under a single candidate, in an attempt to win the district.

From an institutional standpoint, therefore, the political situation in the Lecco district appeared to be fairly well-defined. The political representation of the constituency was and was to remain firmly in the hands of Lodovico, despite the great efforts of his opponents, especially in the balloting of 1900 and 1904.

*The Gavazzi-Cermenati duel*⁷

Mario Cermenati and Lodovico stirred up the political and pre-electoral debates. Their encounters were no less than battles, *matches* held at a distance, from the platforms of the election meetings to the declarations issued to the press, from the articles of supporting newspapers to the plain propaganda in the local homes and commercial businesses. Cermenati and Lodovico's campaigners, meanwhile, waged their battle first-hand – creating turmoil at the election meetings, distributing antagonistic pamphlets and posters, and chasing rival support-

⁷ From Aloisio Bonfanti, *Il vecchio borgo. Le vicende di Lecco dal 1784 al 1928*, Arti Grafiche Lecchesi, Lecco, 1970.

ers through the streets and squares after the usual disputes, sparked off in the taverns with the help of a few glasses of the local wine.

The first political «duel» between the two took place in occasion of the parliamentary elections, held on June 3, 1900. Cermenati was at the time a lecturer in Geology and Palaeontology, after having been a pupil of Antonio Stoppani, and later a professor of Natural Science History at the University of Rome; Lodovico, on the other hand, was a prominent industrialist. The former represented the Leftist progressive parties, and in particular the Republicans and the Radicals, while the latter, as we have seen, was the recognised leader of the Moderates and Conservatives, who had already nominated him in the past.

In those days voting was carried out using the uninominal voting system.

Cermenati's candidacy grew out of an appeal made to voters by a committee of local figures and leaders of the lay and democratic circles, headed by lawyer Giovanni Battista Torri Tarelli, one of the five «Garibaldian brothers».

The race promised to be heated, and the outcome was anything but certain. Lodovico was favoured by his experience as deputy and the work he had carried out for the benefit of the territory and the population of the constituency. Cermenati, on the other hand, was a vastly popular figure, recognised for his genius.

He was, in actual fact, the editor of the Lecco district weekly magazine, the *Prealpino*. The magazines *Cronaca* and *Prealpino*, in fact, besides expressing a certain political view, were also used occasionally as a tool by Lodovico and Cermenati.

The election results were awaited anxiously by the rival parties. The three polling stations in Lecco confirmed a clear-cut victory for Cermenati, with 217 votes against 72 in the first, 184 to 43 in the second, and 192 to 42 in the third. A majority of votes for Cermenati was also registered among the population of the old villages around Lecco, the present-day district towns. In the countryside, meanwhile, the situation was reversed. In Valmadrera the vote was unanimously in favour of Lodovico, 331 to 14; a clear-cut Moderate majority was also registered in Malgrate, 79 to 26, and the towns in the northern Valsassina area were all overwhelmingly behind Lodovico.

The final results in the polling stations of the Lecco constituency - Lodovico Gavazzi 2,522 votes, Mario Cermenati 1,931 votes.

Lodovico had retained his seat in Parliament.

The geographical distribution of the election results, with the success of the Moderate candidate in the remote mountain villages, farming communities and industrial towns (on the level of the medium-sized workshop or the artisan complex), was the object of a new heated debate after the elections. «Gavazzi won thanks to a squalid coalition of industrialists, clericalists and priests» was the comment of the Democrats, who openly accused the parish priests of the small mountain villages and farming settlements of Brianza of having influenced the election results by propagandising for the incumbent deputy.

Thus the Radical Democrats of Lecco did not succeed in taking away the Parliamentary seat from the much-hated Lodovico, who was accused on every occasion of acting exclusively in

his own interests, habitually deserting the lower chamber's meetings, taking advantage of incoherent and illiterate hack writers, and concentrating almost entirely on ignorant people.

Four years later, in November of 1904, Cermenati and Lodovico once more found themselves rivals. During this time, the professor had further consolidated his by now undisputed position as the local leader of the lay democratic community. His candidacy was made public in a manifesto sponsored by the Radical Democratic Circle.

Some time before the elections, however, Lodovico sent a letter to Giulio Fiocchi, expressing his wish to renounce his candidacy, as too many pressing family and work obligations prevented him from dedicating himself wholeheartedly to the Parliamentary mandate.

The Conservatives responded immediately to this decision by holding a meeting the very next day in the hall of the Badoni company in Castello. Here, after a brief discussion, Lodovico's candidacy was unanimously reconfirmed. The assembly, which was composed of around 200 people, including Conservatives Fiocchi and Falck and the young Liberals Borrelli and Corsi, then decided to send a delegation of some thirty people to Valmadrera, to convince Lodovico to reverse his decision. Their efforts were well rewarded; Lodovico, deeply moved, responded by surrendering to discretion and gave in to the will of so many friends. «He will continue along this thankless path», concluded the *Cronaca* arcanelly, «in the hope that this sacrifice will be his last stretch».

Thus Lodovico conducted his profitable election campaign with a long series of meetings in the towns of the District, presenting himself as an advocate for harmonious and orderly social progress, opposed by the upholders of hate, violence and anarchy, who had revealed themselves for what they were in the recent general strikes, in which «a few demagogues of the trade union centres forced their wills upon the majority of the local citizens, subjecting them to their domineering attitude».

The *Cronaca*, meanwhile, took upon itself the task of putting together an acclamation and defence of Lodovico, «that intelligent, upright and honest citizen, the pride and honour of national trade and industry», magnifying his merits and qualities and, at the same time, denying the accusations made by *Prealpino* that he was incompetent, conservative and frequently absent from Parliament.

The election campaign heated up rapidly: from the very start, Cermenati's leaflets began alluding to unholy alliances between industrialists and priests, who «lorded it over superstitious farmers and disorganised workers», openly propagandising for Lodovico. One Radical leader said he heard a priest campaigning in favour of the Conservative candidate in a cemetery, accosting mourners at their relatives' graves.

The Mayor, Mr. Organia, accompanied by two senior councillors, paid an official visit to the Sub-Prefect to complain about the continual interference of the clergy in the political campaign and the «illegal and slanderous conduct» of certain priests against Mario Cermenati.

A few rather high-spirited parish priests had, in fact, taken a stand in favour of Lodovico. Cermenati, indeed, was categorically unable to appeal to the Catholic circles of the period.

The anti-religious principles he openly flaunted, as well as his well-known ideological preferences, closely related to «positivism», the view that all progress came from science, by no means encouraged support in the circles of the strict, observant Catholics.

Cronaca and *Prealpino* lost no opportunity to argue amongst themselves and exploited every action, declaration or statement of the two candidates for electoral purposes.

Of the subjects that came up most frequently, the question of fishing rights was prominent. Discussion focused on the regulations that were supposed to control fishing in the lake, and involved both Lodovico, as local Deputy, and Cermenati, as member of a state committee of enquiry assigned to studying the problem.

To give an idea of the importance of the subject and its weight in the elections, we must remember that Cermenati, in 1900, had been one of the instigators and tutelary deities of a Mutual Aid society for fishermen related tradesmen in Bellano, an initiative to which, two years later, Lodovico had responded by sponsoring, again in Bellano, the founding of a society for «small fishermen», or amateur fishermen, and the construction in Bellano of an incubator for fish farming and stocking.

There were even more direct and personal attacks. In March 1904, in fact, the *Prealpino* published the first of a series of articles entitled *Lessons for the Honourable Gavazzi*, in which the newspaper criticised the Congressman for his conduct regarding Sunday rest and regarding the Trade Union Headquarters, or for his numerous absences from Parliament (from December 1903 to July 1904 Lodovico was present only 10 times, against 202 absences).

In the summer of 1904 a demonstration was held in Como to induce the Government to retain the duty protecting silk fabrics; leaders from various political parties participated in the demonstration, from Conservative and protectionist industrialists to Socialist workers.

Although the subject concerned him directly, Lodovico made no contribution, thus giving the *Prealpino* an opportunity to launch new accusations, which the *Cronaca* attempted to deny.

The *Cronaca* tried to defend Lodovico's parliamentary stands and did not hesitate to emphasise and propagandise the grants obtained for the constituency thanks to his efforts (a telephone line between Lecco and Valsassina, the extending of the Lecco Post Office and financial help from the Savings Bank, the Government and the King in favour of those who suffered damages from the fire in Narro) and to call to mind his part in the solving of important matters such as the construction of the Bellano-Taceno road or the altering of the forestry law.

The newspaper naturally attacked Cermenati, placing in serious doubt his scientific acumen and hinting at an alleged secret pact with the Freemasons.

Cermenati was supported by a newly-established committee called the «Tradesmen's and Dealers' Committee», as well as by the Radical Democratic Circle of Lecco and several smaller committees scattered throughout the constituency, which included a number of mayors.

The elections were held on November 6, 1904. The voting registries of the constituency of Lecco contained 8,784 voters, of which 6,282 actually voted. The atmosphere was characterised by great uncertainty, and everyone predicted that the margin of victory would be

minimal. In fact, Lodovico got 2,997 votes and Cermenati 2,934. Such a small difference in votes made it necessary to hold a second ballot, and new elections were set for the following Sunday, November 13.

The week passed amidst renewed virulent disputes. Cermenati's supporters, discarding all diplomacy, defined Lodovico as «the candidate of the pitchfork and the cope» (a long cloak worn by ecclesiastics in processions), clearly referring to the «exploitation» on the part of the «masters» and to the support of certain leaders of the clergy. Along with the parish priests, the town clerks of the local villages were also under accusation as Lodovico's «accomplices», openly accused of selling themselves to the will of the Moderates and the Conservatives in an attempt to climb the ladder of success.

On that Monday, in the central polling station of Lecco, set up in the «Sociale» Theatre, the results from the various polling stations of the district began to arrive. The first results immediately confirmed the trends consolidated in the previous elections: victory for Cermenati in Lecco and the surrounding towns, a majority for Lodovico in the polling stations of the mountain and in rural areas.

Such was the tension among voters that even the slightest partial result sparked endless disputes between the supporters of the two candidates present at the «Sociale» Theatre.

At a certain point, during a bout of accusations and counter-accusations relating to fraud and corruption, verbal antagonism gave way to physical violence. The «Sociale» then witnessed what was certainly the most chaotic scene of its long history, with ballot boxes, chairs, files and records hurled back and forth between the two opposing groups. The «Cermenatians» were without doubt the most agitated and also the most steadfast, besides being the more numerous of the two groups in the battle waged among the velvet-clad boxes of the theatre. The guards, unable to restore order, called in assistance from the nearby Sirtori Barracks. Troops in fighting trim had to charge repeatedly in order to evacuate the Theatre and Piazza Garibaldi. This military intervention proved providential for a certain official of the Prefecture who, accused of brazenly siding with Lodovico, was forced to take refuge in the dressing rooms of the «Sociale», having first been chased and then cornered by a frenzied mob with less than amicable intentions. Cermenati himself intervened in Piazza Garibaldi, appearing on the balcony of the *Cetra d'Oro* Restaurant (known as the *Borsino*) to call on his followers to desist. The *Borsino*, a restaurant with a high reputation, whose specialities included crayfish from Valsassina and Valtellina, had become Cermenati's general headquarters during the election campaign.

Dispersed by the troops in Piazza Garibaldi, the demonstrators improvised marches through the streets of the town centre.

Cermenati, hailed by the crowds at his home in Via Cairoli, was obliged to make another speech, in which he once again appealed for calm.

This appeal was not entirely effective, as during the night there were scuffles and incidents in various parts of the town. A group of around 4,000 people, furious with parish priest Giuseppe

Confalonieri for having gone to vote, threw stones at the windows of the vicarage, took down the archiepiscopal coat-of-arms placed above the entrance and flung it into the lake.

Windows were broken at the factories of Badoni, Fiocchi, Sigg and Keller. The Conservative Club, located in Via Cavour and frequented by the supporters of Lodovico, had to be guarded by the Carabinieri as it was repeatedly threatened by punitive expeditions.

The central polling station of the constituency, unable to draw up the minutes due to the disappearance of voting papers and the destruction of envelopes during the scuffles, sent the proceedings to Rome where, on the basis of the material that had been gathered, the Central Election Committee had the difficult task of appointing a congressman for the Lecco district. On December 8, 1904 Lodovico was re-elected to Parliament. It was generally concluded that the incidents of the previous November had been caused by Cermenatian activists, when the results of some of the polling stations had put Lodovico in the lead over Cermenati, who had up to then been in the lead.

When the news reached Valmadrera, the townsfolk celebrated the victory with singing and torch-light processions in the main square. A very vague effigy of Cermenati, made of paper and rags, was burned amongst shouts of jubilation after a curious mock funeral procession for the radical candidate through the streets of the town.

The Cermenatians, meanwhile, gathered at Maggianico for a protest demonstration against «the governmental election abuse». Their leader was absent, having gone some days earlier to Rome to lecture at the university. Before leaving Lecco, Cermenati formally criticised the excessive behaviour of his more zealous followers.

In Maggianico the demonstration took place without incident. Demonstrators marched to the villa of Milanese Senator Mario Martelli, elected to Parliament several times in the past, who habitually spent his summer holidays in Maggianico and had eventually settled in the town after retiring from political life.

Martelli was very close to Cermenati. From the balcony of his villa the Senator spoke to the demonstrators, commenting, just to be in tune with the general atmosphere, on the meddling of priests in politics and the «Moderate and Clericalist reaction».

When Lodovico was recognised Deputy of Lecco by the Election Committee, and when the Chamber of Deputies finally confirmed the elections, after having thanked his voters he also criticised the Lecco incidents: «This was an attempt to suppress the honest expression of democracy. Unprecedented is the offence wreaked upon free institutions, upon you and I by this mob of reckless individuals who, nevertheless, are yet much less deplorable than those who, in the certainty that there was no other way to invalidate the will of the voters of our constituency, from the shadows carefully wove their foul designs. These have revealed themselves to be the enemies of freedom, of which they themselves are unworthy».

He went on to accuse the popular front of being anti-liberal, sectarian and demagogic, reducing a quiet city like Lecco to total chaos, taking advantage of the excitement of the people, arousing and corrupting it for obvious «aims of domination and revenge».

After his defeat in 1904, Cermenati had to wait five years to get his revenge; on March 7,

1909, against the Liberal-Moderate candidate Giorgio Enrico Falck (Lodovico was not running), he was elected to Parliament by an overwhelming majority.

Falck, new to the political world, could not boast Lodovico's distinguished record, nor could he count on a vast personal electoral base (made up of his own employees).

Thus began a fifteen year period in which Cermenati held a prominent position in national politics and was an undisputed leader on the local level. This period ended just before his death on October 8, 1924, in Castelvogadro.

The bells of Lecco

A visible and audible sign of the new commercial power of Austrian-ruled Lecco was the construction of the new parish church by the architect Bovara (1830-1854). The massive, neo-classical monumental structure was, in fact, never completed.

The Lecco of King Humbert was to provide the church with an equally imposing bell-tower, which was begun in 1883 by Gattinoni.

After a few years construction was suspended, and the city was left with a half-finished bell-tower.

With alterations made by Cerutti the upper part was added between 1901 and 1903; the date of the inauguration, however, remains unknown, since, during their construction, the bells became a subject of dispute in the heated climate of the election duel between Lodovico and Cermenati. According to the Catholic newspaper, in fact, «the bells belong to the parishioners» and, therefore, to expect them to be rung for the national holiday of September 20 or for civil funerals was considered improper.

The nine bronze bells of the brand new bell-tower were first rung, unexpectedly, on Christmas night of 1904, in a long celebration of the solemn Nativity Mass.

This was a message of peace after the city's «black autumn», characterised by the election clashes between supporters of Lodovico and Cermenati.

The nomination as Senator

On January 23, 1910, in return for his decision to not run in the 1909 parliamentary elections, Lodovico was named Senator by King Victor Emanuel III, at the recommendation of Minister Sonnino and on the basis of the law stating that whoever had been elected to Parliament for three terms of office (which Lodovico had been, from the 18th to the 22nd session) could be made Senator, which was then a royal appointment.

The nomination was received with extraordinary enthusiasm by the Silk Association which, through its President, «Commendatore» De Vecchi, thanked H.E. Luzzatti and the Government and organised celebrations and honours for Lodovico's return from Rome. At a dinner held in the Eden restaurant on February 1, all the important silk industrialists of Northern Italy cheered and applauded Lodovico, giving speeches extolling the merits of the newly-appointed Senator. Cermenati and the newspaper that supported him continued to criticise Lodovico for the fact that he rarely appeared in Parliament, to which he promptly replied that he had no time

**In occasion
of the nomination as Senator
of cousin Lodovico Gavazzi**

Senator is taken to mean «old man»
But Lodovico is young
And must still obey Papa and Mamma
So to me it seems a contradiction.

Or perhaps it means, by way of exception,
Old in merit, and young in flesh!
In which case it would mean nought.
He has medals, and decorations,

He has travelled the world, even
as far as the Tsar
For oil to make the engines run;
And now he goes to sell silk in Canada.

In conclusion, he is a rare kind of man
And we, who are his family, praise him
«Who has reached the Senate, and there
shall remain».

Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
January 28, 1910

**In occasione
della nomina a senatore
del cugino Lodovico Gavazzi**

Senator da sen voer di veggion
Lodovico l'è invece on giovinott
Che a Papà e Mama el dev anmò sta sott
Sicchè me par, ghe sia contraddizion.

O forse voebbia di, per eccezion,
Vecc de merit e giovin de pelott!
In del qual cas a vorè di nagott.
«Lu el ga medaj, l'u el gà decorazion,

La giraa el mond, l'è staa fin su dal Zar
A toeu el petroli per fa andà i motor;
E a dess el va a vend seet al Canadà.

In conclusion l'è on omm, ma de qui rar
E nun, che sem de cà, femeg onor
«Che in Senato ghe sem, e el resterà».

Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
28 gennaio 1910

to waste, that (then as today) those in Parliament indulged in a lot of idle talk and were not addressing the problems of the country – the real, concrete problems, those that an industrialist of his calibre was used to dealing with at the head of his company.

There were, however, other questions in the debate – the installation of telephone lines in Lierna, the abolition of the duty on corn, the construction of the new Bellano-Taceno railway line and, lastly, the lifting of the prohibition on «twaite shad» fishing in the Lario, not only with regard to fishing rods and tirlindana (fishing lines with several hooks), but any other device allowed by fishing laws.

Gradually, the echo of the fierce battles between Cermenati and Lodovico faded. In fact, true to the irony of fate and political alliances, in the council elections of October 1920, the activists of the two sides banded together to form a new Democratic party, which combined both Radical and Liberal-Moderate ideas, «so as to avoid at all costs that Lecco should become the experimental terrain of the Bolsheviks». This was the motto of the Democratic coalition, which defined itself «as a concentration of those intermediate parties that have resisted the twin tornadoes of Bolshevism and Populism».

The Democratic party won the elections and, thanks to the majority system, 24 of the 30 seats in the City Council. The six remaining seats went to the Socialists.

On the occasion of the first council meeting, the members of the majority, several of whom had been fiercely divided at the time of the Cermenati/Gavazzi elections, marched arm-in-arm into the City Council hall, singing the national anthem. This episode shows that seemingly unthinkable alliances and compromises are nevertheless possible.

When Lodovico died at the age of 85 he was one of the most senior senators, in terms of length of time served as well as age.

*Free Trade and the People's Circle*⁸

The sentiments of the entrepreneurial world of Lombardy, hostile to the State and interventionism and in favour of the exclusive activity of private business, were expressed in a programme approved by the «People's Circle», which brought together the leading members of the new generation of industrialists, who had broken away from the Constitutional Association in order to pursue a conservative project that was more modern and suited to the economic situation in Milan.

The Constitutional Association, meanwhile, an expression of the old «guild», composed predominantly of large landowners, numbered among its members Alessandro Rossi, whose protectionist philosophy replaced the long-standing liberal tradition, which had been introduced and personified by Stefano Jacini.

This represents an example – contrary to the current pattern – of old ruling classes of farming origin, sensitive to protectionist expectations, and modern industrial towns, oriented

⁸ From Antonio Cardini, *Stato liberale e protezionismo in Italia (1890-1900)*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1981.

towards liberal ideas: «the gradual application of the principles of free trade», the programme of the People's Circle wrote, «granting neither favours nor privileges to any industry or social class...; the complete exclusion of any tax increases and any new monopoly; the balancing of the accounts with economies alone, to be put into effect according to the concepts of the liberal programme, and therefore above all with the exclusion by degrees of the interference of the State in all that is not strictly within its sphere».

In the light of the growing importance of the People's Circle in Milanese politics and the corresponding influence exercised by the classes supporting it, this programme can be considered an indicative expression of the existing attitudes to the role of the State and that of private citizens.

Lodovico was a prominent parliamentary leader in the Circle. Not only was he opposed to the iron and steel prices, questionable with regard to public expenditure and taxes, but he was also open to free trade.

The Free Trade Circle was born in Milan, at the end of 1891, on the wave of these feelings, and in February of 1892, also the Free Economy Association, which had greater contact with the Milanese.

The members of this association included Giacomo Raimondi, Riccardo Gavazzi (who was President), Lodovico and Ugo Pisa, President of the Milan Chamber of Commerce, among others.

The denouncement of the Roman Bank

When a series of events placed the Roman Bank in difficulty, the free-traders at first considered a press campaign, but later decided to disclose their findings in Parliament.

They sought help from friends in the Senate and the House, but to no avail. They thought of asking two friendly MPs (Cavallotti and Imbriani), but they were not re-elected in 1892.

The choice, therefore, fell upon a Sicilian Republican named Napoleone Colajanni (1847-1921).

He was contacted and sent a copy of the Alvisi-Biagini report on the Roman Bank, but not the list of politicians who had debts with the Bank, so as not to transform the accusation into a personal attack. The newly-elected Conservative Lodovico was also contacted as a leader of the Liberty Association.

The choice of a Rightist and a Leftist figure added a moral and non-partisan character to the campaign. Both Colajanni and Lodovico believed the accusations and had the courage to take part in the manoeuvre.

Meanwhile, word of the forthcoming exposure was circulating.

Senator Perrazzi, hearing of the intention to communicate to the Chamber of Deputies the results of the Alvisi-Biagini investigation, attempted to warn the Government, so it could take steps to prevent the threatened exposure from occurring. He tried to notify Giolitti, in order that he might take remedial measures but, in the foreseen discussion of December

20, 1892, he could not prevent the two Deputies appointed by the free-traders from reading certain parts of the report⁹. These were «anxious» times for the Liberal group, since flat denials could have shaken any trust that Colajanni and Lodovico had placed in it. A former minister sent word to a Member of Parliament that, according to the Penal Code, slanderers risked punishment in prison. Deputy Pantaleoni, an ally of Lodovico, replied: «if you have sent to the Senate the thief I accuse, it is logical, in Italy, that you wish to send his accuser to prison».

Colajanni and Lodovico's revelations had an explosive effect, and denials from Miceli and Giolitti were not sufficient to silence the affair.

An investigative Parliamentary Commission was set up, known as «the Seven», to shed light on the episode. Despite a well-prepared defence, aimed at demonstrating that the greatest responsibility in the protection of Tanlongo, Chairman of the Roman Bank, fell directly on Crispi, Giolitti was forced to resign after a few months and remained far from the political scenario for several years.

Thus began the long procedure of bank re-organisation, of the scandals and the «moral questions», which involved both politicians and businessmen. In that particular political moment, however, these disclosures were resolved through an «anti-Giolittian» manoeuvre and by

⁹ From *Annuali dell'Economia Italiana 1891- 1900*, no. 4, IPSOA, Milan: «During the discussion, the Honourable Colajanni and the Honourable Gavazzi related several passages from the Biagini report on the Alvisi inspection, arousing a great stir in Parliament and involving former Minister Miceli, who had ordered the inspection. Miceli, ten months previously, had engaged in a heated dispute with Maggiorino Ferraris for having declared that in 1890 the Government «intentionally passed false documents to the Parliamentary Commission». To Miceli's reply that this was a «disgraceful and false accusation», Ferraris said that he could not in any way either tone down or mitigate what he had said. In the session of December 20, Miceli again returned to the subject and, referring to the irregularities discovered by the inspectors, announced that he had specifically questioned the governor of the Bank, whose reply he referred to the members of the Chamber amidst prolonged hilarity: «We», Tanlongo had said to Miceli, «have an old custom of dealing with these bank matters paternally (!), but despite our Paternalism, it is evident that everything is in order with regard to the bank's honour».

However, Colajanni and Gavazzi insisted, and quoting concrete facts and figures, requested that a Parliamentary inspection be made on the banks. Giolitti chose not to support of investigation proposal, partly because he did not want to compromise the national credit, and partly because (as he himself confirmed) «in attempting to gather information on the matter, he noted that several deputies were overly enthusiastic in their support of the request, and these proved to have preliminary contracts with the bank, and so he refused to support the investigation», fearing that «a premature political enquiry might create an excuse for rescue, and because he was anxious to establish, first of all, the true conditions of the issuing banks, and to find solutions».

From a certain point of view he was right, but in so acting Giolitti allowed suspicion and mistrust to grow, aggravating the painful effects of his first resistance and thus contributing to maintaining an atmosphere that seriously troubled public life in Italy. Indeed, that year of 1893 was characterised by a period of anxiety and surprises, as the whole of Italy was submerged by a wave of suspicion and accusations, which contaminated all political life, affecting deputies, senators and journalists, active ministers and former ministers, all of whom had preliminary contracts with the issuing banks, taking advantage of their political positions. The Chamber could not and did not want to doubt itself any longer. Indescribable was the distress, almost terror, that struck it when, a few days later (February 1), it received a request from the Royal Prosecutor for authorisation to proceed against one of its members, Rocco De Zerbi, who had been a model of brilliance and eloquence, and whose death, which was partly brought about by this awkward episode, caused a great deal of commotion and discussion of different kinds, further increasing the desire of everyone to leave behind once and for all this distressful and troubling situation.

The Bovio motion, in any case, was deferred for three months, and the Minister thus succeeded in postponing the inquiry, upheld by the «solidarity» which united all those who were responsible for not having seen the error and who, when they finally did, hastened to conceal it, and devised measures for aggravating it. After all, the position of Giolitti, faced with bank scandals, was morally very weak, the proof of which could be found in the comparison between his attitude towards the «slander» of Calajanni and Gavazzi and that which he was forced by circumstances to assume in January. It is sufficient to recall the reserve and the mental restrictions relating to the disputed knowledge of the Alvisi enquiry, as well as the sudden and hurried passage of Bernardo Tanlongo from the Senate to prison».

diverting attention to seeking out the origins of the scandal. Insinuations began to circulate that it had been a trick of the Right Wing to discredit the Leftist government, while at the same time using men who in the Chamber sat opposite those who had organised the manoeuvre, like Colajanni and Gavazzi.

After this episode, in 1894, a famous M.P. of the period named Pareto renewed the criticisms against the «gentlemen who believe themselves to be Liberals because they repeat, like well-trained parrots, a few lines from Spencer which they never understood, and who remembered freedom only when it was convenient for them to do so». «We are pleased to note the Hon. Gavazzi», he exclaimed, «among those who had the courage to vote because it means that financial measures will immediately be taken. This is as it should be – on one side the friends of the banks, and on the other those who expose their flaws».

Decentralisation and the Liberal Economic Association

In 1895 Lodovico made an interesting speech in the «Social Theatre to the voters of Lecco, in which he expressed a concept which today is considered a fundamental objective of many political movements – decentralisation.

The Sonnino government of the day had to deal with an 80 million lira deficit in the State budget and proposed solving it through cutting down on spending (for a total of 53 million lira) and raising new taxes (for a sum of 27 million lira).

«We must correct in ourselves the false concept that we have created regarding the State, and remind ourselves that the only thing that justifies the existence of the State and the coercion it imposes on its citizens is the services it renders to the citizens and the country.

Decentralisation ... cannot hope to begin as long as the State does not recognise its present presumptuous incompetence.

In a system of centralisation such as ours, those who pay and those who spend neither know each other nor care to – it is clear that this means paying excessively and spending badly or, in other words, obtaining the least effect with the greatest effort.

Decentralisation means bringing together those who pay and those who spend, fusing them together, so to speak, to make of them a self-regulating body that proportions the means to the goals.

I have always admired the administration of our small mountain enclaves, in which the Mayor and the town counsellors scan with watchful eyes all the possible resources and methods of saving, avoiding any unnecessary expense as remorselessly as if their own interests were at stake.

And this they do, in fact, because they consider the Town Council as their own and they regard themselves as both counsellors and townsfolk, tax collectors and tax payers, tutors and pupils. A system of decentralisation, inspired by this example, would relieve the State of the burden for which it is unfit, of the enormous weights under which it staggers, and its performance, on which it must necessarily remain concentrated, would become more prompt and efficient».

With the aim, in fact, of forming the nucleus of a party expressing total and radical Liberalism, a Liberal Economy Association was set up in Rome, thus fulfilling, as was frequently underscored, one of the oldest aspirations of the *Giornale degli Economisti*¹⁰.

The anti-Crispism of Lodovico

Lodovico was a moderate opponent of Crispi, as is borne out by several documents from the State Archives in Como, which date back to 1895. On January 6, in fact, Lodovico was due to give a speech at the «Sociale» Theatre of Lecco, and so Vice-Prefect Vittorelli sent a telegram to the Prefect, requested instructions as «given disposition and attitude of speaker violent speech against minister expected».

The Prefect replied with a caution to safeguard «institutional respect and State laws ... maintaining at all events public order, but avoiding actions which may be interpreted as restricting freedom of speech».

Afterwards, the Vice-Prefect reported the events to his superior by telegram: «for a declared opponent of Minister speech was mild and without offensive language. Mentioned political events of last two years, strongly criticising Giolitti's actions. Approved economic programme announced by present Minister, opposing however new taxes, especially cotton duty ... disapproved also our expansion in Africa, but approved Government conduct regarding siege of troops in Sicily and Lunigiana and declared to have voted for emergency laws while criticizing however method of application. Advocated necessity of stemming subversive theories through morality and religion. Regarding present Minister, did not approve postponement of session and probable dissolution of Chambers, declaring that in his opinion His Excellency Crispi should have either justified himself to the Chamber or resigned before resorting to judicial authority. He concluded by appealing to benevolence of voters. Speech was received coldly and with meagre applause. Deputy Prinetti also present».

¹⁰ In practical terms, this consisted in the creation of an organism capable of spreading the propaganda of Liberal ideas and organising seriously the movement which had become manifest in Italy, relying on the participation of «veteran Liberals and strongly-motivated exponents».

The Association brought together many Milanese citizens who had previously supported the earlier association «for economic freedom», including Lodovico himself, a firm upholder of the idea and opposed to any kind of duty.

This was the time of the birth and spread of Socialism, with the consequent social tensions. The option of repressing Socialist ideas was considered but it was said that a faction that called itself Liberal, and thus ought to be more open, should not be infected by such an attitude.

Taking his cue from an agenda of the People's Circle of Milan, in which the Government was asked to «suppress the uncontrolled propagation of the subversive doctrine», De Viti De Marco launched a vicious attack against Prinetti and the Milanese association, regardless of the fact that these were people of circles with which the *Giornale degli Economisti* had been in contact in previous years.

These same accusations he repeated to his friend Lodovico Gavazzi who, in order to defend Prinetti and the People's Circle, wrote to him, reasoning again on the subject of subversive propaganda and the necessity of limiting the «now unlimited right of association» and «halting» the «most boundless licence of periodicals».

De Viti De Marco replied that to eliminate the subversives once and for all, as now seemed evidently necessary, was the only reachable conclusion after the disturbances caused by the «ruling classes», which appeared as a «fearful group of Conservatives», trusting in no less than a repression pushed beyond all justifiable limits. These political parties were identified not only with the Monarchic Conservatives but also with the «Milanese bourgeoisie». Regarding the latter, which had appeared to represent the most modern part of the country in the opposition to «Crispism», the regression seemed to be particularly acute.

Parliamentary and political activities

In 1902 Lodovico succeeded, after a struggle, in preventing the passage of the divorce law, which was at the time before the National Parliament. The issue was taken very deeply felt by the Catholic world to which Lodovico belonged.

With the defeat of the bill, in fact, he received hundreds of congratulatory notes¹¹.

He was President of the Royal Committee of Enquiry, which he himself sponsored together with Luigi Luzzati (who later became Minister). This Committee was set up to assess the status of the silk industry, study efficient projects and put them into practice to restore the traditional dynamism. The investigation led to the passing of the so-called Silk Law (based on an idea of Lodovico's), with the aim of stimulating national production, followed by the founding of the Italian Silk Institute, or the National Silk Manufacturing Institute, natural heir to the Committee of Enquiry.

Lodovico then became engaged in a series of delicate and difficult commercial dealings with Russia and Canada.

His speeches before the lower House are interesting, intelligent and rational. On June 20, 1901 he gave a highly-appreciated speech on strikes and the Agricultural Unions and another on April 3, 1904 on the subject of Sundays and weekly days off.

His political ideas invariably bore the mark of true, modern, economic Liberalism. He weighed every proposal and initiative against the situations in other countries (especially Germany and Switzerland), demonstrating his pragmatic and efficient practice of always studying in depth the events of neighbouring countries.

The above-mentioned speech in Parliament of 1904 ended with these words: «Those who heed and understand me will grant me the right to adopt the saying of Father Lacordaire – I wish to die a penitent Catholic, but an unrepentant Liberal».

At the end of 1917 he was appointed to accompany an Italian military mission to the United States responsible for purchases.

In one of the most troubled periods in the history of Italy, on the occasion of the elections of October 1919, Lodovico signed a manifesto (defined as that of «the Milanese Senators» since it was co-signed by Luca Beltrami, Ettore Conti, Emanuele Greppi, Luigi Mangiagalli, Cesare Saldini and Angelo Salmoiraghi), in an attempt to re-launch a conciliatory and reformist outlook, constituted by a comprehensive programme for alleviating post-war social tensions.

This initiative was hailed enthusiastically by Luigi Einaudi, who wrote in the major newspaper *Corriere della Sera*: «It is the true Italian ruling class which speaks through the mouths of the signatories, that ruling class which deserves to run the country not by merit of wealth or position, nor for academic or honorary titles, but because it conceives the government of the country as a service, a duty, a sacrifice of individual and specific interests in favour of the common good»¹².

¹¹ One of which, from my great-grandmother Peppina Gavazzi Biella, I include here: «Dear Vittoria, I hear from Gigio that Lodovico made a magnificent speech at the Chamber and that he courageously upheld the cause of the Pope along with that of his country. Please accept, dear Vittoria, my most heartfelt congratulations and know that if you feel proud to be his wife, I am deeply happy to be at least... his aunt. Many loving kisses and cheers from your Giuseppina Gavazzi Biella Home, March 12, 1902. I hope everyone is well».

Lodovico, the President in Valmadrera of the Catholic Men's Union, was considered a leading representative of Paternalism for having recognised the right of the silk mill workers (which other of his colleagues were careful not to encourage) to at least a basic education.

In 1897 Lodovico was one of the members of the Committee of Honour in the «Committee for the Monument to Giuseppe Parini in Bosisio», set up in order to commemorate the first centennial of the death of the poet (August 15, 1899) with a marble statue in the town of his birth. The Executive Committee was chaired by Count Lodovico Melzi d'Eril.

Lodovico's anti-Fascist stance

Lodovico was a firm anti-Fascist from the moment Mussolini came to power.

Contrary to nearly all the entrepreneurs of the time, he never joined the PNF (Fascist National Party). Only Giovanni Battisti Pirelli, Ettore Bocconi, Angelo Salmoiraghi and Enrico Scalini also did not).

His daughter Adele recalls: «Father strongly disapproved of the rise of Fascism, which coincided with the last years of his life. Once Father decided to return to the Senate. I do not remember the date, but it was the last time that it was possible to vote freely. I remember that there was also Benedetto Croce among the very few who, like him, dared to vote against Mussolini. That was the last time he set foot in the Senate»¹³.

On June 25, 1924, in fact, he took the train and went to Rome to vote against Mussolini, along with a very small group of like-minded men: Albertini, Bergamini, Ruffini and Sforza. This was indeed his last appearance in the Senate.

After he passed away, on November 5, 1941, the weekly catholic magazine *Il Resegone*, edited by Edmondo Verga, gave the news with amazing speed just two days later, expatiating at length upon his merits. *Il Popolo*, on the other hand, the magazine of the local Fascist federation of Lecco, announced on November 13 the funeral service, which had been held first in Milan and then in Valmadrera, inserting the column in such a way as to make it practically invisible. On the 20th of the same month the magazine again mentioned the news, listing the offers that had been contributed in memory of Senator Gavazzi, once again under a title which was difficult to spot, and once again on the last page.

What people said about him

In the magazine *Illustrazione Italiana* of January 29, 1893, in an article on the profiles of the new deputies, we read: «Lodovico Gavazzi (Right Wing), the new deputy of Lecco, is a fine-looking young man of 35. Born in Milan, after completing his studies in the classics, he followed the

¹² Some time later, in the dispersion which was to lead to the rift in Don Sturzo's People's Party, the popular Left Wing, now suspicious of the secretary who was considered responsible for the present wait-and-see policy, was contrasted by a concentration of the Catholic Right Wing, as was evident from the attempt of a group of Milanese Catholics, led by former deputy Cornaglia-Medici, Lodovico and M.P. Borromeo, «to form a Catholic party which would act as a conservative counterbalance to the People's Party». Thus was born the Constitutional Union, which, however, did not have much success.

¹³ As a matter of fact, he went back to the Senate until 1932, and he fought to support the silk industry, which was in increasingly worse condition year after year, and to create the Silk Organization.

example of many Gavazzis of past generations and entered the industry of silk spinning and throwing. For his business Mr. Lodovico has had to live for many years in Germany; he made frequent trips to all the countries of Europe and recently (1892-93) to North America. He is a very pleasant man and extremely popular with his workers. He was chosen by the Right Wing opposition to compete against former Leftist deputy Minister Martelli and Radical Ernesto Pozzi. He won the elections, and made his Parliamentary debut in the famous session of December 20th. Today he is a renowned deputy, well-known for having been the first, together with Colajanni, to expose the underhand dealings of the Roman Bank in Parliament.

At that time the Prime Minister scorned Gavazzi as a newborn babe, laughing at the «exceptionality» of the moment – this was no more than a month ago! Today Giolitti is forced to admit that the moment is indeed exceptional, that he was very wrong to laugh, and that the «babe in arms» was right. On Monday evening, before returning to the Chamber, Gavazzi's friends and political supporters expressed their respect for him and encouraged him to continue the fight. In the short speech he delivered on this occasion he again proved himself an able orator with very clear ideas. He is also, we should add, a second lieutenant in the reserve cavalry.

In *Parlamento Italiano nel cinquantenario dello Statuto. Profilo e cenni biografici* by Telesforo Sarti, an 1898 entry referred to Lodovico as an «important industrialist especially in the spinning and throwing of silk».

«He has been in the lower House since 1892 (legislative periods XVIII, XIX and XX) as the MP from Lecco for the Right Wing.

His name became known from the very first year of his mandate, thanks to the Roman Bank scandal, when he and Colajanni broke open the case that had so many painful consequences and that cannot be said to be completely closed even today.

A serious, independent and energetic character, he was respected by all, and in the Senate contributed a number of times, speaking with great ability on matters of a mainly economic and financial nature, which he had studied thoroughly.

Today he supports ministerial policies, if somewhat unenthusiastically. We might venture to say that, whatever the future may hold for him politically, he will never be a Giolittian.

In Milan he is a member of various important administrations and many industrial and banking groups. He holds the rank of second lieutenant of the reserve cavalry in the mobile forces».

In Treccani's *Storia di Milano*, volume 16, part 10, on the music of Milan in modern times, we find a passage which mentions Lodovico and his «musical salon»: «Also in the second half of the century, despite the fact that performances of symphonic chamber music were becoming, as we know, increasingly of public domain, the Milanese salon continued to fulfill its role of focusing attention on culture and ambition. The newspapers of the period, as we remember, made frequent mention of the performances organised by the greatly admired singer Matilde Juva, as well as those held in the houses of ... Lodovico Gavazzi ...».

L'Illustrazione Italiana of February 6, 1910, on the occasion of Lodovico's nomination to the Senate, published the following profile: «He was sent to the Chamber in November of 1892

by the Moderates of the Lecco constituency, including Valmadrera, where the Gavazzis have large industrial plants and property. He was a follower of Giulio Prinetti, and as soon as he entered the Chamber he became, together with Colajanni Napoleone, one of the provokers of the disputes on the Alvisi enquiry regarding the Roman Bank – disputes in which Giolitti referred to him as «born just yesterday in this hall ! ...».

Gavazzi withdrew of his own accord from deputation last March, after 17 years in which he distinguished himself with his sincere and courageous speeches on economic and social matters. He made frequent journeys abroad, including to the two Americas; he is firmly Conservative, yet cultured and modern».

In one of the various biographies describing him (Cimone, Pallestrini, Sorti T., Tortoreto A.) we read: «A Deputy and Senator, born on July 17, 1857 in Milan. He was elected Deputy of Lecco in the legislature periods XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI and XXII. He was nominated senator on January 26, 1910 for the third category and confirmed on February 26 of the same year. An industrialist representing the Right Wing in the Chamber, among the Moderate Clericalists, he immediately made a name for himself through an interpellation on the question of the Roman Bank. He carried out in-depth studies on economic and financial problems».

In 1934 *La Nazione Operante*, by Edoardo Sabino, contained the following profile: «After completing his classic studies, he promptly dedicated himself to the silk manufacturing and spinning industry, contributing generously with his spirit of initiative and his untiring activity. A man who in all fields has always done his duty, his entire life is an example of hard work and moral rectitude ... In 1907 he went to Russia on a trade mission, to conclude several business deals. He worked alongside Luigi Luzzati in an important enquiry regarding industrial life in Italy». In a letter to Filippo Turati, dated March 11, 1904, Anna Kuliscioff wrote: «But say, whoever would have imagined that such an intelligent man as Gavazzi could be so fanatical and biased in his ignorance as a great industrialist? Here I met a cousin of his [Luigi Gavazzi, son of Egidio, Author's Note], a former high school companion of Ninetta [Andreina Costa Kuliscioff, who was later to marry, in fact, Luigi Gavazzi, Author's Note], and I asked him why it was that age and experience counted so little to his relative.

He replied that Lodovico is a pure intellect, and as such is incapable of getting on in the world. He lacks the versatility necessary in business, and the capacity to profit from experience».

The Socialist Movement inevitably clashed with the interests of the upper middle class and the industrialists, resulting in an attitude of suspicion on the part of the workers' societies in general, which were made up of workers but manipulated, for obvious reasons, by the leaders of the middle classes and the industrial world, whose aim was to subdue the social problem, urgent though it was, with a paternalistic attitude.

This evident contradiction itself may explain the progressive downhill trend of the workers' societies which, overwhelmed by the fast-moving events of the day, found themselves no longer able to guarantee social peace.

The years following the natural growth of social conscience were accompanied by dramatic

events in Europe. With the end of the First World War, the disappointments and sacrifices of the ex-servicemen and their families (which had already been put to the test in the immense and underdeveloped Russian Empire) were hurled into the furnace of proletarian movements. The explosive mixture forced the middle classes, even the most enlightened, to withdraw into their shell to defend what they had thus far succeeded in attaining.

And, in fact, in Italy itself the descendants of those sagacious, far-sighted and philanthropic industrialists, such as the Verza-Gavazzi family, were also conditioned by the different attitude of the working classes. When, in 1921, the Christian-based CIL (Italian Workers' Confederation), was actually accused of Bolshevism by M.P. Lodovico Gavazzi, its distinguished leader, Achille Grandi, replied: «For the Hon. Gavazzi, who boasts of being a Liberal Conservative, and who was once a true interventionist, the tragedy of the war has evidently passed without leaving after-effects. The Socialist organisation which, before the war, had around half a million members, a number that, after the armistice, was multiplied by four, is not a historical phenomenon which concerns him. The efforts of the good Catholics and clergy who, in order to save souls, must, according to the teachings of the Gospels, tend the wounds of the body and therefore the injustices of which the humble workers have for many years been victims and still are today, for Senator Gavazzi are all a waste of energy and are even damaging. For him, evidently, all that can be condemned are the inconveniences with which the white organisations were forced to trouble him, along with others of his fellow-industrialists, either for the sake of obtaining a fair salary for the workers or recognition of the workers' spokesmen, or of preventing reprisals or attacks against the right of association. For Mr. Gavazzi the white economic and trade union organisms are a much greater threat than the Socialist body, especially because in his day the Socialist propagandists were satisfied to bark without biting. But when I remember the spinners' salary of just one lira per day in the Gavazzi factories, and the fines and the injustices, and when I think that such exploitation came to an end thanks to the prudent yet proud perseverance of our White Labour Unions, I can well understand the significance of the criticisms put forward by Senator Gavazzi»¹⁴.

The Mutual Aid Society

In 1890 Lodovico was one of the promoters of the Mutual Aid Society of the Silk Industry Workers, an initiative which was born with the support of the Silk Industrialists' and Dealers' Association of Milan, in which the Gavazzis had held an important role ever since its foundation in 1877.

The Egidio & Pio Gavazzi

In the customary division of responsibility within the Gavazzi family, following the death of Egidio in 1910, during the war Lodovico had contributed to the running of the large factory in Desio, in part because his acquaintance with the political circles of the capital

¹⁴ From Antonio Salvadè, *Le vicende della Società operaia di Mutuo Soccorso tra operai e contadini di Canzo nel contesto del movimento mutualistico italiano (1882-1999)*, Fondazione Giuseppe Rovetta ONLUS, Canzo, 2000.

Employees of the Gavazzi silk mill in Valmadrera in the 1930s.



was important at a time when the most promising source of work was represented by the military job orders¹⁵.

The Agricultural Bank of Desio

Lodovico was never part of the Agricultural Bank of Desio. His influence on the bank, however, probably grew in 1917 following the death, after a long illness, of Luigi Gavazzi, whose seat on the Board of Directors was taken by G. Carlo Strocchi.

Industry businesses

Throughout his life Lodovico remained involved in the family silk business, to which he dedicated himself before entering the world of politics and especially when he largely withdrew from public life.

The Pietro Gavazzi company was quite a large company. In 1890 it employed 4,000 workers in 20 factories, including the flagship facilities, in Valmadrera, where the Gavazzis owned two of the three silk manufacturing plants, two of the seven silk-throwing factories and one ribbon manufacturing factory, which employed 207 workers¹⁶.

In an article by Francesco Ronchi on «*La Banconota* no. 42 – June 2005», regarding Cernusco sul Naviglio, we read:

«At the beginning of the 1900s there was a strong contrast between the Catholic and lay worlds; a number of strikes were also held in the textile mills that had recently been set up in the country; such as the Baletti Mill (150 workers), which manufactured lace and tuille. The crisis in the sector, which began in 1908, came to a head in 1913 with the closing down of two of the old silk mills, the Carini and the Tizzoni; only that of senator Gavazzi remained active».

¹⁵ Enrico Galbiati, head of the Desio Socialists, President of the Emancipation' Co-operative, editor of *La Brianza* and town councillor, accused Senator Lodovico of exploiting the workers.

¹⁶ See tables on p. XXXXX of Chapter 6.

After the war, he was able to devote less time to active politics and dedicated himself to running some of the family businesses.

In 1920 he was Chairman of the Pietro Gavazzi Company, which manufactured ribbons and silk articles in Milan.

After the death of Egidio, he founded the Pietro Gavazzi Silk Manufacturers, in Desio, with a capital of half a million lira. The company was born as a result of an agreement with another prominent Desio industrialist, Pietro Basilio Gavazzi (no relation). The venture proved difficult to launch, and in June 1923 the partnership was dissolved.

He considerably reduced the number of factories belonging to the Pietro Gavazzi company, closing down some and selling others. When he passed away, on November 5, 1941, his industrial complex employed a total of 1,500 workers.

The Italian Discount Bank

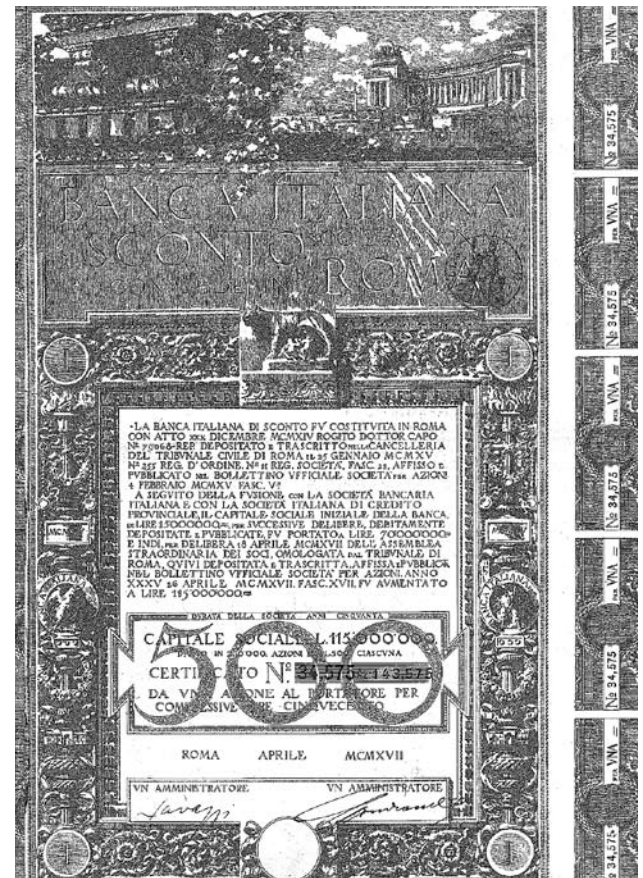
He was a director and member of the Central Committee of the Italian Discount Bank¹⁷, a Rome-based bank that was founded in 1914.

The Bank, one of the most important in Italy, with around 170 offices, branches and agencies, and was formed by the merging of two pre-existing banks: the Italian Provincial Credit Society and the Italian Bankers' Society, of which Lodovico was Director¹⁸. This merger came about with the «blessings» of the Bank of Italy, which hoped to thus contrast the Comit bank, which sought to safeguard the considerable economic interests in Italy of German businessmen and investors (especially in the strategic iron and steel sector).

On the Board of Directors Lodovico was in good company – there were two other Senators of the Realm (Enrico Scalini and Pasquale Leonardi Cattolica), with none other than Guglielmo Marconi (1874–1937) as Chairman and many other renowned figures of the day (there were 29 Board members in all)¹⁹.

The events that involved this bank caused a great stir in the economic, financial and political world of the day.

In the short space of seven years, from the date of its founding on December 15, 1914 until it closed its doors on December 28, 1921, the turbulent history of the Italian Discount Bank was emblematic of the exultations and crises which characterised Italy during the war and in its aftermath, a general sign of the basic fragility of



Share certificate of the Italian Discount Bank, signed by Lodovico Gavazzi in April 1917.

¹⁷ He was a correspondent of the Agricultural Bank of Desio (later the Bank of Desio), in which he had large sums deposited. The Italian Discount Bank was not of Catholic inspiration.

¹⁸ For the 1908 fiscal year, the Board of Directors of the Italian Bankers' Society was formed of: Pietro Baragiola (Chairman), Pietro Priani, Gaetano Belloni, Giacomo Blankart, Ruggero Dollfus, Giuseppe De Zara, Lodovico Gavazzi, Count Giuseppe Luigi Malliani, Ludovico Mazzotti Biancinelli, Francesco Medici and Armando Raggio.

The General Management was made up of Roberto Calegari and Ignazio Rosemberg; while the Management of the Milan branch was headed by Angelo Catelli, with the assistance of Carlo Sadun and nobleman Lorenzo Litta Modignani.

¹⁹ Many were from Lombardy – besides Lodovico, these included Angelo Pogliani (Managing Director), Francesco Gondrand, Gaetano Belloni (from the Ambrosian Bank) and Cesare Mozzoni.

Italy's economic and financial structure, which periodically re-surfaced²⁰. An excessive running up of debts on the part of the industrial system as it came to grips with reorganisation was, in fact, one of the aspects of the 1920-21 economic depression, expressed in a process of «debt inflation», a mechanism which was later to be repeated in the «Great Depression» of 1929.

In 1920 the already unstable economic situation was exacerbated by political instability, particularly with regard to the problems of large industry.

The crisis suffered by large groups more directly related to the manufacture of heavy and traditional arms, such as the companies Ansaldo and ILVA, were the most visible aspects; the affair of the Italian Discount Bank may also be seen in the light of this crisis²¹.

The Bank was founded on the eve of the war, and concentrated specifically on industrial credit – as the newest of the banks, it followed the model of the large, «mixed» joint-stock company-banks, which formed the basis of industrial development in Italy.

Along with French interests (which served to focus the Italian interventionist option on the capital of the two banks merged within the Italian Discount Bank) the Ansaldo group, led by the Perrone family, immediately became of prime importance. Ansaldo, a successful and expanding group in the financial and economic world, could bring badly needed dynamism to the bank.

The growth of the Ansaldo group was turbulent and erratic during the war years, as it depended largely on government contracts, and the Italian Discount Bank rode the same roller coaster in its feverish search for liquidity.

The need for cash was such that the Commercial Bank and the industrial conglomerate that had gathered around it was repeatedly the object of takeover bids – bids which had been launched before the war invoking anti-German and interventionist policies and later reiterated in 1918 and in 1920, when the Italian financial and economic system sought, through a series of attempted mergers and acquisitions, to rationalise its own structure in response to a clear need for re-organisation.

The Italian Discount Bank, however, was considerably more involved than its rivals in the perverse mechanism of war-driven expansion, with abnormal exposure in favour of Ansaldo²² and other heavy industries. The failure of the last attempt to take over the Commercial Bank

²⁰ In 1818 the commercial bank most interested in extending its sphere of business in Brianza was the Italian Discount Bank. The growth of this bank had come about in an extremely rapid and haphazard manner. Pogliani, rather than setting about choosing his clients and rationalizing the network of branches, concentrated on taking over as many local banks as possible (especially those in difficulty), thereby guaranteeing an increase in volume, which would be used as a pretext for launching a series of capital increases. In the Brianza area, the Italian Discount Bank had opened branches in Mariano Comense and Saronno, and had also made an agreement with several Catholic banks. During the war, the Italian Discount Bank had been taken over by the *holding* company controlled by the Perrone brothers, owners of the iron and steel-manufacturing group Ansaldo.

The decreasing attention of the Italian Discount Bank to the local economic situation caused many Catholics in Brianza to lose faith in the bank. Significantly, Giuseppe Pezzana, manager of the bank's branch in Carate, who was well acquainted with the local market, accepted an offer to manage a new branch for the Bank of Rome (a bank which numbered among its directors Angelo Mauri and Cornaggia).

²¹ In the spring of 1920 the Perrone family, owners of the company Ansaldo, attempted to buy up shares in the Comit and Italian Credit banks, with the aim of taking over ILVA and other iron and steel companies related to commercial banks who were rivals of the Italian Discount Bank. The manoeuvre was unsuccessful, but it contributed to worsening relations with the main Italian industrialist circles.

²² Ansaldo's debt with the Italian Discount Bank had risen from 230 million lira in February 1919 to 750 million lira at the end of 1921.

resulted in a drastic liquidity problem for the Italian Discount Bank, which resulted in the alleged falsification of the 1920 balance sheet²³.

But the truth quickly surfaced, and the crisis suffered by the Ansaldo group²⁴ in a context of inflation and general depression caused the situation to deteriorate further, first in January and February and then at the end of 1921, resulting in a great run of deposit withdrawals, which by December became a general panic.

The Government response was flexible – while it refused explicitly to resort to a plain and simple bail-out, it nevertheless managed to avoid bankruptcy. At the end of November, in fact, in agreement with the Bank of Italy and the two other issuing banks (Bank of Sicily and Bank of Naples), the Government had sponsored a bail-out committee, which also included the three main national interest banks. The 600 million lira allocated on November 24, however, proved to be insufficient, as it covered less than half the actual deficit. A legislative intervention was then decided upon, and with a Royal Decree dated December 28, 1921 the Italian Discount Bank requested and was granted a moratorium.

In spite of heavy pressure in favour of the bail-out of the bank, Minister Bartolo Bellotti (1877-1944), a lawyer from Bergamo, did not consider it advisable to saddle the State with such expenses. The fall of the Bank had created a problem in terms of guaranteeing a certain amount to its 400,000 depositors, but also of carrying out the functions of direction, control and financing that are the roles of a parent company.

This problem was solved by the creation, through a law dated March 4, 1922, in the context of the Union for Industrial Subsidies (an institution founded for the financing of war industries dependent on the issuing banks), of an Independent Section with the object of guaranteeing the risks and losses of the Bank and creating the conditions for a settlement, which was actually granted by the Court on March 23, 1922²⁵.

In the first years of the Fascist regime the proceedings regarding the indictment of a number of board members (13 out of a total of 29) were held. They were charged with having fraudulently concealed the financially unstable situation that was already evident in 1920 by falsifying that year's financial statement, as well as having deducted considerable amounts as personal remuneration. Due to the presence of two senators on the company's Board of Directors, Enrico Scalini and Lodovico Gavazzi, both former deputies of the Milanese Right Wing, the trial was held before the Senate in the High Court of Justice.

The trial, which began on April 24, 1924, was suspended on May 2 for an accounting esti-

²³ There were more than 410,000 creditors, for a sum of over 3 billion and 260 million lira.

²⁴ Due to the excessive tying-up of the Perrone company, the Italian Discount Bank was forced to appeal for a moratorium for the payments. Undoubtedly, the Perrone family were largely responsible, since they held over one third of the stock.

²⁵ The Independent Section was run by a committee of executives, having neither juridical figures nor its own capital and functioning purely as an accounting service for the issuing bank. With a law dated March 25, 1926, the liquidators of the Discount Bank were authorised to transfer its shares to the Independent Section, which changed identity.

The transfer served to establish, for the first time in a public context, a shareholding in which non-functional companies were controlled directly by a public administration. This was the first step towards the creation of the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction: it was through this channel that a company like Alfa Romeo succeeded in becoming a State company.

mate regarding the accusations made against the former board members, in relation to the existence of assets at the time of payment discontinuance, the true state of the 1920 balance and the accuracy of the amounts withdrawn by the board members. The estimate confirmed the defendants' claims. The trial was resumed on January 12, 1926 and on March 2 the board members were cleared of all charges²⁶.

The Vonwiller Bank

Lodovico was the first chairman of the Vonwiller Bank (later the Morgan Vonwiller), founded in 1919 as a joint-stock company (thus transforming, the company had existed since 1819). He remained in office until 1921, a year of great financial crisis, in which many banking institutes declared bankruptcy.

The decision of the Italian Discount Bank to request a moratorium had a strongly unsettling effect on the normal trend of the Vonwiller Bank market, so much so that it could justifiably boast undisputed merits for the national economy. This placed it in difficulty, especially in a period in which the special conditions of the country, still feeling the strain of the war and re-organisation, demanded swift and daring initiatives.

The Italian Discount Bank had close ties with the Vonwiller Bank and had previously participated in the transformation of the latter bank into a joint-stock company, the creation of its capital and its subsequent increase, subscribing as many as 17,400 shares of the 40,000 in circulation. It also had influential representatives sitting on the Board of Directors.

The Italian Discount Bank, moreover, never sought, either directly or indirectly, to participate in any operations, much less business transactions, outside of the Vonwiller Bank's normal activities.

The crisis of the Italian Discount Bank, therefore, brought about the resignation of Senators Lodovico Gavazzi and Vitaliano Di Capua as Chairman and board member respectively. They were replaced by Alberto Vonwiller and Angelo Dubini (of the renowned Dubini Brothers silk manufacturing company). Angelo was Lodovico's son-in-law.



1902 photo of the new seat of the Vonwiller Bank in Milan.

²⁶ From an editorial in a newspaper published at the time: «Those who, with a spirit not stirred by passions or interests, read or heard the testimony given yesterday in the High Court by Senator Gavazzi cannot but have felt deeply moved.

This solitary and taciturn man is head of one of the oldest and most highly-respected industrial dynasties of Lombardy, and has maintained intact in the middle of the 20th Century family traditions that are no longer to be found, if not in the eloquent pages of Gian Battista Alberti and Father Tasso. This man was placed, as the leader of a large industrial firm, in the «pantheon» of the Board of Directors of a powerful bank, and as such was dragged into the grim and dramatic affairs that emerged in the disaster of the «Italian Discount Bank». This elderly man, upright in name, figure and custom, held for many years in affectionate obeisance by the members of an almost Biblical family and by the numerous workers in his patriarchal factories, found himself suddenly involved in the sensational scandal of the fall of a bank, and yesterday, before the judges (after four years of obstinate and disdainful silence) he expressed himself in an injured cry, which was more than simply the expression of legitimate defence.

The words of this «old-fashioned» man – which still flow with the anguish suffered in proportion to the traditional honesty of his lineage and the strict propriety of his business education – were laden with an uncommon pride and a piercing rebuke, which went beyond the severe and calm courtroom of the High Court.

In defending himself Senator Gavazzi accused no-one – neither the head of the Board of Directors nor his colleagues nor those who at the time sat on the Government benches or in other positions of power and could have been held responsible for the disaster. Not one name, not one accusation, not one retort passed his lips.

Thanks also to this undeniably noble attitude, when he exclaimed at the end of his testimony: «The fall of the Bank was a crime!» no-one – listener or interpreter, judge or party to the case – was able to hold back a quiver of emotion, nor keep from meditating – each in his own way – on the frivolity and decadence of men and things which today, fortunately, have been surmounted».

At the first signs of trouble at the Italian Discount Bank, Ruggero Dollfus had taken steps to buy it out, urging the Vonwiller family, other shareholders of the voting trust and the Gavazzi and Dubini families to join him in making an effort to take over the equity interest of the Italian Discount Bank.

Lodovico later returned to the Board in 1926, where he remained until 1938.

The operation that was carried out at this time was both efficient and discreet, and served to save the Vonwiller Bank from the many banking turmoils which characterised the period.

The Italian Silk Association and the Industrial Federation of Lombardy

In Lombardy worries regarding the future of mulberry tree cultivation and silkworm raising urged the main dealers, industrialists and workers to set up the Italian Silk Association. Founded in Milan in February 1877, this was the first modern industrial association of the category on Italian soil. Among its sponsors was a young «expert in the problems of silk manufacturing – Lodovico Gavazzi»²⁷.

Prior to 1926 he was on the managing committee of the Industrial Federation of Lombardy, and remained on the committee when, in 1926, it changed its name to the Fascist Industrial Federation of the Province of Milan.

A portrait of Lodovico from the memories of his daughter Adele

The following portrait of Lodovico and Valmadrera at the end of the 1800s is an excerpt from writings by his daughter Adele from Christmas, 1972.

«I would like to try to write the story of my father which, if I succeed, will be a story of the utmost integrity.

The life of my family alternated between Milan and Valmadrera.

In Valmadrera we lived in two large houses. One was the «Big House», the former home of Teresa Casati Confalonieri, purchased in around 1807 when the wife of Federico Confalonieri was very worried about accusations made by the Austrians against her husband. Mrs. Luigia Gavazzi Verza, the first buyer, commissioned a pupil of Canova named Cacciatori to build a monument in memory of her husband, Giuseppe Antonio, for the Chapel adjoining the house. The monument, a high relief sculpture in white marble, portrays a very melancholy Luigia surrounded by her six daughters (who were well-known for their beauty) and three sons, Pietro with his wife Ernestina Pascal leaning against his shoulder, and the other two, Egidio and Antonio. The figures are depicted in classical garb, with tunics and «peplums».

grandmother Luigia was famous for personally overseeing the spinning, and it is said that she used to walk up and down in the «Filandone», as she went about her knitting, checking on the spinners.

²⁷ From Francesco Ronchi, *Desio e la Brianza*, Colonna Edizioni, Milan, 1999.

The large greenhouse, which on one side faced the great hall and on the other side the «Filandone», was already built back in grandmother's day. This greenhouse, built entirely in glass, was taller than the house itself, with a vaulted ceiling, and housed tall palm trees. The floors were in blue and white tiles, which gave a bluish reflection, especially in the evening when the greenhouse was lit by gas lamps. It was a very impressive sight, also for the various types of green plants and the «Maidenhair» ferns in the background, since, in order to reach the «Filandone», one had to climb a flight of stone steps all decorated with trailing «Maidenhair» ferns. This greenhouse was always regarded as one of the beauties of the park designed by the architect Balzaretti, and my great-grandfather Pietro and grandfather Giuseppe kept it going for two generations, with a great deal of effort and expense. Grandfather Peppino finally had it demolished in 1913, when it must have been almost a hundred years old. In those days there were no anti-rust varnishes, and I remember that he showed me how rusty it had all become, to explain why he could not keep it up any longer.

The second house was built by great-grandfather Pietro in the Victorian style, with grey and red stripes, not very far from the Big House. This new house was built with a tower and, in fact, became known as the «Tower House» or the «Residence».

When the Big House was occupied by the «Regiora», her daughter-in-law lived with her husband and children in the Tower House.

My father also lived in the Tower House, because his eldest brother Piero and his wife Orsola lived with the grandparents in the Big House.

Father always spoke with admiration about his grandfather Pietro, who had first encouraged him to take an interest in the family business and whom he considered of superior intellect. His father Giuseppe, on the other hand, had been forced to become involved in the company, though unwillingly. We used to see him walking around the various factories with dog-eared copies of Horace or Dante in his pocket.

At the age of eighteen Father went to Germany for three years to learn German and study the types of yarn that were required by the important local companies. There he also learned counterpoint and later we were often to hear him composing, improvising beautiful piano pieces which, unfortunately, were all eventually lost, as he had not written them down.

Around the time of my birth, in 1893, Father decided to run for election as deputy. I remember the campaign period; Father was riding around in a carriage making speeches in the Lecco district, along the lakeside and in Valsassina, and I sometimes went with him; I remember the fine names of the villages in the valley, where we visited the curates of Primaluna or Cortabbio, who obliged Father to drink a glass, and he accepted so unwillingly!

On the evening of the elections, we listened with him on the telephone to the results of the voting in the different boroughs – Margno, Casargo, Premana. I was «pulling for him» as you might say, and Father was pleased to see this little girl of nine or ten so worked up on his behalf.

Listening along with us to the election results were close friends and important voters: Giulio Fiocchi, Giorgio Falck and Emilio Sangregorio. I fondly remember those evenings of battle and triumph.

I do not, however, remember how much time elapsed from his last candidacy to his nomination as senator. I know that one day Father told us of a telephone call from Luzzatti (who was then the Prime Minister)²⁸, who said to him: «Do you know Senator Gavazzi? Well, let me introduce you to him – it's you!».

He immediately told him that he was needed to make a trade agreement with Russia²⁹. This must have been in 1908, and Father prepared to leave with his assistants, Paternò and Lucioli. He sent us very interesting letters from Russia – the bright nights (it never got dark), the beautiful troikas that raced across the snow, the visit to the Tsar in Tsarkoselo, the magnificent winter palace, and the Tsarina, so frail and so concerned for the *Tsarevitch*.

The most frequent journeys, however, were those he made to America. He travelled to the United States, to New York, where he met a certain Caccianino, his silk yarn agent.

The last journey he made, if I remember well, was in around 1913-14. This time, Caccianino persuaded him to shave off his beard and it was an unpleasant surprise for us to see him come back so changed. My sister Carla, in fact, burst into tears! Actually, however, he did seem younger without a beard.

Once back from America, he dedicated himself to his company with his customary enthusiasm. In the meantime, his father had passed away, and he found himself freer to act as he saw fit. Consequently, some of the factories were refurbished, others were sold and new ones were bought.

He strove to make such changes as would render the company more compact.

I remember when I was around 8-10 years old and I went with Father in the carriage of his faithful «Valsec» to visit the various factories around Brianza, from Morchiuso as far as Albese. These were drawing and spinning factories that, in time, Father tried to eliminate in order to concentrate the spindles that were needed in Molino or in Bellano. The Pergine factory, recently purchased, was used for spinning certain types of raw silk, for which cocoons were bought only in Trentino.

The cocoons bought in Tuscany were spun in the Rassina factory.

At the time of stockpiling, Father sent his sons Emanuele and Pio to the various places where cocoons suited to specific types of spinning were found. Emanuele usually went to Montevarchi or Figline, in Tuscany, and Pio to the Trentino region.

Those were years of ups and downs in the silk industry, and Mother would encour-

²⁸ At the time, Luigi Luzzati was actually Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce.

²⁹ In actual fact, the trade agreement with Russia had previously involved Di San Giuliano, together with Lodovico and Lucioli, in 1907, when he was in St. Petersburg (as we read in one of the funeral orations dedicated to him after his death) following the visit of the Tsar and his Foreign Minister, Iswolsky, to the King of Italy in Racconigi.



Two views of the silk mill at Pergine.

age us to be thrifty or dismiss one of the servants in order to save money, and Mimi and I looked after the linen and the sewing. At this time Emanuele and Pio were still at home, but my sisters were already married with Angelo and Antonio Dubini, who were cousins; they came every evening to visit with my parents.

Their families began to grow, and for Christmas Mimi and I set up a large Christmas tree for all the children in the famous «lounge», a spacious yet plainly-furnished room, with a large table in the middle to do homework on and a coda piano for playing music. As young girls we studied with Professor Attilio De Marchi, brother of the writer Emilio and Father's schoolmate. I remember that he had wanted me to study Greek and Latin, but Father would not hear of it. I was at the time glad not to have to apply myself to such serious and difficult studies, but how I regretted it afterwards!

All my most vivid memories are associated with the Tower House. I can still picture Professor Appiani; he had brought us up to a good level of piano-playing and, since he spent his holidays in Maggianico, he came every week on Saturdays to Valmadrera, braving the long walk from Maggianico to Valmadrera and back to give us lessons. First we studied with him, and then, after lunch and coffee, he left.

We would complain to Mother that we ought at least to have some holidays, but she was adamant. It was necessary to study, and always. As a result, I must say, we both learned to play well, especially after the age of 15 or 16. Before Professor Appiani we had had a more easy-going piano teacher. Her name was Mirabello and in winter she wore a jacket with a fur collar, under which she tucked a newspaper because she said it kept her warm, and he spoke always about «my brother Cavlo», an admiral who was her pride and joy. The little square name Mirabello near my house, where the market is held, is named after him, and I always remember «my brother Cavlo» when I pass.

It was in 1903 when motor-cars made their first appearance at our house. First there was a Gillet-Foret that Father used to go to Pergine – this was started with a crank shaft! Then we had a red Fiat, which tore up the hill of the mill «like the wind». and the first time that Emanuele drove it out of the garage at the mill, he accidentally put it into first gear instead of reverse. In front of the car there was a tool box, which he completely smashed.

At the time of his third and fourth legislative period, Father put a great effort into the construction of the road from Bellano to Taceno, managing, in fact, to have it completed in these years. He was firmly convinced of the need for this road. The inhabitants of the northern part of Valsassina had to travel a good distance to reach the railway at Lecco, while the new road from Taceno would make it possible to reach Bellano in around ten kilometres. This new road would be built along the bottleneck formed by the river Pioverna before entering the lake. How many letters were written, and how many trips to Rome were made before his dream became reality!

In this same period he was also dedicating a great amount of his time and energy to the Ernesto Prato Foundation. Ernesto Prato was a silkworm merchant who had lived a long

time in Japan. In his will he expressed the wish that his savings would be used to set up a charity organisation in his home town of Asso, to aid the blind and poor people of the Province of Como. The organisation was founded under Father's direction, according to the wishes of Mr. Prato, who left to Father, as his executor, his collection of Japanese vases. This collection included two large Cloisonné vases that had belonged to the Mikado (there exists only one other, in the Metropolitan Museum of New York) and many other vases, some of them extremely large. In the division of my father's possessions, the Cloisonné vases went to Emanuele, while Pio inherited the large ceramic vases.

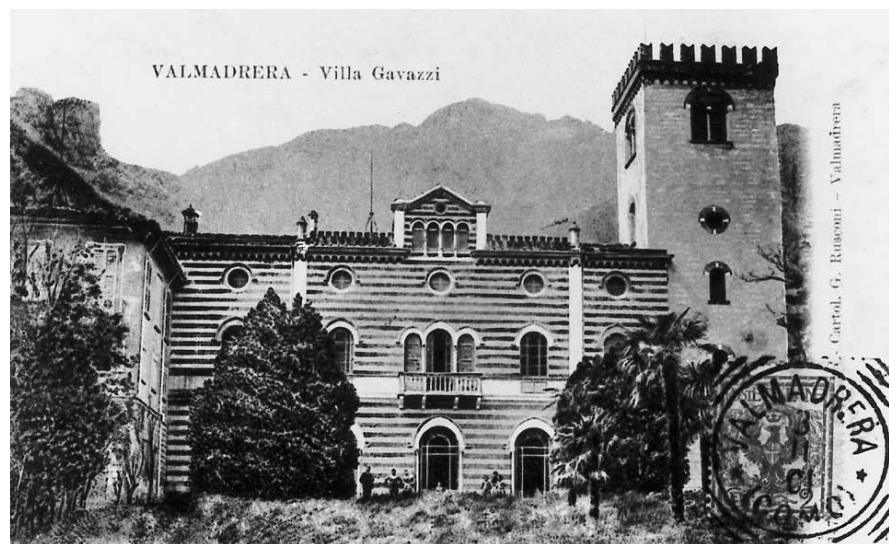
The Fiocchi and the Magistretti families were close friends of the family. When it was not possible to stay in Valmadrera due to the oppressive summer heat, we went to Casargo in Valsassina, at an altitude of around 800 metres, and there we stayed in Mr. Scuri's home. The Fiocchi family lived in one part of the building and we in the other. Between the two houses there was a porch with a stone table, where we would sit for hours, playing interminable rounds of «briscola» and «tressette». But then our mothers would come and ferret us out of our nook and take us to Piazza for our not-always-welcome walk.

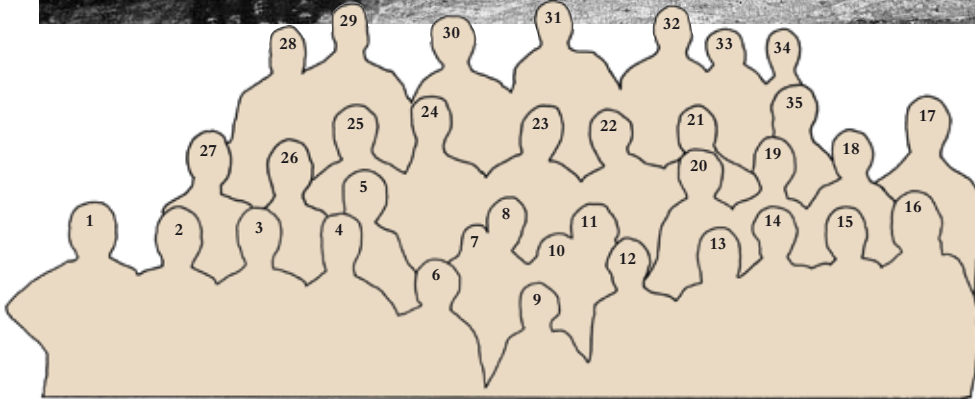
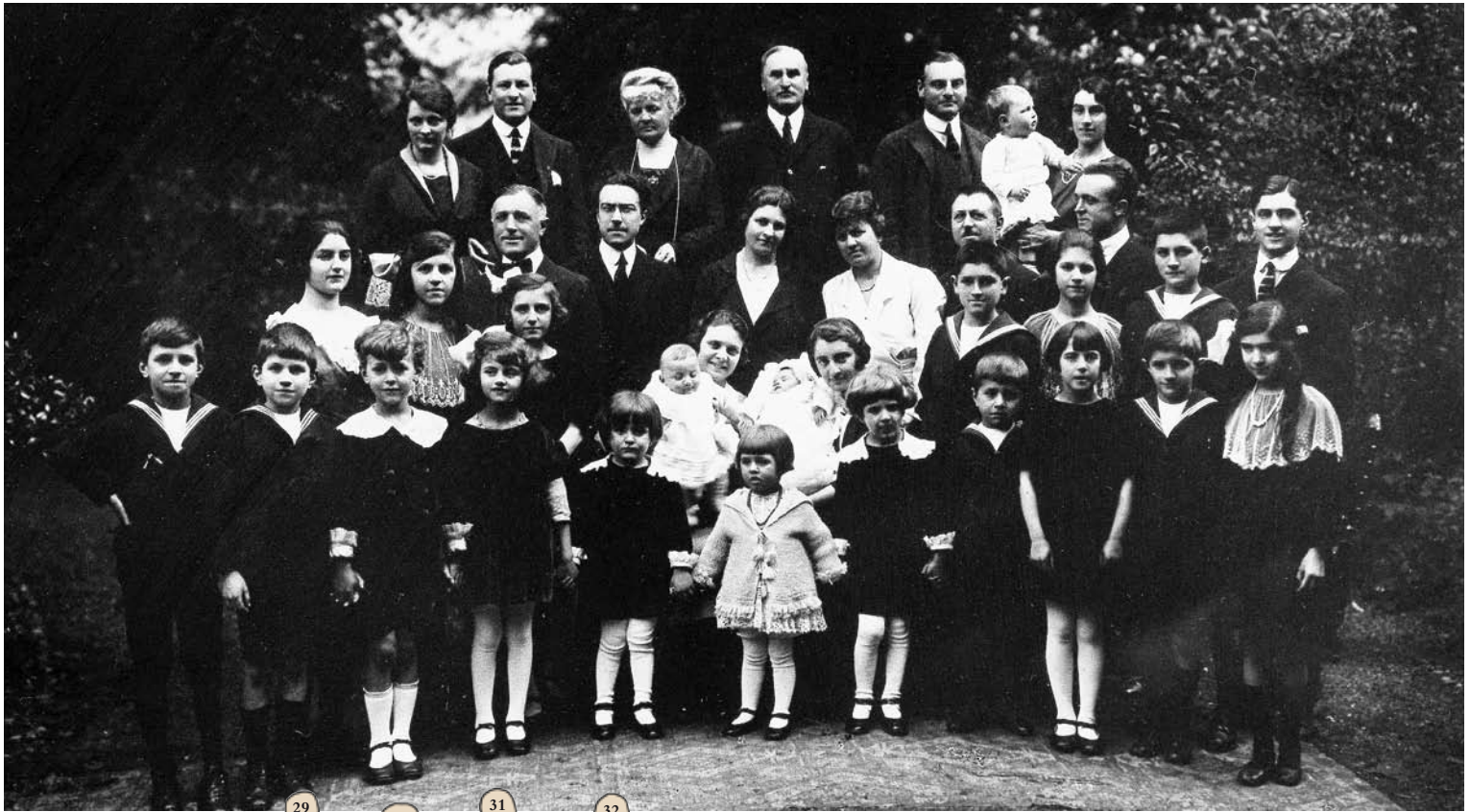
In Piazza there were lush meadows, where we sometimes found mushrooms. Between Casargo and Piazza we would stop off at Somadino to pick up the Magistrettis, who lived there, thus adding to our group another troop of boys and their sister Erminia. Professor Magistretti had a fine grizzled beard and was a photography enthusiast. Mr. Giulio Fiocchi had a most magnificent beard, and Father, before his last journey to America, also had a beard that he could be proud of in the company of the two other men, when they all met together on a Sunday for the walk to Piazza.

Casargo also had its charm. Perhaps I had already become a lover of flowers, because I cannot forget the intense and penetrating perfume of phlox that struck me every time I passed through the gate of the curate's garden in Casargo, which was situated exactly opposite Mr. Scuri's house.

On Saturday evenings we would anxiously await Father's arrival. He came by train as far as Bellano, and then walked the long distance home at a brisk pace, passing through Lezzeno, Narro and Indovero. As soon as he arrived, hot and thirsty, he would drink at the fountain of the Scuri home, whose water he reputed the freshest in the world. Here I will retrace my steps and say a few words about the Stabilini girls that lived in Malgrate. They must have been three beautiful girls, judging from their photographs, in spite of those dresses with the *tournure* at the back, which are most unflattering. Orsola, Vittoria and Maria received their suitors in Malgrate, at a distance of half an hour by road from Valmadrera.

Period postcard of the Gavazzi Villa in Valmadrera. The «Civil House», where Lodovico lived, was the home reserved for the second-born son of the family (A. Bertarelli Public Prints Collection, Milan).





Valmadrera, family group photo (1920):

1. Toio Dubini; 2. Franco Dubini; 3. Vico Gavazzi;
 4. Elena Gavazzi; 5. Vittoria Gavazzi; 6. Pio Dubini;
 7-8. Mimi Gavazzi with Pupi Merati; 9. Ginia Dubini;
 10-11. Adele Gavazzi with Nene Berrone; 12. Chico Dubini;
 13. Piero Dubini; 14. Emi Gavazzi; 15. Camillo Dubini;
 16. Luisa Dubini; 17. Pippo Dubini; 18. Vico Dubini;
 19. Lina Dubini; 20. Lele Dubini; 21. Angelo Dubini;
 22. Carla Gavazzi; 23. Angela Gavazzi; 24. Gianni Berrone;
 25. Antonio Dubini; 26. Pia Dubini; 27. Tota Dubini;
 28. Nina Gavazzi; 29. Pio Gavazzi; 30. Vittoria Gavazzi;
 31. Lodovico Gavazzi; 32. Lele Gavazzi;
 33-34. Lina and Serena Gavazzi; 35. Giulio Merati.

My mother, Vittoria, was born in 1859, and named after the great victory which characterised that year.

The first two married the Gavazzi brothers while Maria, perhaps the most beautiful, remained single for a long time until she finally married a Neapolitan named Giorgio Zezion.

Mother was a wonderful woman. She had the gift of making my father smile whenever he came

home from the office with a worried look on his face. She was known, in fact, for her girlish and unexpected *witticisms*, such as the time when, passing by the Lugano Lake, she said: «These are the leftovers of Lake Como», or the time when I asked the name of a certain mountain (again in the same area) and she answered: «I know that mountain very well – it is the one where Uncle Cristoph used to go hunting» (this uncle was completely unknown to us all, including Father). These *witticisms* were most common during car journeys, made with our faithful *chauffeur* Solini, about routes and arrivals, to the great delight of the grandchildren.

I remember that every year, at the end of August, my parents went to visit their friends Morel-Journal in Lyons, making the trip by car, through Switzerland, and they usually took a couple of their grandchildren along. They would leave with the

trusty Lambda arranged as follows: Father in front with Solini, the chauffeur, Mother in the rear with one of the grandchildren and the other one sitting on the rumble seat, with the task of passing messages back and forth between the grandparents. This always gave rise to great amusement, both due to their deafness and to Mother's Milanese expressions. Once such famous dialogue went as follows: «*Vittoria, look at that lovely waterfall!*» – «*Oh Signör, l'è un pissarutin!*» («Oh Sir, it's such a pissarutin!!» [affectionate Milanese term meaning «little sparrow» but also «little pee»]).

Mother ran her household with a firm but gentle hand. Father used to say: «I am King, but she is the Queen», and in fact, he never interfered with the business of the home, and did not even know what was to be served at mealtimes.

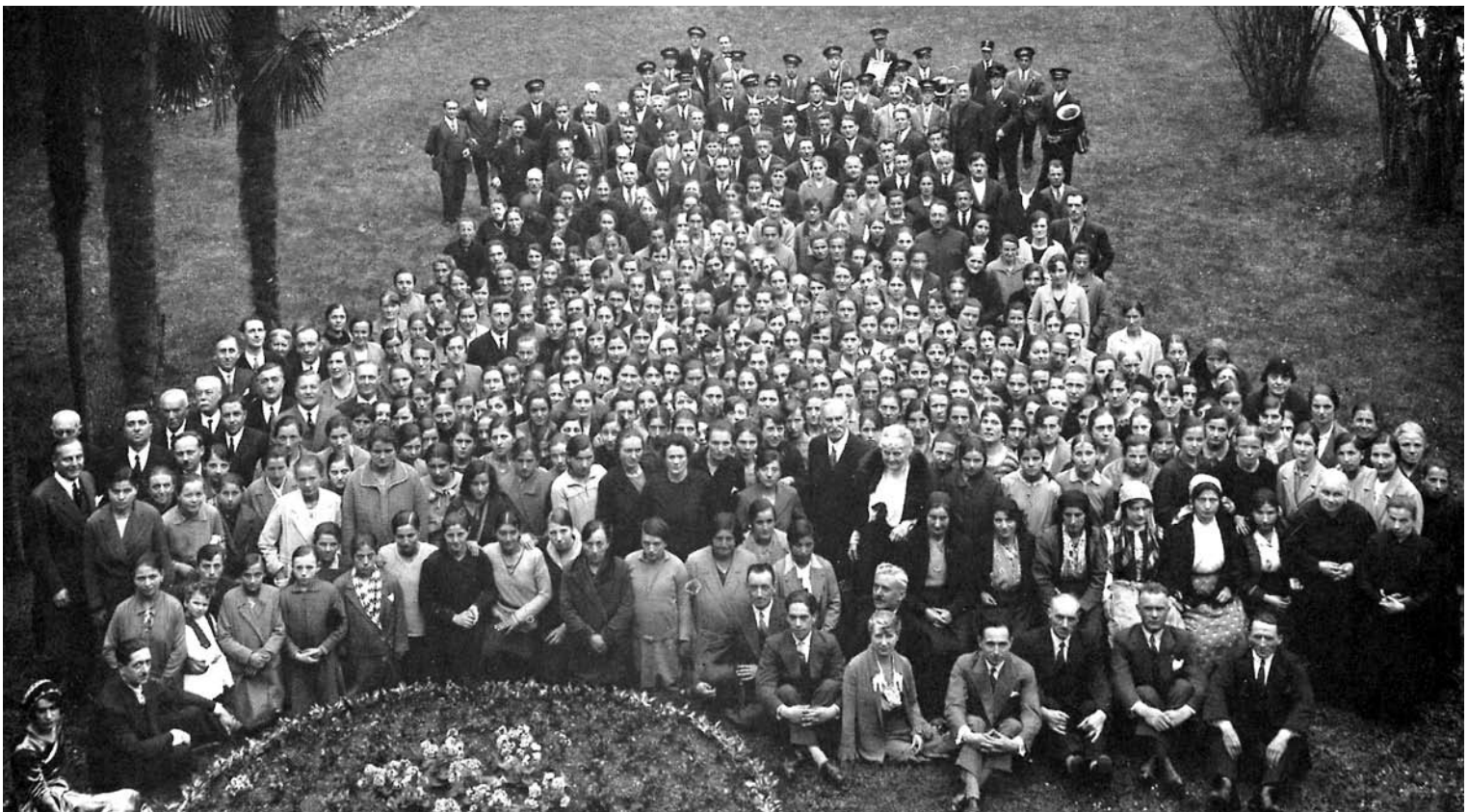
Mother was a strong swimmer, and could cross the lake from Malgrate to Lecco as if it were nothing. Father also swam well, and when we went to the seaside he would have me climb up on his back and would swim for a long time with me holding onto him.

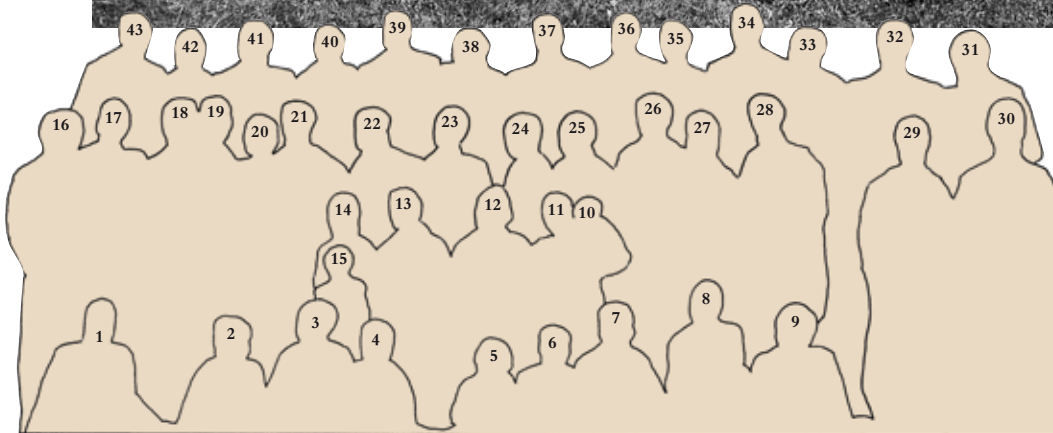
Until motor-cars became the rule, we all used to go to Malgrate on foot, and we would cross the lake by boat to go to the market in Lecco on Saturdays.

Mother used to tell us that when the children were small she would push the pram with her smallest baby as far as Malgrate to go and visit her own mother, Grandma Rachele, whom I never met.

In Milan the Stablinis lived in Corso Venezia. The Gavazzis previously lived at n. 14 Via Cusani, and then at n. 37, Via Monte Napoleone.

Valmadrera, group photo taken in occasion of the golden wedding anniversary of Lodovico Gavazzi (1931).





Valmadrera, family group photo (1930):

1. Serena Gavazzi; 2. Mino Gavazzi; 3. Nene Berrone;
4. Sandro Gavazzi; 5. Giulia Dubini; 6. Angelo Dubini;
7. Pupi Merati; 8. Ginia Dubini; 9. Pio Dubini;
- 10-11. Tota Dubini holding Giulia; 12. ?; 13. Adele Gavazzi;
- 14-15. Sandra with Toni; 16. Lina Dubini; 17. Camillo Dubini;
18. Toio Dubini; 19. Pippo Dubini; 20. Luisa Dubini;
21. Gianni Berrone; 22. Antonio Dubini; 23. Carla Gavazzi;
24. Angela Gavazzi; 25. Angelo Dubini; 26. Giulio Merati;
27. Pia Dubini; 28. Sandro Boselli; 29. Chico Dubini;
30. Piero Dubini; 31. Elena Gavazzi; 32. Franco Dubini;
33. Vittoria Gavazzi; 34. Vico Dubini; 35. Lina Gavazzi;
36. Lele Gavazzi; 37. Lodovico Gavazzi; 38. Vittoria Gavazzi;
39. Pio Gavazzi; 40. Nina Gavazzi; 41. Lele Dubini;
42. Emi Gavazzi; 43. Vico Gavazzi.

The house in Via Cusani was occupied on the ground floor by the offices of the silk business and on the first floor by my father's grandparents, Pietro and Ernestina, known to all as *Grandpapà* and *Grandmaman*, as she was from Paris. In this period Orsola and Piero, Lodovico and Vittoria lived with their relatives, Giuseppe and Angela Sessa, in Via Monte Napoleone. Father went to the office in Via Cusani three times

a day – morning, afternoon and evening. The third visit he justified by saying that he was going to check whether there were any telegrams. It was indeed a long walk from Via Monte Napoleone to Via Cusani. Father wrote everything personally by hand for years, and there were letters regarding both silk manufacturing and politics!

In around 1880 Giuseppe's two brothers founded the silk-weaving factory in Desio that specialised in umbrellas. They had as a telegraphic trademark name the word «rain» and produced for the English market. For the inauguration of the Desio factory, King Humbert I was invited.

The brothers Egidio and Pio complemented each other well. Egidio was very dynamic and a great salesman, while Pio was an engineer, and took care of the technical side of the business.

We often went to visit these great-uncles, who always received us warmly. How well I remember Uncle Egidio welcoming us as he stood before the crackling fire! And how affectionately were we received by the famous Aunt Peppina! She outlived her husband by many years, after he died of pneumonia in 1910 in their beautiful home at Via Brera no. 18, in Milan. Before the year 1900, Lodovico's family had moved into a house on their own, leaving Piero and Orsola with their grandparents, in Via Monte Napoleone. We had an apartment in the same Dozzio house, although the entrance was at n.10, Via Bigli; inside the building our apartment communicated with that of our grandparents. This was where the famous lounge was, with the coda piano that was used for our lessons. The apartment had no windows onto the road but only on the side facing onto the internal courtyard, where, in fine weather, we played, ran around and made a great din. Mr. And Mrs. Dozzio were indeed very kind to stoically bear such a racket! When we lived in Via Bigli my elder sisters got married to their Dubini cousins, one in 1902 and the other in 1903. I remember Angela's wedding, on February 1st, under a magnificent blanket of snow, which coated both the streets and the procession in candid white.

During Angela's engagement party, which was held in the little house annexed to the Tower House, Mimì, who must have been around 5 or 6 years old, was given permission to sit with the rest of the party at the table. Suddenly, in the midst of the rather self-conscious group, eating silently around the table, there was heard a little noise of unmistakable origin. All eyes were immediately turned to Mimì, without a word, almost accusingly, and she calmly said: «I did it with my mouth». This caused everyone to burst into laughter, breaking the ice among the guests, who had all been somewhat «stiff», as is common on such occasions.

Carla's wedding was held in September in Valmadrera, with a great banquet in the Big House of our grandparents, with a beautiful table set for 36 guests. Carla was 18 years old, and a real beauty. She remained beautiful for years, in spite of giving birth to 10 children and going through several bouts of enteritis, which were treated by Dr. Bellinzona, the famous «Mr. isn't that so?» [Translator's Note: a nickname deriving from his habit of finishing his remarks with «isn't that so?»] who discovered the well-remembered «Lactoserve».

I remember when we used to sit in a little group under the pergola directly in front of the tower.

This was a spot where, in the evening, we used to gather the chairs and armchairs that we used during the day for our meetings. The straw-thatched pergola was surrounded with many loquat trees, which provided us with shade during the summer months, and good fruit in June.

In the garden, beyond the tower, there was an annex, a little house that was inhabited over the years by different families of the younger generation. The period in which I remember it well was when it was occupied by the Dubini family, Carla and Antonio, and their increasingly numerous brood.



Group photo of the nine Gavazzi cousins, children of Piero (P) and Lodovico (L), taken in Valmadrera in 1895:

1. Adele (L) (1893-1979);
2. Egidia (P) (1888-1972);
3. Emanuele (L) (1887-1950);
4. Carla (L) (1883-1978);
5. Angela (L) (1882-1968);
6. Carlo (P) (1894-1957);
7. Pio (L) (1888-1970);
8. Maria (P) (1880-1896);
9. Peppino (P) (1883-1957).



Play (*Che Bel Mandolin*) staged by Elena and Emi Gavazzi on the occasion of the golden wedding anniversary of their Gavazzi grandparents (1931).

Pio Gavazzi (1888-1970) in formal attire.



A typical scene was Carla coming to join the group under the pergola with a large basket of sailor suits of all sizes, which every year were passed down from the eldest to the youngest children, and had to be lengthened, shortened, let out and taken in and eternally adjusted.

Carla then wanted to order new clothes in the same style from Selfridges, in London, and I had the task of making the order!

As well as Professor Appiani I remember Camilla Merati under the pergola, with her shrill laugh. She was the mother of my brother-in-law, Giulio Merati, and a great friend of everyone's, because she lived at n.10 Via Bigli in Milan as well, and when the Meratis were young and they used to come and visit us with the Grad-Page from Campagnola, Camilla came with them and was always very welcome.

In those days we had had a tennis court built at the bottom of the garden at the Big House, and it was there that I spent my happiest hours in Valmadrera. With my brother-in-law, Angelo Dubini, who was a far better player than I was, I would run back and forth until I was exhausted, not having nearly the amount of stamina that he did. Then he would go back to his beloved wife Angela, his «Quaja».

From 1903 to 1920 we lived at n. 7, Via Fatebenefratelli, in Cramer House, where Mimì and I were both married.

My two brothers fought in the 1915-18 War - Emanuele with the armoured vehicles division and Pio as a Captain of the Artillery. The two of us sisters worked in the Red Cross for all three years.

The war was tragic for Pio, who lost his beautiful and much-loved wife Ginia, to illness: she died in 1918 and Father and Mother took into their home their two beautiful little children, Lodovico and Elena.

At the end of the war Father went to Pergine, where he had a factory, and came back with «Pax», a Doberman which had been left by an enemy officer and which was very attached to Father and never left his side. It accompanied him to the office, it waited for him at the door of the house when he had to go out and, on Sundays when Father went to Church, it did not leave the bed where it was accustomed to sleeping, as it knew he would not be going to the office.

One particular memory is dedicated to Bellano.

The property there consisted of a silk mill and a spinning factory on the lake shore, with the Manor behind on higher ground, which had a beautiful view and an adjoining garden on different levels. Father stayed here especially during the last years of his life. There was also a lovely private marina with a dock, where my brothers' sail boats and the Nazzaro boat were moored. This latter was a little boat with which our faithful Nazzaro took us out rowing for fresh air on summer evenings when we did not go for walks along the lakeside before the arrival of the motor-car. With the construction of the new Bellano-Taceno road a large part of the garden was

amputated, and the lower part had to be re-designed with a curve of cypress trees lining the road up to the house.

The higher part I arranged as I could, with a rock garden flowering in summer and autumn, which turned out to be a great success; it was here, in fact, that I gained experience on the subject.

Before going to Bellano Father usually took us to spend some time in the mountains in summer. His great passion was Selva di Val Gardena, with the beautiful Dolomite mountain peaks, which Mother called «Masigott», wonderful meadows and a delightful freshness in the air, and here we spent happy summers together.

Our friendship with the Fiocchi and Magistretti families withstood the test of time. In the '20s Piero Magistretti, who turned out to be an able architect, transformed the house at n. 35 Via Moscova into a beautiful apartment, where my parents spent happy years, with their children and grandchildren competing for the opportunity to visit them. Emanuele and Lina lived on the second floor of the same building and on the third there were Mimi and Giulio. In 1928 Father and Mother went to Tripoli on holiday and their children took advantage of their absence to throw a great party, thus returning, in the large house of the grandparents, the many invitations they had received. «When the cat's away, the mice will play», the invitation read. The party was apparently a great success. I was not there at the time, unfortunately: I was in Alassio, with my husband.

For their golden wedding anniversary (1931), the children and grandchildren organised a great show, performed by us all, with couplets, songs, dances in silkworm costumes, monologues and violoncello music (Emanuele was dressed in a sailor suit). Father and Mother were the only spectators, and they were so amused and touched that the show had to be repeated two or three times for the close relatives, who were adamant.

We four sisters sang couplets that referred to our respective qualities. Carla was specialised as a «Fabbrica de masch e de tosan» («a factory of boys and girls»), and so on, all in Milanese dialect. The rehearsals were great fun; Pio was in charge of the curtain, Giulio wrote part of the texts. Father and Mother had been invited out for lunch, and when they returned home they found everything ready for the show and all of us in costume (we sisters had braided our hair) >>.

The 1918 letter to the workers

From the speech made in Parliament on June 20, 1901 on the subject of strikes and Agricultural Unions, we read: «I was born of a family which for the past five generations has lived in work and of work, and nothing comforts me more than the affection of many thousands of workers, of which I have had enough proof to dispel any doubt; nothing concerns me more than their moral and material well-being, and nothing distresses me more than being unable to do more for them».

As one last element in defining the profile of Lodovico, the following is an open letter he circulated among his workers on the occasion of the end of the First World War:

«« To my workers!

The day has finally arrived for singing praises and celebrating peace on earth among men of good will!

For five years throughout the world we have longed for this great day of peace between the nations, while men were wracked by the horrors of war in a seemingly endless struggle, which threatened to stretch on forever with the preparation of new and more powerful weapons of war!

We have lived through years of anguish, pain and fear – at times even the strongest souls seemed to waver in doubt...

I was so deeply convinced about the just cause of Italy and its allies, however, that I was able express the need, or rather the duty, to instill courage in others and especially in you – and this I did repeatedly in word and in writing.

The Treaties has not yet been signed, but the armistices that have been imposed on our enemies, with conditions ensuring the impossibility of any resumed hostile action, are a prelude. Meanwhile, the cannons are silenced and our fears for the safety of our loved ones in arms have subsided.

This is an inestimable blessing, for which we must first of all thank the Lord; with His help, the valour of our soldiers and the skill of their commanding officers have been able to bring to Italy the most splendid and decisive victory ever recorded in history. The enemy army, much stronger than our own in number, training, and ancient military tradition, and the awesome mountain strongholds from which it dominated the whole plain, has been broken, disbanded. We have captured hundreds of thousands of prisoners, thousands of cannons, and an immense quantity of material of all kinds. And in a very short time our valorous troops, whose onslaught was unstoppable, re-occupied the invaded territory, the Italian lands over which the enemy has ruled for centuries, reaching and surpassing even the boundaries assigned to Italy by Nature itself. The magnificent crown of mountains that encircle our country is for the first time guarded entirely by our soldiers!

The Austro-Hungarian empire has fallen, due to the staggering defeats suffered by its armies, leaving the German empire alone and forcing its capitulation to the allies and the acceptance of the most humiliating conditions.

Honour to our good soldiers on land and sea! Honour to the fallen, the wounded, the prisoners, the maimed! Honour to the patriotic populations of Veneto, Trentino and Istria, who, among unspeakable trials and nameless horrors, reduced to utter squalor by the devastations and barbaric cruelty of the enemy, trusted in the cause of justice, the cause embraced by Italy and its allies. Honour to the King, who shared with the soldiers and the people risks, hardships and suffering!

What is now coming to a close was not merely a war between countries, nations and peoples, but above all a war between two opposing principles: *the pagan principle of violence against the Christian principle of justice*.

The barbarian enemies, who had unexpectedly attacked small nations or large States unprepared for war, had no other aim but that of violently overcoming them. They do not know, or they forget, that wonderful saying: «*Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you!*». Instead, thirsting to plunder and dominate, they abrogated treaties, violated all the rules of war and those of humanity itself, and wherever they passed they sowed terror and destruction, killing all those who crossed their path, including old people, women and children.

They have been skilfully portrayed by our greatest Lombard poet, Alessandro Manzoni: «*rea progenie degli oppressori*».

Those who are responsible must and will take upon themselves the healing of the wounds that war has visited upon us – wounds that are deep and still bleed. But do we ever think of what would have become of us had the victors been vanquished instead?

Those who, in the face of the continuing misfortunes, sacrifices and hardships now show impatience and intolerance would be unworthy citizens.

Through such behaviour, after the victory, they would brew the most wicked spirit of unruliness, to the extent that Italy would risk wasting the fruits of so much heroism and so many past sacrifices. Unwittingly, indeed, even against their will, they would cause the pagan principle of violence to re-surface in another form.

Look at Russia, where there is no longer an autocrat who forcefully imposes his will, but an iconoclastic and reckless crowd that destroys everything, demolishes everything, reduces all to ruin. There, in order to avoid fighting against outside enemies, an even more terrible, more fearful war has been unleashed – a civil war between sons of the same homeland! In that country, which was the bread-basket of the world, today the people are literally starving to death! All work is disorganised, security is totally lacking, and only terror reigns! One can see what their final aim is! Has not enough blood already been spilled?

And so a country with a population of 180 million has fallen prey to anarchy, a country of infinite resources has worn itself out with the impotence of death. And this again as a consequence of the pagan principle of violence, practised by the masses themselves, which we call, using a word from the Russian language, Bolshevism.

The Bolsheviks, not content with ruining Russia, attempt to invade other countries, even those that are neutral, like Sweden, Norway, Holland and even Switzerland, instigating mass uprisings that these governments violently repress. And they would like to infect our country with the same plague!

In the face of this terrible threat, strict discipline is required of the Italian people. They themselves must become the guardians of order – if the people can be persuaded of this necessity, order will be established much more effectively than by thousands of Carabinieri.

The people, however, must be fully aware of the great difficulties we face today, of the impossibility of solving everything in a few days, and of the danger that impatience can create.

It is my heartfelt wish that you, and the whole population, will beware of the easy promises and the most astounding programmes put forward by politicians or political parties, as in a competition, with the aim of winning the favour of the masses.

I would like each one to realise that peace, order and work are the true driving forces of a country's prosperity.

Our country has been through a time of great illness and, as a convalescent is cautioned against carriage rides or Alpine excursions or rich banquets, but rather prescribed the comfort of rest, likewise also to our convalescent country should we not advise rest – the restorer of all energy and reconstructor of war-torn organisms?

Whose bravery lay in numbers / Whose reason was offence / And blood their right / And ruthlessness their glory!

Do you not seem to hear the echo of all the infamy committed by our enemies in the past four years of war? And yet these lines were written almost a century ago!

I have said that war is a struggle between the pagan principle of violence and the Christian principle of justice. Could we doubt that this latter would in the end triumph? And we Italians, let us say it once again, could we keep out of this struggle? Would we not, with our neutrality, have reinforced violence to the detriment of justice? Would we not have betrayed, for sluggishness or for cowardice, the just cause?

We have heard many times the German Kaiser call upon divine help in his speeches or proclamations, even declaring himself the apostle of the *good old God*, to impose on Europe a German peace, German culture, and German rule! These invocations are to us true blasphemy! In my opinion, however, the Kaiser was in perfectly good faith – the *good old God* in which he believed, the ancient Teutonic idol, symbol of plunder and brute force, has nothing to do with our God of love, charity, fellowship and justice.

Now the idol is shattered, together with the Kaiser and his empire, and justice finally prevails!

We must now hope that this terrible war and all the blood and tears shed will remain eternally in the memory of mankind to prevent the recurrence of such a scourge at some distant time in the future. We trust that the leaders gathered together to trace the path of peace will be able, through the League of Nations, to limit armaments and promote wise international laws that will prevent any future armed conflagration.

And as we reprove and condemn the citizen who tries to enforce the law himself, instead of using the legal means at his disposal to obtain recognition of his rights, why should we doubt that the nations may also in the future solve their differences with arbitrators and judges, rather than with weapons?

To achieve this goal it is not enough to have overcome the Kaiser, his empire and his old god – *it is necessary for the principle of violence to be vanquished forever.*

As I said earlier, the armistice freed us from the greatest of our fears for the safety and the lives of our soldiers. However, it does not diminish, at least for now, the sacrifices and restrictions imposed upon us by the state of war.

It would be foolish to believe that with the silencing of the cannons all foodstuffs, clothing and indispensable articles will now be sufficiently abundant to meet the demand and lower the prices. No; for some time yet we must bear the weight of this regime of hardship, in which the Italian people have given such an admirable example to foreign nations.

Life will not return to normal as rapidly as we would like.

Think of all the workshops that have been created and transformed to cater to the production of war material, now rendered inoperative. Think of all the millions of men who must come home from the front and find work. Think of the innumerable resources destroyed, the fields abandoned, the cities laid waste, the debts amounting to millions! Our country has survived a great ordeal. And just as a person recovering from a sickness is not prescribed carriage outings or mountain hikes or rich banquets, but rather rest and quiet, would should our convalescent nation not also require the fortifying power of repose, to rebuild the organisms so disturbed by the war?

Peace has been achieved with weapons, and we must now be capable of holding on to it – we must hold on to it in order to recompense ourselves for the past sufferings, so that we may enjoy it forever!

Let us put all our efforts into this and we will achieve the heavenly goal – Peace on earth and goodwill towards men.

Lodovico Gavazzi – Senator of the Realm >>>.

Lodovico's reputation

In 1997 I went to lunch with Baron Teofilo Alessandro Salvadori di Weisenhof. This distinguished gentleman from the Trentino, who had by this time had reached the ripe old age of 97 but was still in excellent form physically and mentally, told me that in the 1920s the silk manufacturers of Trentino-Alto Adige were struck by a very grave crisis, aggravated by the fact that the region had become a part of Italy, consequently cutting off their access to the German silk market.

According to the Baron, in order to solve this weighty dilemma and seek good advice, the more prominent representatives of the local silk industry went to Milan to speak with Senator Gavazzi, who was considered the most qualified and important expert in the sector. On their return, they spoke of the figure of Lodovico with such great reverence, respect and appreciation that it almost seemed, he said, as if they had consulted an oracle.

Lodovico Gavazzi
photographed in
his study.



Lodovico was offered the title of Count. He refused, claiming that it was enough for him to bear the surname of Gavazzi (which he evidently regarded as being more prestigious than a noble title).

Lodovico's «music salons» were famous; they are mentioned, in fact, in the *Storia di Milano* published by Treccani³⁰.

ANTONIA GAVAZZI (1859-1912)

Antonia was born on May 25, 1859. Known also as Antonietta, she married Marcello Cerruti (22.11.1853 - 2.5.1933). They had a son named Carlo, who lived and died (at the end of November, 1965) in Palermo, to where he had moved with his Sicilian wife. He went by the name of Carlo Cerruti Gavazzi.

Antonietta died on September 17, 1912.

ERNESTINA BARBIANO DI BELGIOJOSO GAVAZZI (AUNT MAMÀ) (1872-1949)

The marriage with Giuseppe Belgiojoso

The eldest daughter of Egidio Gavazzi, Ernestina was born on February 23, 1872. She married Count Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso (16.10.1872 - 2.11.1911), who died not long afterwards at the age of 39, leaving her a widow.

Ernestina Gavazzi (1872-1949), who became famous as «Aunt Mamà».



Her husband, a well-read and cultured man, was very fond of writing poetry, especially in Milanese dialect. On his tombstone in the family chapel of the little cemetery in Casiglio d'Erba, near Parravicino, he is remembered as a «cultured, learned, jovial and good man». His wife, however, did not particularly appreciate him.

His grandson, Franco, remembered him as being likeable, cheerful and humorous.

In her youth Ernestina was in great demand for her beauty, liveliness and wealth; she did not, however, marry for love.

As a young girl she fell in love with Cesare Degliocchi, who later became a charming and famous physician.

In the family a true story is told regarding the engagements of Ernestina and her sister Bice. Giuseppe Belgiojoso and Guido Chierichetti were friends and had gone together to ask Egidio for the hands of his daughters in marriage, the two eldest being, in fact, of marriageable age. It seems that Belgiojoso and Chierichetti were concerned only that they would be granted one or the other of the girls, but had no special preference. The decision, therefore, was left to the girls.

³⁰ See, in this chapter, par. «What people said about him», page 318.

Speaking in dialect, Ernestina said to her sister: «*A mi me pias tant vess òna contèssa*» («I would really like to be a countess»). And so Bice chose Chierichetti, and Ernestina married Giuseppe.

The Dell'Orto couple, who for some time stayed in a room next to that of Ernestina and her husband, sustained that during her husband's amorous effusions, they would sometimes hear her say: «*Te minga anmò fenii?*» («Have you not finished yet?»). Another famous phrase attributed to her was: «*Decidess, o dènter o foèura, perché a mi quell su e giò me piass proprio*» («Make up your mind, in or out, because I don't like all this up and down at all.»). Others in the family claimed that she sometimes read during these intimate moments.

In those days, nightdresses were made with a kind of a slit, or a pocket, which allowed sexual relations while limiting nudity as much as possible. The nightdresses were often embroidered with the words «*Not for my own pleasure, but to give children to God!*».

These anecdotes are probably the fruit of imagination, but Ernestina was a character to whom imagination could easily attribute such phrases.

Her sister Bice, meanwhile, whenever someone complimented her on her numerous offspring, would say: «*They are the children of duty!*».



Drawing of Count Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso, husband of «Aunt Mamà».

«Aunt Mamà»

After her brother Giuseppe was left a widower at 37 years old, he announced that he wished to marry one of his cousins, who was also his secretary. This announcement, it would seem, created a dilemma within the family. The sisters, in fact, claimed that as he already had six children he should not re-marry and risk bringing yet others into the world, and Ernestina promptly offered to substitute his late wife in the running of his household. And so it was that she became «Aunt Mamà».

In addition to this, she put an end to Giuseppe's complaints at having to sleep alone by having him sleep with his son Rodolfo, who, in fact, became his favourite and continued to sleep with his father until he grew up.

Aunt Mamà, therefore, became a second mother to her nieces and nephews, who had lost their own mother when they were still very young. Franco, the eldest, was 10 at the time and Vittoria, the youngest, was only three months old. She was, however, quite strict, and perhaps not very well-loved; the six children she looked after, in fact, all married very young and left home as soon as they were able. Franco could not bear her, and used to refer to the period as «the longest-running dictatorship in history» (35 years, from 1914 to 1949).

She also dominated her brother Giuseppe, and influenced him in his professional choices.



Another photo of «Aunt Mamà».

Ernestina's homes

Ernestina lived in the house of her brother Giuseppe in Milan, at nos. 18 and 20 of Via Brera (on the site of the building there now stand four large apartment blocks, at numbers 18, 20, 22 and 24) and in Desio at nos. 14, 6 and 18 of Via San Pietro.

From her husband she inherited the beautiful villa of Parravicino d'Erba, which she in turn passed on to her youngest sister Maria Piera (Pea), who was married to Lado Manca, setting aside some portions for her sister Fanny, her nieces Vittoria Beneduce and Beatrice d'Inzillo.



North side (top) and south side (above) of the Belgiojoso Villa in Parravicino d'Erba.

The Lado family later took the property back into their own hands.

Ernestina was also the owner of the Confalonieri Villa in Desio, which she inherited from the Belgiojoso family. The house, of simple design with the main body elevated, in line with the historical tradition of Baroque villas, was demolished in 1969 and an apartment building was built on part of the grounds.

Household management

Ernestina used to go to Parravicino during the month of August, when the heat made it almost impossible to live in Desio.

When she was away from Desio, she often lent the house to her brother Felice and his wife Ada, who for two years in a row gave two memorable parties.

She frequently organised the so-called «Senator's dinner» in Via Brera, with her brother Giuseppe, Lodovico Gavazzi, Giovanni Treccani degli Alfieri, Ettore Conti and other notables. During the wartime evacuations there were 65 relatives living together in Desio; each family had its own *ménage*. Life, in actual fact, was great fun.

Ada had a little dog, Ombretta, to which she often gave written messages to take to Aunt Mamà. Ombretta was a very clever dog, and learned to open all the doors leading from the apartment of Ada to that of her sister-in-law, and often returned carrying an answer. Needless to say, the little dog was fussed over considerably.

Everyone loved living in Desio. Ada used to say: «Let me live in

peace these last years of war that we have left».

In the evening many of the family gathered together in the large living room, and played cards or charades, with parlour games, and so on. Ada used to say that they were «*les soirées de Compiègne*».

Here is a description of the gatherings in Via Brera, in the words of her nephew Franco: «Milan, April 23, 1938. This evening there was a great gathering in Via Brera. As usual, there were a few too many guests, but fortunately these included many fine, distinguished people. Some of the famous names included His Excellency General Porro with his wife, Senators Conti, Treccani and Durini with their respective consorts, and Scalini; my parents-in-law, Vittorio and Aida Gneccchi, the Rattis of Desio, the Countess Lonisette Prinetti, the Cottinis, Anna Teresa Cigala, the Cerrutis, the Dozzios, Mario and Teresa Cicogna, the Mapellis, the Corradis, the Pignis, the Dal Vermes, Scipione and Alessina Belgiojoso with Tina, Lodovico and Carolina Belgiojoso, the Facheris, the Nodaris, Mrs. Pesenti, the Vittadinis, the Filippinis, Augusta Turati with her children and son-in-law (Ernestina was overdressed, but seemed more pleasant-looking) etc., etc.».

The Sunday gatherings in Desio, meanwhile, were thus described: «This institution of holiday outings is to all effects a great invention since, as well as reviving and keeping alive many acquaintances which otherwise would be lost, they serve to avoid the assommants afternoons of the family home, where the notables of the town rant and rave».

Aunt Mamà was therefore given the task of choosing the guests, sending out the invitations, organising the functions, etc.

One of the frequent guests in the Gavazzi household was Don Pietro Rusconi.

Former ambassador Gianvico Borromeo, in his book entitled *Rosso di sera (momenti, memorie e meditazioni)* recalls: «When I look back, one prominent figure stands out among the many priests and religious figures I have met, known and loved. This is Don Pietro Rusconi who, in his last years of life, held the title of Monsignor and was in charge of the Sanctuary of San Celso, in Corso Italia.

He was one of those old-fashioned priests who, rich in dignity and culture, was an elegant and entertaining speaker, taught and maintained excellent relations with everyone, so much so that in certain families he had a permanent place at the dinner table: Don Pietro frequented the best families.

Don Pietro was a saintly priest. A man of impressive physical stature and Herculean strength, my father used to say that at Cassano he could throw the wild lemons picked from the vases around the fountain at the entrance right over the roof of our villa – an incredible throw. My mother, on the other hand, had met him when he used to teach religion at the college in Via Manin and remembered that, when talking about sins of gluttony, he would hold two fingers horizontally under his throat. She told me when I was still a young lad that, sitting down at the table for dinner, he had been much more drawn to the Virginia cigar placed alongside the silverware than to the meal. Since then he began a battle with cigars and won – from that day on (I do not remember what day it was) he never smoked again!

For my part, I have a very touching memory of Don Pietro, because in 1937 he celebrated my wedding, which was held in the Church of San Francesco da Paola, where I had been baptised. My marriage was eventually to reach its golden wedding anniversary.

It was, I believe, at a luncheon in the home of his future bride – my mother – that my father came out with this extraordinary remark in reference to Don Pietro's frequent presence in the Gavazzi and Gniecchi households: «Si ignecchiva in casa Gavazzi, ma sgavazzava in casa Gniecchi». [Using a play of words in which the surnames of the two families are transformed into verbs to mean that in Gavazzi's house he became serious, but in Gniecchi's house he was vivacious]. This remark was so amusing and harmless that no offence could be taken; and, in fact, none was. It is a true story, which took place in the first years of the century, and my father, in his old age, still congratulated himself on coming up with the witticism. In order to understand the great hilarity that this «bomb» caused, one must take into account the environment, in which the young people had a great desire for merriment, while the older members of the family discussed the weighty religious and political ideas of the day».



Aunt Mamà in 1937, surrounded by her «adopted children»: from left, standing: Giovanna Gavazzi Riva, Filippo Riva, Giuseppina Gavazzi Marioni, Peppino Marioni, Franco Gavazzi, Margherita Gavazzi Majnoni d'Intignano, Rodolfo Gavazzi, Pia Gavazzi Gnecci Ruscone, Piera Gavazzi Dell'Orto, Uberto Dell'Orto; seated: Giuseppe Gavazzi, Vittoria Gavazzi (later Beneduce), Aunt Mamà.

The thriftiness of Aunt Mamà

Aunt Mamà had a mania for bargains – on one occasion she bought a wagon full of toilet paper and an entire train of coal (which, however, came in handy when war broke out shortly afterwards).

In her drive to save money she had wine brought to Desio in jerry-cans, in order to avoid paying the duty that was customary in those days. These jerry-cans were, of course, always washed first, but never enough to completely eliminate the smell of petrol; the wine, consequently, always had a slight aftertaste of hydrocarbons.

In her bargain hunting she also bought a lot of «demolition» goods. Thus Aunt Mamà was always trying to save money; although her brother, whose household she was managing, was very rich and by no means miserly.

Once, her brother Felice wanted to buy a mink coat for his wife Ada (who in the family was known as Felice's «joy»), and he mentioned this idea to some Austrian customers and agents at the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company, who spoke highly of the mink furs available in Austria, insisting that they were better and also cheaper than those on the Italian market.

From the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi the news spread, until at eight o'clock one morning Ada received a telephone call from her sister-in-law, asking to see her urgently. Ada hurried to her house in Via Brera, where she was immediately greeted by Ernestina with the words: «*Domnà i donn caprizzioeus come ti voeuren il vison comprà a Vienna e rovinen i noster omen*» («Only a spoiled woman like you would buy mink from Vienna and ruin our men»). Ada decided to forego the purchase, even though she had never even asked her husband for it.

In her last years, Aunt Mamà enjoyed going to Santa Margherita. Once, with Giuseppe, she rented an apartment that had been greatly criticised by her sister Bice, who considered it too «common» (Bice lived in the large, grand Durazzo House).

After this, her habitual hotel became the Laurin, and it was here that she died, on January 4, 1949; her niece, Vittoria Gavazzi, was her guest at the time, and was with her in her last days of life.

The will

Aunt Mamà was also obsessed with her will, which filled an entire notebook. She repeatedly changed her mind and continually called for the notary. She would send for him in Santa Margherita, in order to have him sign some marginal notes, and the diligent notary would dutifully take the train, do as requested and return to Milan.

On one occasion he was called to Santa Margherita with the task of re-writing the entire will. Ernestina had the habit of burning old documents, and once, while she was burning some papers in the bathroom and throwing them into the toilet, she accidentally left yellow burn marks on the toilet seat.

The hotel maid discovered the mishap, and went to Ernestina, saying: «Madame Countess, I am very sorry, but I must unfortunately charge you for this toilet seat, which will have to be replaced»; to which she replied, «*Oh, ben, brava, che me faga su l'ass, perché visto che la pago la porto via*» («Oh, very well, then, but pack up the toilet seat for me, because seeing that I

am paying for it, I'll take it with me.»). This was done, and Ernestina returned to Milan with the stained toilet seat packed away in her suitcase.

When she finally arrived in Desio, her sister Fanny helped her to unpack and was amazed to discover a toilet seat among the luggage. She asked her sister to explain. Ernestina told her the story and declared that she was very glad to have taken it, as it would no doubt prove useful in some secondary bathroom in Brera or Desio.

During the war, when the bombing began, the house in Desio filled up with evacuees. As large as it was, however, it obviously could not accommodate everyone.

There was the apartment of her brother Giuseppe, my grandfather, who was the owner of the house, and those of her sister Fanny, her brother Simone, her sister-in-law Ada and, obviously, Aunt Mamà herself. Franco and Margherita (my parents) had a beautiful and comfortable apartment. That of Rosa Gavazzi Pirelli (the sister-in-law of my grandfather Giuseppe), meanwhile, was occupied by her son Egidio with his wife Ippolita (Rosa in this period was at the Pirelli home in Varese).

The last to arrive in Desio were Rodolfo (my uncle, the brother of my father) and Pia. They were assigned an apartment which they themselves judged to be inadequate, as it was smaller and in a part of the house where the servants worked. The couple therefore protested, especially Pia, who threatened to evict Egidio and Ippolita as «squatters» (the house belonged to Giuseppe and therefore his children had more right to live there).

Pia made a rather excessive scene, and Aunt Mamà attempted to calm the waters by observing that when Gino (Egidio's father) sold his share of the house to Giuseppe he had written that he wanted to retain the right to live there. In actual fact, this letter was never seen and probably never existed. However, for the sake of peace, Egidio and Ippolita left Desio.

At the same time, Rodolfo and Pia secretly had a house built for themselves in Paderno d'Adda, on land that had been given to them by the Gnechi Ruscone in-laws.

When Aunt Mamà died, she left a valuable diamond ring to Ippolita, with the words «She knows why». The family believed that this was because of the episode in Desio during the war.

Sleeping in company

Aunt Mamà had the almost obsessive habit of not sleeping alone. She usually slept with her sister Fanny or, in her absence, with the cook, Adele Malberti.

Once she went to Paris to visit her niece Vittoria and Ernesto Beneduce, who worked there. She was accompanied by the chauffeur and had to break the journey in two. As she refused to sleep alone, when she stopped at the hotel she requested two rooms... but adjoining.

A profile of Ernestina

Aunt Mamà was a woman with a strong personality; she was domineering, yet she was not touchy and she did not hold grudges.

As a young girl she kept a diary, the reading of which reveals a remarkable maturity and outstanding intelligence, as well as great affection for her family.



For receptions a menu was carefully arranged, then printed and distributed to the guests.

To my wife

Tita, my dear, you often asked me:
«Why, since Love has joined us,
Does the Muse no longer favour you
As when you were alone?».

As I think on this I suspect
That she, now aged and of little worth,
Jealous that another has occupied my heart,
Has left and gone away in spite;

Seeing me return alone today, and sad
And of her rival no longer a trace,
She, with her offerings,
made again her appearance.

Yet when she understood that I wished to sing
The praises and virtues of the other
She turned around and went away.

Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
Milan, September 3, 1901

Alla Moglie

*Tita mia cara, tu spesso mi hai detto:
«Perché da quando ci ha congiunti Amore
La Musa non ti dà più il suo favore
Come soleva quand'eri soletto?»*

*Pensandoci mi vien questo sospetto
Che ella, omai vecchia e di poco valore,
Gelosa ch'altra mi ha occupato il core,
Se ne sia andata presa da dispetto;*

*Solo, oggi, e triste vistomi tornare
E la rivale non scorgendo più,
Colle sue offerte s'è ripresentata.*

*Ma quando intese ch'io intendea cantare
Di quell'altra le grazie e le virtù
M'ha voltate le spalle e se n'è andata.*

Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
Milano, 3 settembre 1901- - -

She was fond of surrounding herself with a small circle of admirers. She was extremely attached to her family – her brothers and sisters, and to the memory of her parents, especially her mother. She had much less affection for her husband, however, although he appeared to be a perfectly likeable man.

She took her role very seriously: depending on the situation, she was either the sister of a senator and great industrialist, the governess of her seven nephews and nieces, the manager of two large Gavazzi households (those in Via Brera in Milan, and Desio), and the Countess Belgiojoso.

In a room full of people, everyone was always aware of her presence; she seemed to tower above those around her, despite her small stature.

She used to declare that widowhood was the ideal condition for a woman.

She also enjoyed being a countess. One day she was visiting Rome with her brother Giuseppe, and they went into a restaurant. The waiter, after taking their orders, asked, referring to the type of payment: «Con tessera?» («With a ration card?»). This was, in fact, at the beginning of the war. Ernestina, when the waiter had gone, asked her brother: «Come fa quell li a savé che mi son una contessa?» («How does that waiter know that I am a countess?»).

Her sister-in-law, Andreina Costa Kuliscioff, Luigi Gavazzi's widow, spoke of her in a way that was far from critical.

In July 1917 Ernestina had gone to San Remo to spend some time with her, taking her nephews and nieces to play with their cousins. This is what Andreina wrote in a letter: «Yesterday evening Ernestina arrived with Giuseppe's five little ones and Rosa's two boys. She embarked on this long and tiring journey to stay with me for a while. How grateful I am! How unselfish is this good sister of mine! She took upon herself the trouble and the worry of that large family (of her widowed brother), and does everything with a serenity and kindness that are truly admirable. She is a real saint, and she even finds the time to help all those who turn to her, and does it all with such love and cheerfulness... how I should like to be like her, I, who am always so worried and burdened. I am depressed by everything, troubled by everything. Lord, help me to become a better person!».

A few days later, Andreina came to Ernestina asking advice regarding certain charitable initiatives that she wanted to carry out in San Remo: «She is so good, so resourceful... I feel so weak, so incompetent and incapable of accomplishing anything good...».

Ada Gavazzi had this to say: «The Gavazzi household has been run with a very strict morality... in word. There was respect of appearances above all contained and dictated by religion, by religious practice.

The extremes of this philosophy of life can be seen in the line of Luigi, where on one side there were Benedictine monks and Carmelite nuns who flagellated themselves, and on the other side those like one of Pietro's daughters, who did not marry in Church, refusing the religious sacrament of marriage.

They were, in short, absolutists, in one sense or the other.

Aunt Mamà was a real character. There was a clear contrast of character between her and her sister-in-law, Andreina. The latter was strict in her ideas, extremely uncompromising

towards herself and yet very indulgent with others. She was a superior being, and had the characteristic serenity of this type of soul.

In Aunt Mamà criticism was always implied. Andreina, on the other hand, never criticised, but she was melancholy and ascetic by nature.

Aunt Mamà was a master of unintentional comedy. She didn't intend to be funny, but in actual fact she was (thus she was described sixty years later by her sister-in-law Ada). «She could always be seen walking through the streets along with her sister Fanny, who was tall, while she was short. She was a very likeable woman».

Franco regarded her from the point of view of having suffered as a child and while growing up without his mother, he saw Aunt Mamà as having usurped her rightful place. This perhaps expressed what the other nephews and nieces also felt, though less directly.

Margherita wrote to her husband Franco: «We feel the absence of Aunt Mamà, not in that we are able to breathe, as you would say, but in that we miss the support, the «main mast» of the house».

In the family, among the sisters-in-law, sisters and brothers, etc., Aunt Mamà was considered and reputed as being kind and likeable, with a strong personality.

While Fanny was pedantic, Aunt Mamà was full of fun. She had a finely-tuned sense of humour.

Other anecdotes

My mother was pregnant with a new baby, and my brother Egidio, the eldest, a little boy of just a few years, came down with scarlet fever, and had to be kept away from his mother.

Immediately two of the aunts (Fanny and Ada) offered to keep him. Aunt Mamà said «*Ghe pensi mi*» («I'll look after him»). When, after some days without a reply, Ada asked her what she had decided, if she needed help, she answered: «*No, no, hemm trovàa una mònega*» («No, no, we have found a nun»).

A few days later, Ernestina was a little flustered. The reason was that the nun, according to the rules of her Order, was not allowed to take little Egidio to the toilet because he was a boy, and someone else had to help him in the toilet and bathe him.

Ada asked her: «So, are you happy with the nun?». Aunt Mamà answered with a remark that was to become famous in the family: «*O Signor, che stupid d'un ordin a dagh tanta impor-*



To my wife

Since it was written in the little book
That Papa wrote, and that she also read:
«To my children Ernestina and Giuseppe»
And the paper was addressed to both,

How can she say now with that little mouth
That what it contained was for her
Completely, without so much as a crumb
For her husband, who loves her so dearly.

This grasping of what is given to me
With my name, dear lady, she must understand
That I really cannot forgive it.

Unless she says these things
Thinking that we are two halves of a whole
In which case I may keep all for myself.

Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
Christmas 1904

Alla Moglie

*Subet che gheva scritt sul librettin,
Scritt del Papà, che l'ha leggiu anca lee:
«Ai miei figli Ernestina e Giuseppin»
E destinna a tutt duu l'eva el palpee,*

*Come fala mò a di con quel bocchin
Che quel che gheva dent l'eva per lee
Tutt intreg, senza nanca un cicinin
Al so Mari che ghe sussiss adree.*

*Sto sciampam anca quel che me se dà
Col me nom, cara lee, l'ha de capi
Che ghel poss propri minga perdonà.*

*A meno non la disa sti còss chi
Pensand che sem du mez d'una unitaà
Nel qual càs podaria tegnì tutt mi.*

Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
Nel Natale 1904

Ernestina Gavazzi
(Aunt Mamà) and her
sister Francesca (Fanny).

In this sacred ground
 Rest the remains of Count Doctor
 Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
 Torn from the loving arms of his family
 At the young age of 39.
 His desolate wife - Ernestina Gavazzi
 placed here this stone
 that passers-by might remember
 and pray for him.

Parravicino Desio
 October 16, 1872 November 26, 1911

Aunt Mamà had this plaque installed in the outer wall of the cemetery in Parravicino, along the road leading from Canzo to Milan. After that, many referred to her as *the desolate wife*.



tanza a un oggett inscì spiacevol!» («Oh Lord, what a stupid Order, to give so much importance to such an unpleasant thing!»).

This was an expression that represented the frigid, mental formalism of the 19th Century, when many people married not for love and attraction, but because it was the thing to do. One day, she found a book containing rules of conduct for engaged couples: «The engaged couple should not stay too much alone, but they should be with others; they should avoid excessive familiarity and abandon, and especially kisses on the mouth». Ernestina remarked: «Domandi mi che stupid d'un liber! Chi l'è che ghe vegn in ment de dass i basitt su la bocca che fa inscì schivi!» («What a stupid book! Who would ever think of doing such a disgusting thing as kissing on the mouth!»).

Her own experience of marriage had been one of disgust, and consequently she had her own particular views.

From the diary of Franco - 1946: «Aunt Mamà rails violently against marriage and, in particular, against the sexual act, which she finds no less than «offensive» to women. We in turn all rail against her; but these are subjects which we have been accustomed to discussing for years, for decades, and no-one gets upset».

As a boy, Franco would ask her: «Aunt Mamà, please let me have the car». She would order the chauffeur to prepare it, but to empty the petrol tank. Franco was furious: «Mi son el padron e podi minga avè la màchina!» («I am the master, and I can't even use the car!»).

One day, during the war, Ernestina and Ada went to visit Monique Chierichetti in hospital. As they left, Ada said: «Aunt Mamà, what a pity! With this operation, Monique has lost all her femininity!». To which Ernestina replied: «Oh, còssa te diset mai; a mi han tirà via tuscòss a



Here lies
The Countess Ernestina Barbiano
di Belgiojoso Gavazzi
Re-united in life after life with her beloved consort
Relatives friends and townsfolk
Bless her memory
23-2-1872 4-1-1949

In te domine speravi
non confundar in aeternum

Here lies - awaiting the glorious resurrection
Count Doctor Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
learned - wise - jovial - good
to his wife - to his mother - to his desolate relatives
whose only comfort is his happiness in paradise
16-10-1872 26-11-1911

The inscriptions on the
headstones of Aunt
Mamà and Giuseppe
Belgiojoso at the
Parravicino cemetery

33 ann e te par che ho perdùu la mia femminilità?» («Oh, whatever are you saying; they removed everything when I was 33, and do you think I lost my femininity?»).

One day, Giuseppe came back from Desio with a photograph album, because he had met Mussolini. Ernestina was eager to see them: *«Fa vedè, fa vedè» («Let me see, let me see!»), and Giuseppe said: «On moment, Ernesta, on moment» («Just a minute, Ernesta, just a minute».* Then, looking through the pages at the different characters she asked: *«Chi l'è quell lì?» («Who's this?»).* «That is Marinotti», said Giuseppe. *«Oh, che orror! E ti dove te see?» («Oh, how ugly! And where are you?»); «No, li ghe son minga» (I'm not in these shots) answered Giuseppe. «E chi l'è quell lì?» («And who is this?»); «That is Mr. so-and-so». «Oh, che faccia de porscèll! E d'òve l'è il Duce?» («Oh, what a piggish face! And where is the Duce?*

[Mussolini])» . «No, li ghe no» («No, he is not there». *«E chi l'è quell lì?» («And who is this?») «L'è el scior xy» («That is Mr. so-and-so»); «Oh, che moster!» («Oh, what a monster!»).* Finally she came across a picture of Giuseppe in his fascist uniform; he was not handsome and never had been, but Ernestina exclaimed: *«Tèl chi il Giusepp... stupendo!» («And here is Giuseppe... just wonderful!»).*

Naturally, everyone present burst out laughing. The «partisanship» and local pride of Aunt Mamà were so explicit and exaggerated that they were funny. In her eyes all that counted were «the Gavazzis».



Peppina Biella in Desio
in the early 1900s with
her daughter-in-law Pia
Gniecchi Ruscone (left)
and the latter's mother,
Maria Gniecchi Sessa.

Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso poems

The LADO-RAVIZZA Wedding

I do not know whether Argental or Chantilly
or Pont-de-Venezia
Are made with knitting needles or
on the tambour,
But I know that I have seen some laces made
by hand
That even I, who knows nothing of such,
was left speechless.

And I look at this Carletto, I said to myself,
He has managed to find himself the kind
of woman
Who does not lose herself in a drop of water
And can sew golden stitches for her husband.
And now, Mariuccia, if you want to give soon
These two fathers a gift of a cap, finely
Embroidered, and with a grandfather's bow,

You must immediately think
About pink quilted baby clothes
To be soon used and used again.

And with these scribbled lines, as a great authority
I give to you my heartfelt wishes.

Arcore, June 12, 1907

Nozze LADO – RAVIZZA

*Mi so no se Argental o Chantilly,
Pont de Venezia fa a guggia o a cussin,
ma so che ho vist di pizz fa da on sciampin
che anca ben che ignorant, sont restaa lì.*

*E, varda sto Carletto, in tra de mi
Me sont ditt, l'à savuu cattà on donnin
De quei che se perd minga in on guttin
E san fàg i pont d'or al so mari.*

*E adess, Mariuccia, se a sti du papà
Tè voeut regalag prest ben ricamada
La beretta col fiocch de gran-papà,*

*conven che subet t'abbiet de pensà
a la fassa de roos intrapuntada
de podè doprà prest e ridoprà.*

*E cont sti vers fa là, de bon gadan
Sto auguri mi vel foo col cœur in man.*

Arcore, 12 giugno 1907

A Joke

While reading about the congress of character
Socialistic
In the journal of the daily paper,
I ventured an idea inherently simplistic
That from the truth, though, is not far
removed.

I found much jargon of the neologist,
And I saw the comrade trade unionist
Rise up proudly against the reformist,
And both were at war with the fundamentalist.

And the pure ideas of the marxist
Twisted into those of the positivist
Which were more purely economist.

Yet all this great muddling commotion
Is simplified as the practical achievement
Of the perfect rasping of the egotist;

And of all my ideas this is the most simplistic.

1911

Scherzo

*Leggendo, del congresso socialista
Sul quotidiano foglio, la rivista,
ho tirato un concetto semplicista
che dalla realtà ben poco dista.*

*Trovai molto frasario neologista,
e vidi il compagno sindacalista
alzarsi fiero contro il riformista
entrambi in guerra coll'integralista.*

*E la concezion pura marxista
Svisarsi nell'idea positivista
D'un concetto più presto economista.*

*Ma tutto sto gran dir confusionista
Si semplicizza in pratica conquista
Del perfetto raspar dell'egoista;*

e questa è la mia idea più semplicista.

1911

**THE DELL'ORTO-GAVAZZI
Wedding**

Best wishes? My boy, without changing an
iota
Ten plus five is fifteen – I think it is enough.
As to good health, steadfastness and fooling
Time,
Ask your Grandma for the secret. –

Virtues you have aplenty: to list
Them it would take a catalogue
Yet there is one secret so arcane
That I am almost hesitant to tell it.

The owl ... I tell you that secretly
Angela cannot tolerate it.
Yes, the owl that sits on the pole.

Keep the fear of owls
And of what follows the art of the owl
And your love shall be perfect and lasting.

Desio, September 16, 1911

Nozze

DELL'ORTO – GAVAZZI

*Augurii?.. Fioeu – senza cambia d'on etta
Des e cinq quindes – me par che ne vanza.
Salud e ingana i ann, bona costanza?
Domandegh al segrett alla Nonetta.*

*Virtù che n'avi tant in abondanza
Che a dij l'è come vourè far la metta
Ma ghe n'è vuna che per vess segretta
De dila me ven squas la titubanza.*

*La sciguetta... vel disi chi in segrett
L'angela le po minga tollerà.
Si, la sciguetta che sta sul palett.*

*Conserva la paura di sciguett
E quella che ven dree del siguettà
E el vost amour el durerà perfett.*

Desio, 16 settembre 1911

In occasion of the Felicitous Wedding
Of Count
ANTONIO BARBIANO DI BELGIOJOSO
With Countess
EMILIA DODICI DI VISERANO

With head wreathed in purple roses,
I a cloud of light and colours,
Amidst throngs of vain beseechers
The goddess of the fortunate comes.

And on you, dear Antonio, today fell
Her indulgent gaze, as she joined you
In a sweet bond with the virtuous girl
Who eternally will bring you joy.

In her eye shines a light
Foretelling a future of bliss,
Which many desire, but few
Are fortunate enough to know

*In occasione delle Fauste Nozze
del Conte
ANTONIO BARBIANO DI BELGIOJOSO
colla Contessa
EMILIA DODICI DI VISERANO*

*Avvinta il capo di purpuree rose,
in un nembro di luce e di colori,
fra schiere a lei di supplicanti invano
la dea vien dei felici.*

*Ed a te, caro Antonio, oggi uno sguardo
Benigno ha dato, in dolce nodo unendoti
Alla brava fanciulla che felice
Per sempre ti farà.*

*Nella pupilla sua brilla una luce
Divinante di gaudi un avvenire,
che a molti è dato desirar, ma a pochi
concesso è di gustare.*

Where I saw her

I saw her one day as she kneeled in the church,
Her fair head resting on her palms
Folded in prayer,
Almost as if she said to God, «I care for nought else».

Yet a furtiver glance she darted often
Peering to see whether any
Could see her so angelic;
Pious she was called, though it were deceit.

One afternoon I saw her in a large carriage
Passing cheerfully through the crowds
Smiling at everyone
With a smile open as the limpid sky.

How beautiful she was, with the bright face
Of a child, innocent and blithe;
But to those who knew her well,
It was not goodness, it was scorn.

One evening I saw her 'midst the music of a waltz
In a sea of enchanted light
Dancing light-footed
Clasped in the arms of a foolish lover.

With languishing gaze and smiling lips,
Aside she whispered passionate words,
That many others had deceived;
What seemed to be love was but artful play.

I saw her one month later at the altar
Kneeling silently in a white veil
With the foolish young man;
She looked like a cherub descended from heaven.

But she shot me a glance as sharp as a dart;
And I feigned to greet her in return,
Be happy, I answered,
While of him I thought – «behold: a cuckold»

Desio, September 23, 1898

Dove la vidi

*La vidi un dì alla chiesa inginocchiata,
china la bionda testa sulle palme
congiunte in atto supplice,
quasi dicesse a Dio: «D'altro non calme».*

*Ma lo sguardo furtivo ognor lanciava
Spiando se qualcuno in posizione
L'osservasse sì angelica;
la diceva pietade, era impostura.*

*Un meriggio la vidi in ampio cocchio
Passar gioconda della folla in seno
Ver tutti sorridente,
con riso aperto come ciel sereno.*

*Come era bella con quel gaio viso
Di bimba allegra ingenua e spensierata;
ma a chi ben conoscevala,
bontà quella non era, era disprezzo.*

*Una sera la vidi al suon d'un valzer
In un mare di luce affascinante
Danzare leggerissima
Al braccio avvinta d'un ingenuo amante.*

*Languido il guardo, sorridente il labbro,
ardenti motti gli dicea in disparte,
che tant'altri ingannarono;
l'avresti detto amor, giuoco era d'arte.*

*La vidi un mese dopo all'altare
Discender calma in un candido velo
Col giovinetto ingenuo;
pareva un cherubin sceso dal cielo.*

*Ma un'occhiata mi diè che parve un dardo;
e io fingendo di renderle il saluto,
sii felice, risposile,
mentre di lui pensava: ecco un cornuto.*

Desio, 23 settembre 1898

(Untitled)

If the masses deride you, laugh louder;
As you rise, let those cowards fall behind.

With hands and face flecked with blood,
The faith in your heart will be firmer,
The peak is high – try, try!
And at the top love's ecstasy you'll find.

From above you will look down on the
tiny crowds
That below you fade away and disappear;
On the slop above you, children you will see
Following the lofty example of their fathers.

Then looking back with joy at your labours,
Absorbed in the beautiful, the holy and the true,
To those who have loved you over the years
To your poet then spare a thought.

If a melancholy note I have launched
in the banquet
It must be drenched in the pale liquor:
Raise the glasses, then, so I may perform here
the ritual
By toasting to faith, to hope and to love!

Desio, April 25, 1898

(Senza titolo)

*Se il volgo vi irride, ridete più forte;
salendo, quei vili lasciate in un cal.*

*Le mani ed il volto di sangue irrorate,
avrete più salda la fede nel cor,
la vetta è ben alta, tentate, tentate!
Chè giunti godrete l'estasi d'amor.*

*Vedrete dall'alto la turba piccina
Che in basso nel nulla s'annebbia e dispar;
i figli vedrete su su per la china
dei padri l'esempio là in alto cercar.*

*Allor ripensando con gioia agli affanni,
assorti nel bello, nel santo e nel ver,
a quei che v'amaro nel corso degli anni
al vostro poeta mandate un pensier.*

*Se mesta una nota lanciavi nel convito
Obbliosa sommergasi nel biondo licor:
in alto le tazze, ch'io compio qui il rito
brindando alla fede, alla speme, all'amor!*

Desio, 25 aprile 1898

The last day of the century

**In the year of our Lord
Nineteen hundred
The following I depose
As my testament**

Feeling myself now at the end of my hundred years
Laden with experience built of disillusionment,
The result of all I have received and obtained
I give to you here in four short words.
Since that scoundrel my predecessor,
A great spendthrift by hereditary nature,
Decided to leave for the other world
In the very moment that I arrived,
I was given into the care of a certain islander
Who, in restoring the furniture he had
acquired,
Proceeded to wreck the entire property,
Until, high up in the snow, he began to drag his feet.
In council then gathered the family,
Which, hastening to Vienna to bridle the guardian,
Thought with a few words to resolve the conflict
And return the property to the age-old tenants.
And here, in my old garden of Europe,
They placed the Austrian to act as jailer;
Who, ignorant of botany, to show enthusiasm,
Planted gallows, mistaking them for plants.
But when, at twenty-one, I came of age,
I took up the reigns of my own property.
Now, to rid myself to the old gardener,
I may tell you it was no easy affair.
In this I had the help, of which I am indeed glad,
Of a brave Savoy man and a bold fellow from Nice,
And a certain shrewd Count, who had the quick wit
To steal the cat's chestnut from between its paws.
And now that I have in some way restored my property,
What's done is done; my will I make as I declare.
I leave my property divided as it is;
To the detriment of others no demands must be made,
Neither by those who play the reactionary for their own interests
Nor those who, instead of potatoes, dig for rubies.
Regarding my personal property: science, art, economy,
Law, politics, industry and so on,
I leave them to those with the brains to deal with them;
Those who were born to plant cabbages need not interfere,
For if in the new century, new social efforts

Make of science a government monopoly
To be distributed in the homes like water or gas,
To the plumbing as of now I assign engineer Sassi;
And I leave to my dear France a little nest egg
That it may be put to gain interest in the savings book,
For the founding of a home, when
The last of the reactionaries are banished.
I leave the Church to the priest, the Government to the
Liberals;
And if to their bosses Don Luigi and Lodovico
Two words informally I could say,
I believe they could resolve the great Question.
I leave you also electricity and I leave you steam;
But as regards the airship I leave to my successor
The task of finding it a sail, furnishing the fabric
With the well-known brand of E.P.G.,
And if the balloon ventures too far towards the stars
To stop it refer to the ribbon manufactures
Gavazzi and Comapny. – The advertising costs
Are all included in my inheritance. –
I leave to the wise husbands tolerance and benevolence
For the loveable whims of their better halves,
And I disinherit these from any part of my inheritance
Should they discard their skirts to wear trousers.
To the pretty young girls such a husband
They have already shaped on the model of the ideal.
And I leave to all in great quantities
Good cheer, best wishes, appetite and friendship.
– And now the monument: I leave to Scotterlana
To create glory in itself, which may go far
In future centuries: have no hesitation,
If the estimate should surpass in the liquidation
And in gold letters I write on the pediment
In eternal memory of myself, the following inscription:
– The century of steam, the century of progress,
The peace that was not he enjoys here and now.
– Lastly I state and dispose; for the funeral
I want no laments but only cheer,
For it is not possible to live more than one hundred years,
I ban, then, all tears and I ban also sorrow,
To those who bury me – Aunt Ninetta and Uncle Pio,
Of my hundred years I send my sincerest and best wishes.

Home of Pio Gavazzi, December 31, 1900

**In occasion of the felicitous
DAELLI-PORTA Wedding**

The recipe for perfect Love

He is right, Mr. Guido, on the subject
Of recipes, as he knows more than me;
But on the subject of love, by Jove,
The poets know it all, from A to Z.

«Medicamen Amoris» (it has been said)
«Poesis est», and if in this moment there are those,
Healthy, happy, lively and strong,
Who care nothing for this matter;

In midsummer, it may happen in clear splendid
Skies that some wisps of cloud appear;
Remember then the recipe of this compound of love:

«Four grains of golden silence, filtered
With the memory of the first little kisses,
And all whisked in a bowl of good spirits!»
This is a recipe that has never failed.

Desio, June 26, 1911

L'ultimo giorno del secolo

*Nell'anno nostri Domini
Il millenovecento
Dispongo quanto in seguito
Quale mio testamento*

*Sentendomi all'estremo ormai dei miei cent'anni
Carico d'esperienza, fatta di disinganni,
di quel che ho ricevuto e sonmi procacciato
in quattro parolette vi do qui il risultato.
Premesso che quel birbo d'un mio predeceessore ,
dell'avita sostanza grande dissipatore,
ha pensato d'andarsene nel mondo del di là
proprio nel punto stesso ch'io mi veniva qua,
in tutela fui messo d'un cotale isolano
che per rifare il mobile, appena l'ebbe in mano
anche l'immobiliare mi mise in isconquasso,
finchè su fra le nevi non arrivò al mal passo.
Il consiglio fu allora raccolto di famiglia,
che in fretta e furia a Vienna, messa al tutor la briglia,
crede con quattro chiacchiere di togliere i divari
rimettendo in possesso gli antichi affittuari.
E qui dell'Europa, nel mio vecchio giardino,
ci misero l'Austriaco a far da secondino;
che ignaro di botanica, per mostrarsi zelante,
vi piantò dei patiboli scambiandoli per piante.
Ma nel ventuno giunto alla maggior età,
presi io stesso il governo della mia proprietà.
Or pria di liberarmi del vecchio giardiniera,
vi so dir non è stato sì facile mestiere.
Mi fu in questo d'aiuto, ch'è il vero dir mi piace,
un Savoiaro prode ed un Nizzardo audace,
e un certo Conte astuto, ch'ebbe l'ingegno fino
di toglier la castagna del gatto col zampino.
Ed or che il patrimonio in tal modo ho rifatto,
quello che è stato è stato dispongo come in atto.
Lascio i miei beni immobili divisi così come stanno,
nessuno vò che mendichi pretesti in altrui danno,
sia che per proprio comodo porti alcuno il codino
o al posto di patate altri cavi il rubino.
Quanto ai miei beni mobili: scienza, arte, economia,
il giure, la politica, l'industria e così via,
li lascio a chi ha cervello per saperli trattare;
chi è nato a piantar cavoli non se ne stia a impicciare,
che se nel nuovo secolo, nuovo social conato
facesse della scienza monopolio di stato*

*da darsi a domicilio come l'acqua e i gassi,
incarico pei tubi fin d'or l'ingegner Sassi;
e lascio al mio buon Francia un certo gruzzoletto
perché lo ponga a frutto di Cassa sul libretto,
da eriger un albergo di ricovero, quando
gli ultimi forcaioli saranno messi al bando.
Lascio la chiesa ai preti, lo stato ai liberali;
e se due parolette ai proprio principali
Don Luigi e Lodovico dicessero alla buona,
credo potrebb'er sciogliere anche la gran Questione.
Vi lascio ancor l'elettrico e vi lascio il vapore;
ma quanto all'aerostato, lascio al mio successore
di trovargli la vela, provvedendo il tessuto
del titolo E.P.G. molto ben conosciuto,
che se il pallone tropèpo tendesse verso gli astri
per frenarlo volgetevi alla ditta dei nastri
Gavazzi e Compagnia. – della reclame le spese
Nella mia successione son già tutte comprese.-
Lascio ai mariti saggi tolleranza e bontà
Verso i capricci amabili delle loro metà,
e diseredo queste d'ogni mia successione
ove la gonna lascino per prendere il calzone.
Parte della poesia in italiano che manca:
"Alle belle fanciulle un maritino quale
Già se lo son foggiato pensando all'ideale.
E lascio a tutti quanti in grande quantità
Buon umore, saluti, appetito e amistà.
- Ed ora il monumento: lascio allo Scotterlana
Di crearsi una gloria, che vada assai lontana
Nei secoli venturi: non abbia esitazione,
Se il preventivo superi nella liquidazione
E a caratteri d'oro vi ponga sul frontone
A mia eterna memoria la seguente iscrizione:
- Il secol del vapore, il secol del progresso
La pace che non ebbe sta godendo qui adesso.
- Infin lascio e dispongo: per le pompe funebri
Non voglio querimonie, bensì che si stia allegri,
Chè già non si può vivere di più dei cento anni,
Quindi bando alle lagrime e bando anco agli affanni
A chi m'ha seppellito, - gli zii Ninetta e Pio –
Mando dei miei cent'anni schietto l'augurio mio.*

Casa di Pio Gavazzi, 31 dicembre 1900

*In occasione delle fauste nozze
DAELLI – PORTA*

La ricetta del perfetto Amore

*El ga rason che in fatto de ricett
Sur Guido, le sa lunga mei de mi;
ma in di ricett d'amor, ch'el tasa lì,
che i poeta ne san dall'A alla zett.*

*«Medicamen Amoris» è sta dett,
«Poesis est» e se in sto moment chi,
San, conten, vigorus, robust, lunghii
De sta facenda non ve importa un ett;*

*In pieno estaa, pò das, che nel splendor
Del ciel seren passa quai nivollitt
Recipe allora sto decott d'amor;*

*«Granuli quattro de silenzi d'or
Nel ricordo filtra di prim basitt,
Sbattuu nel pirottin del bonumor!»*

L'è una ricetta che ne pò falli.

Desio, 26 giugno 1911



Beatrice Gavazzi and Guido Chierichetti at the time of their marriage (1898).

BEATRICE CHIERICHETTI GAVAZZI (BICE) (1873-1959)

The marriage with Guido Chierichetti

Beatrice was born on May 14, 1873 in Milan. She married Guido Chierichetti (1874-1949) in Desio. The two brothers, Guido and Alfredo, owned many companies, including the Digerini & Marinai cookie manufacturers in Genoa.

Alfredo was a capable businessman. He foresaw the potential development of Santa Margherita Ligure and made the consequent investments, building large estates and upgrading buildings, some of which were destined for the hotel industry³¹.

Both brothers started out relatively well off, but Guido, upright and well-educated as he was, lacked Alfredo's initiative and «business sense», which contributed mightily to the family's becoming the wealthiest in Italy.

After the death of Alfredo, who ran the companies, Guido lost interest. His dream, in fact, was to become a Senator - a dream on which he squandered all his energy and which he struggled in vain to realise. He administered badly, sold up and lost everything.

He then asked his father-in-law for Bice's dowry, which amounted to 70,000 lira, and Egidio gave it to him.

Her daughter Lia

Bice had seven children, in spite of her proverbial lack of passion in her relationship with her husband.

Bice's daughter Lia became a nun. Many years later, however, she reversed her decision and left the convent. Franco wrote about the episode in his diary in 1941: «Milan, March 11, 1941. Aunt Bice refuses to take her into her home, and so Lia, after having stayed for some time with the Carpegna family, is now reduced to living in Caltanissetta (of all places) with certain of her Morandi relatives, who run a hotel there. It seems that Father tried to bring her to Milan with one of his Senate railway tickets. This is another attitude of family members that distresses me, and can be explained only by the fact that Aunt Bice, poor woman, is the most unbalanced of all her siblings; indeed, because there is nothing dishonourable in recognising that one has followed the wrong path. Poor Lia! Instead of being welcomed with open arms, consoled, protected and encouraged, the door is closed in her face. I feel in my heart of hearts that if I had a larger house and could afford a more generous hospitality, I would be happy to offer her a place at my hearth; but unfortunately, I can only pray to the Lord that she may find a rose or two along her way».

The homes of Guido Chierichetti

Guido Chierichetti owned several splendid houses - Villa Durazzo, in Santa Margherita, «I Collazzi» in Florence and another large house (formerly the Corsini building) in Via

³¹ Alfredo had an affair with Pia Gavazzi (daughter of Antonio and Egidia Ponti). Pia later married Baron Ulrich. Others sustain that the relationship was between Alfredo and Egidia Gavazzi Ponti, the mother of Pia; or perhaps with both. In the family, however, these subjects were strictly taboo, it was never possible to speak of them, and so we have no way of knowing the truth.



Curtatone, Florence, as well as paintings, furniture, carpets and ceramics – all of museum quality. In the dining room of the house in Santa Margherita there were at least four portraits by Van Dyck, which were part of the stucco decorations. In the hallway on the third floor, moreover, there was a series of Magnasco paintings!

The villa originally belonged to the Durazzo family, after which it was owned by the Centuriones and eventually the Chierichettis. It appears that all the various changes of ownership were the result of gambling losses.

Prince Centurione, when he was forced to sell, committed suicide³².

The Collazzi, Florence. The pictures of this beautiful villa, which was designed by none other than Michelangelo Buonarroti, show how it looked when it belonged to Guido Chierichetti. It was sold in 1933 to the Marchi family.

I COLLAZZI, VILLA MARCHI

Having reached the road to Volterra, just after a turn, atop a rise, we see the finest of the villas built here in the sixteenth century. Some say this masterpiece of Florentine architecture should be attributed to none other than Michelangelo. Lensi Orlandi is certain of it: this is the work of Buonarroti, who in Tuscany “*lived intensely, admired and misunderstood by his contemporaries and by posterity*”. The complex is ringed by high bulwarks, which give it the appearance of a castle. In fact, this was its role in the fourteenth century, when the Buondelmonti, its lords, kept watch on the surrounding countryside to control the roads leading into Florence. For several centuries the Castle, or the Collanza, as it was also known, lent its name to the entire area. Around 1530 the Dini family reorganized the ancient structures in such a grand yet elegant style that only an architect of extraordinary genius could have designed the project. And who might this architect have been if not Michelangelo, a close friend of Agostino Dini?

During this period, the Maestro was overseeing the building of the sacristy of San Lorenzo, the Laurentian library and the fortifications of San Miniato, so it would hardly be surprising if he also followed the building of the villa of an influential figure who was also a dear friend. The facades are solemn yet sober, in contrast with the decorations of the courtyard, surrounded on three sides by a double row of porticoes. On one side of the courtyard stands the elegant chapel, in which hangs a painting of the Wedding at Cannae, by Santi di Tito, the same man who, as an architect, may also have overseen some of the work.

The staircase, located at twelve o'clock, and the first floor portico are supported by two pairs of elegant columns. The central hall is the true heart of the entire complex: the rooms of the ground floor and the first floor all converge on it. The hall exudes a solemn yet familiar atmosphere, thanks to the presence of decorations in stone, furniture and fine paintings. The painters Meucci and Botti both did important work here. From 1735 to 1754, restorations were done, and in 1782 numerous stately trees were planted on the grounds, altering the villa's original perspectives, which were designed with treeless, sunny grounds in mind, and the building dominating a largely bare hilltop. Subsequently, the cypress-lined approach road was added, as well as many other types of trees.

The villa has always needed work, so much so that it can be said to have been truly finished only in 1934, by its most recent owners, the brothers Carlo and Giulio Marchi. In fact, it was in that year that the work on the villa's left wing – begun in 1929 – was finished. It was only then that the construction of the villa, begun four centuries earlier, could be considered complete.

A profile of Bice

Bice was a rather eccentric character. When she met her very young sister-in-law Ada in Milan, she invited her and her husband, Felice, to spend a few days in Santa Margherita. The couple arrived in the morning and she asked them: «Would you like to stay for lunch?». Felice promptly answered: «Thank you, we were on our way to the Casino in Montecarlo. We will postpone the journey until the afternoon». And so, after lunch they went on to play on the «baletta», as Felice used to call the roulette.

She lived in the company of an amusing parrot.

With her nephew Franco and her niece Margherita she was kind and affectionate, but others describe her as being quite the opposite.

Again from Franco's diary, the entry dated September 23, 1944: «Aunt Bice is visiting in Desio for a few days. She has an air that is more... immortal than ever, as I often say – healthy, white and pink, puffy, full of energy despite her 73 years, genuine... an «untamed shrew» (oh, if only my Shakespeare had known her, along with her elder sister, he would have created two immortal characters, with the added advantage for humanity that by now the originals would already be dead and gone) – that woman will outlive all of us».

August 21, 1958: «I went with Stefano to visit Vittoria and Aunt Bice. Talking with Aunt Bice is like conversing with a hedgehog – if hedgehogs do indeed converse».

March 18, 1959: «Dear Aunt Bice passed away today, at the age of almost 86 years. Although her originality bordered on madness, I cannot but speak well of her, as with me she had always been extremely kind and attentive».

It is known, however, that my father was always critical towards everyone in his family; at times, in fact, his criticisms turned into disputes. His judgements and comments regarding family members, therefore, were often not very objective.

The character of Bice also appears very different in the correspondence that I was able to trace. She is favourably described in the following recollections by her granddaughter Cecilia d'Inzillo: «... Grandmother Bice willingly married Grandfather Guido, who was a good and handsome man. Well-loved by her parents and parents-in-law alike, she straight away went to live in Florence, due to her husband's job. He was a Doctor of Chemistry, like his father Francesco Chierichetti, a well-respected man who is still remembered in the annals as one of the pioneers of the Lombard chemical industry.

Grandmother Bice had an important role in her Florence years, both within her numerous family and in society, which was extremely complex and elitist compared with that from which she came.

³² The building was famous for its ghosts; there are, in fact, many anecdotes about relatives and acquaintances who experienced various mysterious and inexplicable visions and occurrences in the house.

For example, one day a guest, while ascending the large staircase, passed a distinguished gentleman as he descended in an elegant manner. The two greeted each other with a nod. Later on, this guest saw in a painting in the living room the figure of the man he had met on the staircase. Puzzled, he asked Bice who it was. She answered that it was Prince Centurione, who had died years before.

Another reliable account comes from a guest who was woken suddenly one night by the feel of an icy hand on his cheek. There were also infinite cases of locked doors found open, doors flung open unexpectedly, etc.

She kept close ties with her own family, nevertheless, and every summer spent long periods in Parravicino at Aunt Mamà's house. She in turn was always generous and hospitable, and many relatives and acquaintances, both Italian and foreign, came to stay at her own home in Florence and in «Collazzi». Giuseppina³³, for example, went to Florence often in her youth and, as far as I know, appreciated and greatly valued that new and different atmosphere. Personally, I lived with Grandmother Bice for at least seven entire years, in Santa Margherita – seven years that were for me an essential time of learning and experience.

Her personality, intelligence and integrity, her love of all that is beautiful, profound and essential, did not pass un-noticed for those who, feeling a certain affinity with her, were able to recognise and understand her messages, even during her last difficult years, after so many experiences, at times dramatic...

Below are various other letters that provide a glimpse of the profile of Aunt Bice.

From Egidio Gavazzi to Guido and Bice Chierichetti: «Milan, September 26, 1898 – My dearest children, before I begin the hard work of Monday, I would like to send you these few lines while you are still in Lucerne.

I read eagerly the letter from Bice, dated the 24th, which reached me yesterday and I am very glad to hear you are both happy. The postscript from Guido, moreover, filled me with joy.



Santa Margherita, interior view, Belvedere hall. Beatrice and Vittorio Chierichetti with Monique de Villers and her sisters (1929).



401-49. S. MARGHERITA LIGURE
Villa Chierichetti



Inside view of Murano room.

Villa Durazzo, Santa Margherita. Originally this had been a house with a fortress-type tower. In 1678 Gio Luca Durazzo restored the building from Alessi's designs. It then passed over to the Centurioni Scotto princes and in 1920 was bought by Alfredo Chierichetti, Guido's brother. Since 1973 the villa has been owned by the Town Council.

³³ Bice's niece and Giuseppe's daughter.



Villa Durazzo in the context of the garden.



Terrace in front of the Villa with its typical risseau paving.

A particular of the garden.



Yes, dear Guido, I know that Bice is lucky to be yours, and this conviction strengthens further the sentiment of pride I have felt ever since you asked me for her hand in marriage. Pride is a sin, yet I have no wish to repent in this case and I have every reason to remain unrepentant.

Good bride and bridegroom, enjoy this time of happiness and you, Bice, be thankful for the generosity of your new relatives, thanks to whom you are able to admire the natural treasures of beautiful Switzerland.

I do not know well your future plans and the addresses of the hotels my two lovebirds will be staying in. Please send them to me, so that our letters may reach you directly. In the meantime, please note that in Lucerne (Poste Restante) there should be mail for you.

I enclose the addresses of Tom [?] in Paris and of Jove in Bennist [?], London. Send word in advance notifying them of your arrival in the two cities. They will be a help to you and will certainly shower you with kindness. Meanwhile, to celebrate your first week of marriage, they send, especially the second, large purchase [?] orders.

September 1898 will be the most fruitful for sales of all the months we have spent in our long commercial career. It is really true that «*un feu un cavagneu*» («Every child comes with its own hamper»)!!!.

A short while ago I sent a note to Mother Ester, asking her to come today with Francesco and Alfredo to enjoy Simone's hunt.

I hope they will all come, so we can spend a few happy hours in their delightful company. And now the 8 o'clock post has arrived, and I send you my best wishes with sincere love and affection. Your Papa.

I remind Bice that in London there is an important fur market. If she wants to buy an otter-skin coat there she would do well, and you will then be able to flaunt it before the Italian government!!!».

From Giuseppina Gavazzi Biella to her daughter Bice Chierichetti: «Milan, October 2, 1903 – My dear Bice, this time I have to say that even being extremely busy has its positive side. From the morning onwards, whether I wanted to or not, I have been continually busy; not because here they have been idle, but in many things they interpreted my wishes by waiting for me, while in many others we did not know where to start.

There was a broken radiator and stove, the corner living room unfinished, and many other matters which, as I said, today provided me with a forced and beneficial distraction from the sorrow of having left you, your Guido and the dear environment where I spent heavenly days. You, on the other hand, I hope, have not taken on yourself such distractions, but you will have found comfort and peace in the company of your loved ones who have stayed by you, and in the smiles of those dear little ones whom I seem still to hear around me. Oh my dear Bice, how much loving kindness and goodness you all lavished on me! Now I have spent three holidays with you in Florence.

Let me call them holidays, because I come, in actual fact, to look after myself and

be nursed, rather than to play the part of the nurse. And every time I come away with such a fond memory that it gives me true pleasure even in the midst of sorrow for the separation.

Such is always the case, but this time especially, for the consolation you brought me, for the tenderness you showed me and for the immense joy that I felt in being with you. Yesterday I could not find the words to sufficiently express my thanks to your Guido for the very kind hospitality that he has always shown me; you know how much I appreciate this good fortune which is so beneficial to my health and well-being.

And this brings to mind the bother I caused you through forgetting that inelegant object. It took all the promptitude of Italy to reach me so quickly with my *coat of arms* on it, and it was such an inspired thing, contrary to what I had thought, because Father also used that favourite remedy of mine, and I would have been a little embarrassed to have left it behind like that.

Skipping now from one subject to another, I must tell you that the supplies were very useful to me as a distraction, ...».

Another letter from Giuseppina Gavazzi Biella to her daughter Bice Chirichetti: «Milan, May 14, 1911 – My dear Bice, I do not want this day, that reminds me of the happy event of your birth, to end without sending you and your lovely family my heartfelt wishes. How many memories are awakened in me by the date of May 14!

I can still see that beautiful spring morning, cheered by birdsong, a true splendour of nature; I remember Father's happiness in holding you, more beautiful than the sky in spring, and how he would not even hear of any regrets that you were not a boy. How serene and philosophical was that dear soul, and how lovely it would have been to appreciate and enjoy his presence even longer if it had been possible. Tomorrow General Pagani is arriving in Desio to make a commemorative speech for the inauguration of a bust dedicated to your Father, which, unfortunately, bears little likeness to him.

The memorial tablet is beautiful, with an excellent inscription by Tolla, but the sculpture in bas-relief, as usual, leaves much to be desired. Truly these attempts are discouraging. It is the second time that sculptors have disappointed us. Now I want to try portraits – let us hope we have more success.

The financial help you sent to your nurse is as usual very generous. I think I shall follow your example, so that the poor woman may be comfortable in her convalescence. I am glad that Grocco [?] gave you such a good suggestion and that you feel fitter. Please take care, however, not to abuse this well-being, and remember how much your children need you to be strong and energetic rather than tired and fatigued.

A heartfelt embrace to Mother Ester and a thousand kisses to you from your affectionate Mother». From a letter to Bice Chierichetti from her father-in-law, Francesco Chierichetti: «Dearest Daughter, in the letter from your mother, which crossed your own dear letter of the same date, she told you about our project which, if it had been successful, would have been one of the best plans of our entire married life. What better way, in fact, to show our affection and love for



Bice Gavazzi with her younger brother Felice.

our dear daughter (for such we consider you) than to postpone to a future date the company of relatives and friends in order that we might have you here with us on such a special day? I have already told you of the desire of myself and my wife to have a daughter; in our family there was an emptiness that now, by God's mercy and your goodness, is filled. God sent her to us already grown, beautiful, good and clever and we thank Him.

You say you hope we shall live to celebrate our golden and diamond wedding anniversaries – Well, we would be content even with a shorter life if we could leave our children happy. Mother and I were moved by your precious gift, fruit of a noble thought and exquisite workmanship, and we thank you wholeheartedly. It will have a place of honour in our living room and be a testimonial of all of your affection for us – thank you so much. Today your very dear Mother and dear Ernestina brought us an elegant sachet full of good wishes and flowers; what a delicate and noble soul! Indeed, she is your mother and cannot be otherwise. Ester was in bed, as you know, due to her usual ailment which, although for now it is by no means serious, demands great care and total rest. I hope I shall be able to come myself to pick you up and bring you to Milan, and in order to do so I will postpone my trip to Florence for a few days, from where I shall write to you and let you know.

Please pass on my and my wife's thanks and greetings to your fine uncle and aunt, whom we love very because they love you very much.

Be happy and healthy, and know that I am your most loving father, Francesco».

From Giuseppina Biella to Guido and Alfredo Chierichetti: «Milan, Via Brera no. 18 – May 1, 1920 – Dearest Guido and Alfredo, immensely precious was the token you sent me of your dear Mother and *my greatly lamented friend*. Besides being a true work of art, it called to my mind all the kindness of that gracious soul, to whom nothing was too fine for me, which is the reason why I find myself surrounded by original and precious gifts, all from my dear friend Ester. And now, you, dear children, have added another, a testimonial of your affection, which has the power to make me feel young again and for which I am very, very grateful. Keep it always for me and accept once again my heartfelt thanks. Giuseppina Gavazzi Biella».

From a letter to Cecilia d'Inzillo at the Fanny Villa – Pontedilegno (Brescia) – from her grandmother Bice Chierichetti: «Santa Margherita Ligure – Villa Chierichetti – August 27, 1951 – Dear Cecilia, you will by now have received the book I sent you – it is about a dear little girl who is so good to her family.

You were a good girl too, when you got burnt, because, in spite of the pain, you took care to defend and console the peasant woman who had accidentally burnt your arm, and in so doing you showed the goodness in your heart; and your Granny, as a reward, has sent you this book.

I hope that by now you are all healed: here the house it is very quiet – I hope you will come and see me soon.

Next Monday I am going to Forte dei Marmi to visit your Father.

I send you, Gregorio and Bernardetta a tender kiss and greetings to your Mother and Aunt Fanny. Granny Bice».

ADOLFO GAVAZZI (1873-1950)

He was born on June 29, 1873. An electro-technical engineer, Adolfo Gavazzi graduated in Germany, where he led a rather adventurous life. In his student years he took part in several duels. He married Evelina Agnesina. After the death of his wife from cirrhosis, he re-married Carmela Doni, a former maid who became his lover (in 1944 the two were already married). At the beginning of the 1900s he lived in Foro Bonaparte no. 12, Milan, and later moved to n. 25, Via Manzoni.

His social life was very lively, and he was a regular guest at court parties.

He designed the street lighting and the electrical distribution network of Trieste.

In 1907 he is recorded as being the owner of the Adolfo Gavazzi Electric Appliances Factory at n. 6, Via Sirtori, Milan (which was later moved to n. 2, Via S. Nicolao).

On October 16, 1913 he founded the «Adolfo Gavazzi-Pietro Mariani» general partnership, a studio of electrical and industrial engineers based at n. 2, Via Quintino Sella, in Milan. The partnership, which sold various electrical and technical articles manufactured in Germany, was, however, dissolved in the following year (April 25, 1914).

He was the statutory auditor of the Artificial Ice Joint-Stock Company.

His stepsister Laura was ashamed of him, as he was rather frowned upon by the local gentry for his disorderly habits. Adolfo eventually lost everything; he spent the whole day in the house, clad in a dressing-gown, and had an unkempt beard which gave him a rather unclean appearance.

He later lost a great amount of money in the designing and construction of an aeroplane that never actually got off the ground.

In his old age he was rather an eccentric character, but he took great delight in teaching his little grandchildren the ins and outs of little electrical jobs in the home. He died on February 3, 1950.

ANTONIO GAVAZZI (1875-1948)

He was born on March 29, 1875. Antonio Gavazzi was given the title of «Cavaliere», and was indicated in documents as a «property-owner».

On November 5, 1934 he was awarded the Commendum with a Plaque of the «Ordine Piano» by Vatican City, with Pope Pius XI.

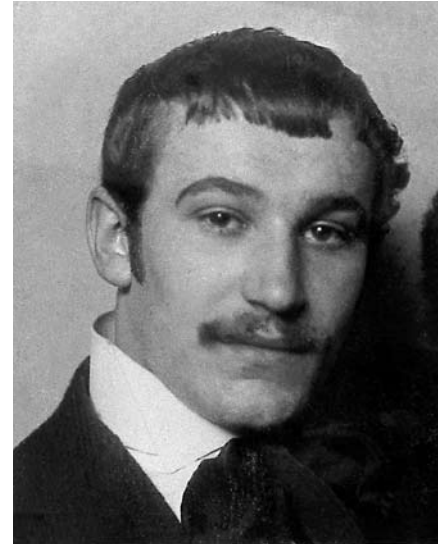
He was Managing Director of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Company - a position which was also given to Simone Gavazzi, his first cousin, with whom he shared an office in the company but was not on good terms. The two had their desks facing one another, yet they never spoke and often even communicated through a third person.

Antonio was in charge of the garments department, and Simone the umbrella section.

He was also Podestà of Desio (after the death of the former Podestà, his brother Giulio, in 1932, until the war broke out), although the town was not satisfied with his work.

The marriage with Egidia Ponti

He married Egidia Ponti (b. in around 1877, d. on 24.4.1962), a very beautiful girl who had the reputation of being rather «frivolous» and who left him shortly after the birth of their



Adolfo Gavazzi
(1873-1950).

second son Uberto³⁴. After the separation, the children were left in Antonio's care.

It is interesting to note that the respective daughters-in-law of the brothers Egidio and Pio, founders of the famous company Egidio & Pio Gavazzi, shared their same names in the feminine version – Giuseppe, the son of Egidio, married a girl named Pia, and Antonio, Pio's son, married a certain Egidia.

Egidia Ponti was so beautiful that she was sought after by everyone, and even the cousins (like Felice Gavazzi), could not refrain from the occasional furtive pinch.

She often travelled in the company of a relative, Felicina Dolzino, a very ugly woman afflicted with goitre. This relative was very rich and purposely chose to travel with good-looking friends because, as she said, «at least I am looked at and I meet nice people; they look at my beautiful friends and they also look at me». Felicina Dolzino always paid for these trips.

One day, Egidia and Felicina went to Venice. While they were strolling through Piazza San Marco, a handsome young officer spotted the very beautiful and conspicuous Egidia. He followed her and saw her entering the Danieli Hotel. Inquiring of the doorman, he learned the women's names, but thought that Felicina was the beautiful one, and wrote her a love letter.

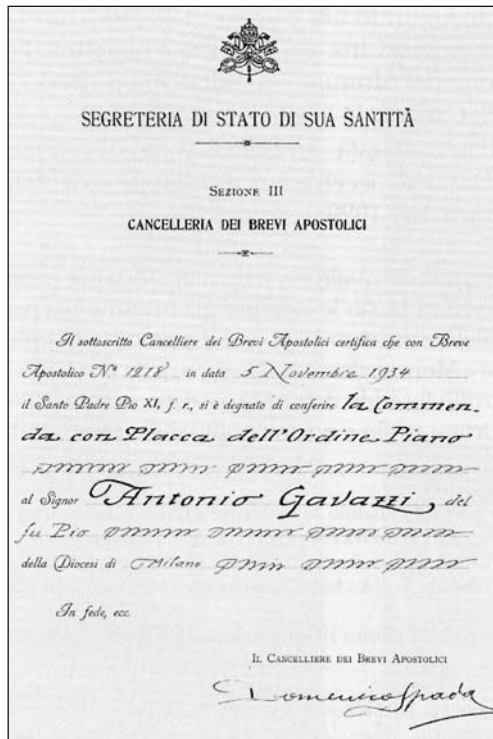
Felicina, who had never received such a letter, exclaimed to Egidia: «Sent, sent cosa me scriven!» («Listen, listen to what it says!») Egidia suggested that it had perhaps been a mistake, but her relative insisted, saying: «No, no, ghe propri Felicina Dolzino, propri mi!» («No, no, it is addressed to Felicina Dolzino, that's me!»).

From the diary of Franco Gavazzi: «April 26, 1962 - This morning I went alone to Cassano d'Adda to the funeral of cousin Egidia Gavazzi Ponti. She was around 85 years of age. If I am not mistaken, she was the same age as Uncle Simone, and had been a woman of great beauty... but her conduct could not be considered flawless. She was, however, intelligent, charming and kind to everyone, and so could easily be forgiven for the rest and was generally well liked.

I am told that the villa in Cassano, with its fair-sized garden and such a fine broad view of the Muzza and the Adda Valley, already belongs to Uberto, and that Uberto intends to enjoy the place and make of it his country home. He does very well to keep it and improve it».

Antonio's homes

Antonio was officially a resident of n. 14 Via Meravigli, Milan, c/o the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company, although he actually lived at n. 2, Via Ricasoli, in Milan. When, however, his son Uberto married Pia Dell'Orto (the «pillory», as she was known), the latter established herself as Mrs. Gavazzi in Via Ricasoli. Antonio told Uberto that he had become «Dell'Ortized» and chose to move to n. 6, Corso di Porta Romana (the Cicogna-Jacini house), partly because he had quarrelled with his brother Carlo and the two no longer saw eye to eye.



Certificate from the Vatican conferring the title of «Commendatore» with the Plaque of the Ordine Piano to Antonio Gavazzi on November 5, 1934.

³⁴ Egidia was from Canzo, where she is buried in the Ponti chapel. She had two sisters – Luisa, whose married name was Maroni, and Mina, whose married name was Maggi.

Antonio the art lover

Antonio was a regular at La Scala, where he had his own box. He was also an art lover and a collector of antique furniture and owned a number of magnificent and very valuable pieces. When, in 1902, after the assassination of Humbert I in Monza, the Savoy family decided to abandon the royal villa there and dismantled a large part of the furniture of the palace, Antonio bought several pieces, including a famous, gigantic wooden four-poster bed by Canonica³⁵, which was almost six metres tall! This was placed in the house in Via Bovisasca, Desio. When this house was sold, the bed was sent to Via Ricasoli in Milan, but had to be reduced in size, since the ceilings were not high enough to accommodate it. Subsequently, due to family quarrels, it passed into the hands of various family members.

During the war, the building where Antonio lived was partly destroyed by fire in the last bombing of Milan, and he lost a large part of the furniture, ceramics and chinoiserie, as well as a valuable piano. He did manage to save many important works of art, however, most of which he had bought himself. From the diary of Franco Gavazzi: «September 21, 1968: «This afternoon, in Lorino di Besana, there was the Christening of the firstborn son of Maurizio and Ada Ulrich. I enjoyed the reunion immensely, because I saw many old friends and because the house, in which a good part of the collection of Antonio Gavazzi is kept, is a true museum».

In 1951, three years after his death (1948), which followed that of his brother Carlo (1944), the heirs sold the beautiful Bonomi-Cereda-Gavazzi villa in Via Bovisasca (later n. 10 Via Matteotti), Desio, to a certain Mr. Aliprandi, a pickle manufacturer, who allowed it to fall into a state of disrepair.

Antonio died on September 16, 1948, in his home in Via Ricasoli, Milan, after some months of illness.

He is buried in the Alemani chapel in Pasturago di Vernate, where he had a country estate (inherited from his mother, Caterina Alemani).

GIUSEPPE GAVAZZI (1877-1949)

He was born in Milan on March 3, 1877. In 1899, at the age of 22, he graduated with a gold medal from the Polytechnic of Milan (first class honours) in industrial and electro-technical engineering³⁶.

³⁵ Pietro Canonica (b. in 1869 in Turin, d. in 1959 in Rome), sculptor, was famous for his monumental works.

³⁶ In researching this book, writings by an engineer named Giuseppe Gavazzi turned up. He was, however, probably not our Giuseppe. He was a navigation expert and on May 16, 1909 he published in the magazine *Critica Sociale* an article entitled *In favour of a new law regarding the deviation and uses of public waters*. Again, on April 27, 1918 he gave a general report at an introductory conference, held in the City Hall of Bergamo, on internal navigation in the relations with the province of Bergamo, published by the Bergamo Committee for Internal Navigation. Lastly, another article was found in the publication *The Bergamo-Brescia Committee for Internal navigation - office: Palazzolo S/O, under the title of The Canal of Primary Navigation – Adda-Bergamo-Brescia-Mantova-Po*. This Giuseppe Gavazzi wrote the part relating to the tract from the Adda to the Oglio.



Young newlyweds Pia Gnegchi and Giuseppe Gavazzi in 1901.



Giuseppe Gavazzi
(1877-1949).

Giuseppe became a member of the College of Engineers and Architects.

Entrepreneurial activities

He began his career as an engineer in his father's business, the silk weaving firm of Egidio & Pio Gavazzi, in Milan, from 1900 to 1907. He then went to Krefeld (Germany) and after a certain period returned to Desio where, in 1905, he designed and oversaw the construction of the first dyeworks of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company, in Desio, and in 1907 made a first enlargement³⁷.

Later, for the spinning activity of the Desio factory he designed and installed a ventilation and humidification system, adapting it to the requirements of the environment.

In 1925 he designed and created, again for the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company, the installation of a revolutionary (for the times) steam tur-

bine group (Tosi construction) with an alternator for the production of around 250 KW of electrical power and the exhaust used to power the dyeworks³⁸.

By the time his father Egidio died (1910) he had already succeeded in carving out his own area of expertise, and he began to concentrate on cultivating relations with the Milanese financial circles, not neglecting his duties as a board member of two «strategic» companies for the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi firm, the Gas Company and the Drinking Water Company.

In 1920 he became Chairman of the Catholic Agricultural Co-operative of Desio, made up of landowners, largely represented in the Board of Directors of the Agricultural Bank of Desio, with whom he maintained close working relations.

He was the guest of honour at the inauguration of the Desio Parish Recreation Centre (around 1901) and President of The Brotherhood Society (a workers' mutual aid organisation).

At the age of 30 he began to dedicate himself to hydroelectric power generation (from 1906 to 1915), making a name for himself both in the field of important water utilisation projects and for his ability to cultivate relations with public and private corporations.

In 1907, in co-operation with a similar initiative by the group Brown Boveri and the Banking House, he founded the Dinamo - Italian Company for Electrical Works, which dealt especially with the problem of electric traction regarding the Varese area railway lines of the State Railways and the Simplon Swiss Railways. He also designed and put into effect the exploitation of an important source of hydroelectric power in the Simplon massif.

The Dinamo, of which Giuseppe was General Director, had the concession of considerable

³⁷ This brought great success to the umbrella manufacturers with the dye aniline black. The dyeworks was used mainly for dyeing umbrella fabric.

³⁸ In the 1950s this group still worked perfectly when the dyeworks was able to use all the exhaust and as a reserve in the periods when electrical power was lacking.

hydroelectric power sources in the rivers Cajrasca and Diveria, in the province of Novara, district of Domodossola³⁹. He ran this company until 1915.

After the war, he stopped working in the hydroelectric field and began to concentrate on the Italian electrical industry.

First of all, he worked with the Motor group. From 1915 to 1922 he was Managing Director of the Electrical Joint-Stock Company of Bovisio & District and the Milan-based Hydro-electrical Company of Cerro al Lambro, as well as the SAEB⁴⁰.

In 1916 he became Chairman of the Gas Company of Desio, which was also responsible for the distribution of electricity. He held the post until 1924, when he passed it on to his brother Gino.

Again in the field of electricity and hydro-electricity, he was Chairman and later honorary board member of the National Union of Companies for the Autonomous Production and Consumption of Electrical Energy (UNAPACE) in Rome; Board member and Chairman of the subsequently-dissolved Brioschi Company for Electrical Businesses; Board member of the Alpine Reserves company of Ossola, Alto Toce (1915-1924), which contributed to utilising the valleys of the area; of the Vizzate Hydroelectric Company (Vizzate-SIV – hydroelectric plant of Prati di Vizzate, Alto Adige), and of the Hydroelectric Company of Isorno (a company which was later to be taken over by the large hydro-electric complexes).

He was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Italian Hydroelectric Association.

The Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company

Giuseppe later worked in the wool-manufacturing field.

In 1913, at the invitation of several shareholders, he became director, in 1916 Managing Director and in 1945 Chairman of the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company, whose revival was largely his doing.

As his company gradually grew, Alessandro Rossi began to be aware of the increasing need for funds and therefore for closer contact with the great financial market. He went to Milan where he made the acquaintance of several well-respected businessmen and founded

³⁹ The programme began with the construction of the erecting shop at Varzo (near Domodossola), which used two waterfalls, one on the river Diveria of 36 metres and one of 450 metres on the river Cajrasca, a tributary of the Diveria. The very variable energy of the two rivers was integrated by water collected in an alpine tank of 5,500,000 cubic metres and located at a height of 2,200 metres above sea level. In addition to this seasonal storage tank, the system, which was designed specifically for traction requirements, included a water intake at a height of around 1000 metres with a tank of 45,000 cubic metres, which was followed by a 2,600 meter-long canal, running mostly through a tunnel and terminating in a storage tunnel of 6000 cubic metres, in the immediate vicinity of the loading tank. From this tank two steel pipes decreasing in diameter carried water to four 5000 H.P. Pelton turbines. In addition to these four machines, two others were able to utilise the 36-metres waterfall of the Diveria river. The plant had a capacity of 40,000,000 KW-h. per year, according to the integrated load of the tank. Along with the power plant, the 92 km-long double line from Varzo to Gallarate was designed and built, with two signal stations at Piedimulera and Arona.

Giuseppe's main task was to direct and oversee the projects, as well as to deal with the numerous bureaucratic procedures involved in the drawing up of the contract with the State for the sale of electricity to the Milan-Gallarate-Varese line, which was the first contract stipulated by the Railway Administration with a private company. The Dinamo, then, supplied the necessary electricity to the State Railway lines of the Varese district and the Simplon Swiss Railways for works and traction.

⁴⁰ Because of his responsibilities in strategic wartime industries, such as the Hydroelectric Company of Cerro al Lambro, and later also because of his position in the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company, he was exempted from military service even during the World War.

Factory of the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company at Schio, of which Giuseppe Gavazzi was chairman.



with them in 1873 (thus moving the company's administrative offices to the chief town of Lombardy), the joint-stock Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company (Lanerossi), which was eventually to be quoted on the Stock Exchange. Giuseppe's invitation came from these Milanese partners, although some of the Rossi and Gnechi relatives supported the choice. The greater part of Giuseppe's energies were dedicated to the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company and, for better or worse, he marked the events of this grand wool factory of Schio. Following in the footsteps of the founder, he launched a great many social and welfare initiatives⁴¹.

In the industrial field, he earned the gratitude of the large «family» of the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company for the construction (and reconstruction) and modernisation of many plants and factories⁴².

⁴¹ The construction of sports complexes and gymnasiums; the founding of professional spinning, weaving and dyeing schools; the founding of schools of home economics; the expansion of the existing nursery schools; the construction of medical clinics for work-related accidents; assistance for maternity and infancy; the extension and construction of seaside and Alpine summer camps for workers and their children; the founding of libraries; the founding of experimental cultivation and breeding structures; the construction of after-work social clubs and similar facilities; the establishment of the «Alessandro Rossi» fund for professional training and assistance (sponsored by the Board of Directors), and the introduction of annual scholarships at institutes and universities in various regions of Italy.

⁴² The reconstruction, almost from scratch, of the factories bombed in 1916; the construction of new plants, like the factory in Piacenza, later to become the premises of the Chemical Applications Industry company; the construction of an Experimental Laboratory for the study of textile fibres; the construction and subsequent enlarging of the Vicenza Carding Factory; the modernisation of the Rocchette factories; the modernisation and enlargement of the factories of Schio and Torrelvicino; the renovation of the Pieve factories; the modernisation and duplication of the Marano Vicentino factory; the creation of magnificent heating systems; the modernising of the existing systems; the reconstruction of the Vicenza Carding Factory (previously established under his own supervision), which had been seriously damaged by air raids in 1944; the reconstruction and repair of sections of the factories of Dueville and Schio which were damaged by air raids; the construction of the large steam generator plants and the installation of groups of turbo-alternators and Diesel alternators at Vicenza, Rocchette, Schio and Pieve, which gave the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company almost total self-sufficiency in terms of electrical power; a precaution which proved to be particularly valuable in periods of energy shortages.

In addition, he carried out major textile machinery renovations in almost all the factories, thanks to the technical knowledge acquired through the studies, travels, and technical conferences he undertook and attended with extraordinary keenness for decades.

He set up research laboratories and experimental departments, placing them in the charge of qualified staff.

He kept abreast of the latest modernisation techniques in industry, created new outlets, founded supporting industries such as the Leather & Wool Joint-Stock Company, the Textile Industry Machinery Company, an experimental laboratory for textile industries (IAC, SAPEL, SMIT), etc.⁴³

His management of the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company, however, was also severely criticised (partly by those with a personal agenda, such as Gaetano Marzotto, who, from 1928 to 1932, attempted unsuccessfully to take over the company and oust Giuseppe). Nevertheless, as we have seen, his work was certainly not without its innovative and original aspects – the realisation of electrical autonomy in the factories, the setting up of supporting industries, investments in textile fibre research, etc.



Poster of the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company. Giuseppe Gavazzi was responsible for the commercial revival of the company.

The struggle against the Marzotto family⁴⁴

It is interesting to study the relations and contrasts with another major wool manufacturing company, run by the Marzotto family.

In 1926–27, Giuseppe's neighbour, Gaetano Marzotto, took a special interest in the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company after a series of factors came to a head – a gradual decline in share value, which he believed to be the reflection of poor company management; the intensifying of contrasts between shareholder groups that made the control of the company less compact than in the past, and the concrete possibility of acquiring a substantial capital share, to be used in modifying the equilibrium of the company.

In short, he believed that the old joint-stock company could be taken over only if he succeeded in taking advantage of the controversies raised by the Vicenza shareholders (the Marzottos, the heirs of Alessandro Rossi, the Dell'Ortos and Antonio Scotti) against the controlling group led by Giuseppe and Chairman Clateo Castellini.

At the end of March 1930 the industrialist from Valdarno asked Giuseppe to join the Board of Directors of a Brescia-based joint-stock company named Wool Manufacturers of Manerbio. At that time the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company was organised on the basis of the

⁴³ A particularly important company was the IAC (Chemical Application Industries), created in 1924 to supply Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company with two thirds of the synthetic dyes and other reserve chemical products needed in their factories, as well as penetrating solvents and various chemical products used by other similar industries.

⁴⁴ From Giorgio Roverato, *I Marzotto: una casa industriale*, Associazione di storia e studi sull'impresa, Franco Angeli, Milan, 1986.

Thanks to a shrewd alliance policy, Marzotto was able to make his appearance at a meeting of the Rossi Manufacturing Company in March 1928 with almost 8,500 shares to his name – around 21 per cent of the company capital but a little less than the 29 per cent of the shares represented on that occasion.

His aim was to take advantage of the difficult period that the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company was going through due to the slump that was affecting the entire textile sector, and wool manufacturers in particular. Nevertheless, the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company managed to come through it better than many other companies, if only thanks to the importance of tradition on the market. Marzotto maintained that companies should not succumb to the recession, that it was necessary to react, to re-organise production, to respond imaginatively to the drop in demand, and to update the Rossi industrial colossus by taking as a model the industry of Valdagno, which was then in the perfecting stage.

Naturally, Giuseppe was well aware of the movements of the so-called «Vicenza group» and the buying up of shares on the part of Marzotto. It was probably as a move to ward off the blow and reduce the significance of the minority's line of reasoning that in the 1927 financial year report he predicted that the re-launching of the company would take place also through «industrial conjunctions allowing broader scope».

This was evidently a clear attempt to reach a compromise with the rival company and put forward the idea of a possible future co-operation between the two companies.

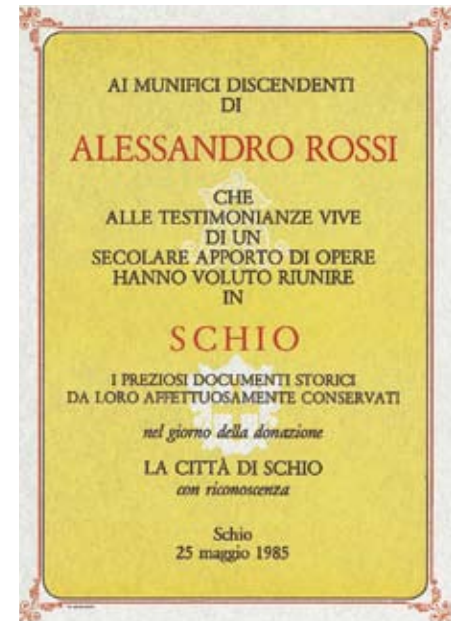
In addition, Gaetano Marzotto was offered a seat on the Board of Directors, which, nevertheless, was conserved in a state of formal passivity, since all the power remained in Giuseppe's hands.

In a meeting held in June 1930, Marzotto protested against high manufacturing costs and the excessive impact of expenses in general.

Giuseppe did not respond immediately, but waited until the following July 15, when he replied by objecting to Marzotto's accusations, especially those relating to the organisation of labour. These were the first skirmishes of a dispute that was shortly to explode in all its severity.

In December Marzotto, speaking on behalf of the Vicenza group, made a detailed attack on the Gavazzi-Castellini management. Marzotto, thanks to the acquisition of new shares and the forging of new alliances, was now in control of 25 per cent of the capital.

On this occasion, Marzotto made the following demands: a) to become part of the Executive Committee, which up until this time included only the Chairman and the Managing Director; b) the establishing of central management at Schio «under the guidance of a man who (is) ... new to the factory environment ... (and) would not be in the habit of favouring anyone and who could provide strong and dependable support to the efforts recognised and appreciated by the General Manager» (this probably referred to one of Marzotto's own representatives) and, lastly, c) the nomination of two other «Vicenza» board members as a sign of the new conjunction of power. Marzotto allowed no time for the consideration of his demands, but warned that if they were turned down – although a large part of the Board members believed it was necessary to accept them, and the final acceptance depended on «only a few, and perhaps only one as yet undecided



Plaque of recognition from the town of Schio, donated to the descendants of Alessandro Rossi.

individual» (referring, obviously, to Giuseppe) – he would remain «at the window» with his friends, «hoping that the board members would succeed, nevertheless, in establishing the necessary order and ensuring the satisfactory progress of the company, while being ready at the first possible occasion to assert the rights they have through their important interests in the company».

In short, Marzotto threatened to appeal to the shareholders' assembly.

Probably not all the accusations were unfounded. Conforming to a practice that was anything but uncommon among companies, the Board meetings of the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company were tiresome bureaucratic procedures that were held in order to comply with the laws, and not the setting where decisions were made. All power was in the hands of the Managing Director and the Chairman who, at the most, shared it with a few specialised executives, while the Board of Directors acted as a mere rubber stamp body and was often kept in the dark regarding real company strategy.

However, while this saved time and energy in the absence of disputes between the various shareholder groups, as soon as conflicting interests emerged it took on the nature of an abuse of power. Marzotto achieved the dismissal of Castellini and the nomination of Pier Antonio Foresti as Chairman. The latter was a small shareholder, unaligned with the two conflicting groups. On this occasion, the now elderly Board member Gaetano Rossi resigned from the Board of Directors. In a subsequent meeting, however, a subject that Marzotto believed to be quite firmly settled in his favour was once again called into question – his membership on the Chairman's Committee.

The intervention, in fact, of one of the auditors, referring to an article of the Business Code, blocked the election of Marzotto to the Executive Committee on the grounds that he had «a company altogether similar to the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company», thereby creating «interference and opposition of interest in a great many resolutions».

On January 2, 1931 Marzotto nevertheless obtained the nomination, in his own stead, of another representative of the Vicenza group. The aim, at this point, was to create a favourable situation for winning the confrontation that was to arise when the 1930 financial year was discussed at the shareholders' assembly. On this occasion, in fact, Marzotto made a renewed and even more explicit attack against Giuseppe, accusing him of improper conduct with regard to the Board and the General Manager himself, and of being responsible for the chaotic organisation of the company's factories. In a Board meeting held in March of 1931 Marzotto succeeded in blocking approval of the financial report, and the discussion was adjourned to May 9. Meanwhile, Giuseppe had resigned as Board member of the Wool Manufacturers of Manerbio.

If Gaetano Marzotto thought he was close to victory, however, he was very soon to be disappointed. After a harsh and tenacious dispute between himself and the auditors during the new meeting, at which Giuseppe and his supporters arrived with an exceptionally large number of proxies, the balance sheet was approved as more or less identical to that previously prepared by the Board of Directors, with over 24,000 votes in favour against the almost 9,000 votes of the Marzotto group. This was a heavy blow for Marzotto. His struggle to take over the company had gone on too long, and the faith of the group of supporters around him was beginning to falter.



Giuseppe Gavazzi with his son Rodolfo at the Milan Trade Fair in the late 1930s.

This incident also had repercussions in other fields, such as the Wool Manufacturers' Commission, which was not limited to authorisation management and the distribution of monetary shares assigned to the department, but had become a place where disputes and mediations regarding the different interests were handled.

The confrontations between the two companies, which by this time had become extremely personal as a result of the old contrasts, and those within the Wool Manufacturers' Commission, were perpetuated in the Federation of Wool Industries.

At the end of the 1930s Gaetano Marzotto did everything possible to win a nomination as Senator of the Kingdom, gaining the support of many, including former minister Mosconi (who still kept up excellent relations in Rome), Farinacci, Lessona (Minister of Italian Africa until 1937, who later gained the favour of Mussolini) and using the many contacts acquired in the military ministries and his close relations with the ministry governed by Guarneri; he was also well-acquainted with a number of other influential figures.

In spite of his excellent preparation, however, the operation was not successful.

This was not due to an unwillingness on the part of Mussolini to yield to the pressure for the nomination as senator, but rather to the fact that the Royal Senate was perhaps the only institution which the regime had not considered it necessary to strip of all privileges. One of these privileges, in fact, consisted in a sort of informal approval of the new appointees, achieved by means of discreet surveys among the influential members of the assembly.

In Marzotto's case the result proved unfavourable – against him was a secret move by Senator Treccani, Chairman at the time of the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company, himself and his friends backed by the company's Managing Director, Giuseppe Gavazzi. In such a way, the latter succeeded in blocking the senatorial ambitions of his powerful and disagreeable rival. Mussolini finally dropped the matter – Marzotto was not important enough to justify disregarding the principle of illegitimate co-optation by which the Upper House was governed. For the wool manufacturers this was a bitter disappointment, especially since all the most prominent industrialists were sooner or later nominated Senators, as Giuseppe himself was to be a few months later.

In 1937 Giuseppe declared that, thanks to the excellent results of the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company, he was able to pay back almost the full amount he had borrowed from the bank in order to purchase an important parcel of shares that would guarantee him the majority of the company. In 1940 he acquired still more leverage.⁴⁵

On February 27, 1947, my father Franco Gavazzi wrote in his diary: «The Stock Market has taken another leap upwards – the shares of the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company are today at 52,000, which means that Father, with his 30,000 shares, has today one and a half billion lire worth of shares in this company alone»⁴⁶.

Giuseppe had no shares at all in the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company when he first became involved with it.

⁴⁵ In those years the Vice President was Senior Officer Molteni, President of the Commercial Credit Bank. In March 1943, due to the air raids on Milan, the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company was «evacuated» to Seregno.

⁴⁶ The equivalent of 35,000,000 Euro today.

Sector-representing positions

In the sector of wool-manufacturing Giuseppe Gavazzi was a Board member of the Italian Wool Manufacturing Association, Vice President of the Italian Wool Industry Federation since its founding, Vice President of the International Wool Federation (where he was also greatly appreciated for his knowledge of foreign languages and his numerous acquaintances abroad) and President of the Industrial Union of the province of Vicenza. He was an associate member of the Sundry Textiles Union on the occasion of the allocation of responsibilities in the sectors of the Lombardy Industrial Association, which was re-organised after the war (1946).

He had a seat on the Board of Directors of the General Confederation of Italian Industry. Again in relation to his wool-manufacturing business, he was a Board member of the Commercial Institute of Italian Wool Manufacturers, of Milan, since its founding.

He was also part of the Co-operative Committee for the Assistance of Emigrant Workers in Europe and the Near East.

Abroad, Giuseppe was considered a great expert on economic and social matters. With a good command of foreign languages, as well as a thorough knowledge of technical and commercial procedures, his service to the Wool Federation was considered extremely valuable⁴⁷.

The Industrial Foreign Trade Company (CICE)

Giuseppe proved to have extraordinary discernment in his initiatives for increasing trade relations with the Soviet Union.

In 1921 he was the founder and Chairman of the joint-stock company CICE (Industrial Foreign Trade Company) for the export of Italian goods. The company was then in a position to take advantage of the subsequent Italo-Russian trade agreement in 1923. Through this venture, he succeeded in re-establishing business connections with Russia, which had been isolated since the First World War and the October Revolution.

The CICE was to become a powerful industrial organism for foreign trade and developed an extraordinary «clearing house business» between Italy and Russia. In 1925 it was already receiving favourable reviews from the *Daily Express* and the *Manchester Guardian*.

Russia and Italy had always played modest parts in each other's economic life. The minor Italian commercial and industrial expansion, the lack of an effective merchant marine and the strong political and economic influence of the English and the French in the Eastern Mediterranean and as far as the Black Sea had for centuries been major obstacles to Italian penetration of the very rich markets of Southern Russia. Germany, Austria, England and France held an almost total monopoly of the general import trade in Russia.

This was before the First World War. During the war, Russia became virtually isolated on all sides. What little industry there was fell into complete disrepair in the transformations required by the war and was totally unable to meet the military's enormous demands.

⁴⁷ He participated in discussions and conferences in Amsterdam in 1932 on customs policies, in favour of freedom of trade; in Budapest in 1933 on the problem of competition from non-European countries; in Rome in 1934 on Japanese competition and on the studies concerning the characteristics of wool fibre; in Warsaw in 1936, in Paris in 1937, in London in 1938 and in Brussels in 1939 on various subjects.

Entering Russia after the October Revolution and developing closer ties, politically and especially economically, to a regime that was so different and so hostile to the capitalist system, required a great deal of courage. It was important to have an extremely encompassing vision of life in Russia. It was absolutely essential to look to the future and to the future alone, and not to fear the present.

In such an exceptional environmental situation and at a time so economically and politically difficult for the country, at the beginning of the year 1921 Giuseppe pioneered relations between Italy and the USSR, founding the above-mentioned CICE, to which was assigned an initial capital of 1,000,000 lira⁴⁸. The initiative was a success, thanks to much painstaking work, unflagging energy and great sacrifices.

In this period there were no official relations between Russia and the Italian Government. Giuseppe set up the first CICE agencies and began to seriously examine the possibility of a commercial and industrial penetration of the country.

Three years passed, dedicated almost exclusively to the study of Russian laws and their progressive evolution towards a commercial system that could establish the inevitable and necessary contacts with commercial, industrial and financial bodies throughout the world. The various conditions of the different Russian markets were examined; studies were made on the purchasing possibilities of the population and the farming masses in particular; potentials and means were calculated. Everything had to be set up from scratch – shipping lines, insurance services, transportation, etc., not to mention the most basic and essential part: convincing the major industrialists to take part in the consignments and the banks to provide the funds needed in considerable quantities and for long periods.

In spite of the fact that, in this period, the reports that circulated about Russia painted a very desperate and disquieting picture of the country, the CICE persevered in its task with steadfastness and determination. The main European countries and the United States had initiated a commercial penetration that was beginning to take on considerable proportions.

So far, Italy had not been able to compete in this trade «race» for the lack of two important elements that the rival countries had a firm grasp of – a sound experience of Russian market methods and sufficient financial leverage to set up important deals.

In 1922-1923 Giuseppe made a long journey through Russia with a diplomatic passport, during which he also had some dangerous run-ins. One day, the train on which he was travelling with his daughter Piera and his secretary at the CICE, Franco Marinotti (who later became the owner of SNIA) was held up by bandits, who searched all the passengers and luggage, stealing everything that was of any value.

In the course of their journey through Russia, they had acquired a great number of things, usually offered them in rather unorthodox ways – strings of pearls, jewellery, icons, carpets, etc.;

⁴⁸ In September of 1922 the capital was raised to 3,000,000 lira and subsequently, in October 1924, to 7,000,000 with additional further increases in sight.

The CICE was based in Milan, in Piazza del Duomo no. 23. The Board of Directors, of which Giuseppe was Chairman, included Senator Romualdo Borletti, Vice Chairman, Franco Marinotti, Managing Director, Senator Giovanni Agnelli, Aristide Basilio, M.P. Stefano Benni, Giulio Brusadelli, Giorgio Enrico Falck, Isaia Levi, Alessandro Maino, Ettore Mazzucco, Dr. Piero Pirelli, Giulio Sessa, Raimondo Targetti and M.P. Gianfranco Tosi.

it was likely that most of these goods were stolen, more specifically, from the country dachas and manors of the aristocracy that had been overrun after the revolution, a few years before. There is a famous anecdote regarding Marinotti, who managed to save a splendid emerald he had bought from being taken by the bandits by throwing it into the train car's spittoon.

The CICE eventually succeeded in penetrating the Russian market and introducing Italian goods. Just a few years after its foundation it stipulated an important contract in Moscow for the sum of 300 million lira, with the participation of the largest Italian banks.

In 1923 the CICE organised Italian participation in the Pan-Russian Trade Fair in Moscow. The Italian pavilion was judged the best of the foreign entries. Here the high level of Italian industry was demonstrated through a display of products from the major Italian manufacturing firms, earning them great success.

The CICE also succeeded in creating a consortium of fifty or so of the most important industrial companies and, through its sister company, the National Company of Mineral Oils (SNOM), made available large amounts of Russian credit in Italy. In addition, thanks to the heavy importation of coal from Donetz, it was also able to offer guarantees that made possible a favourable and practical agreement with the banks.

The great commercial-economic movement of the CICE practically took on the form of a large clearing-house for the Italian balance of trade with regard to Russia.

The Russian government, besides scrupulously fulfilling its banking obligations, balanced Italian exports by supplying fuel oil and coal to Italy⁴⁹.

The Russians themselves declared that the CICE was the most important European institution their country dealt with.

The «Brotherhood» and the mining industries – The silver mines

The five brothers (Giuseppe, Simone, Luigi, Giovanni Battista (Gino) and Felice; later reduced to four plus Luigi's widow) together formed a company called the «Brotherhood», and many business ventures were made jointly, under the guidance of Giuseppe.

While many of these were very successful, others, such as the mines, suffered heavy losses.

The «Brotherhood» owned silver mines at San Martino Monteneve (2,370 metres above sea level) in the borough of Corvara in Passiria, Alto Adige⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ In February 1925 the CICE obtained the exclusive permission to import to Italy and its colonies fossil coal and anthracite from the Donetz basin. This resulted in the exportation to Italy from Russia of approximately 600,000 tons of coal in the three-year period from 1925 to 1927 (the cargo was loaded in the port of Marioupol and unloaded in the ports of Venice, Naples, Livorno, La Spezia, Genoa and Savona).

Regarding liquid fuel the SNOM signed a contract in December 1923 with the Pan-Russian Fuel Oil Union for the importation to Italy of petrol, petroleum, fuel oil and lubricating oil. The commercial introduction of oil products was extended as far as the colony capitals in Libya, Eritrea, Somalia and Juba.

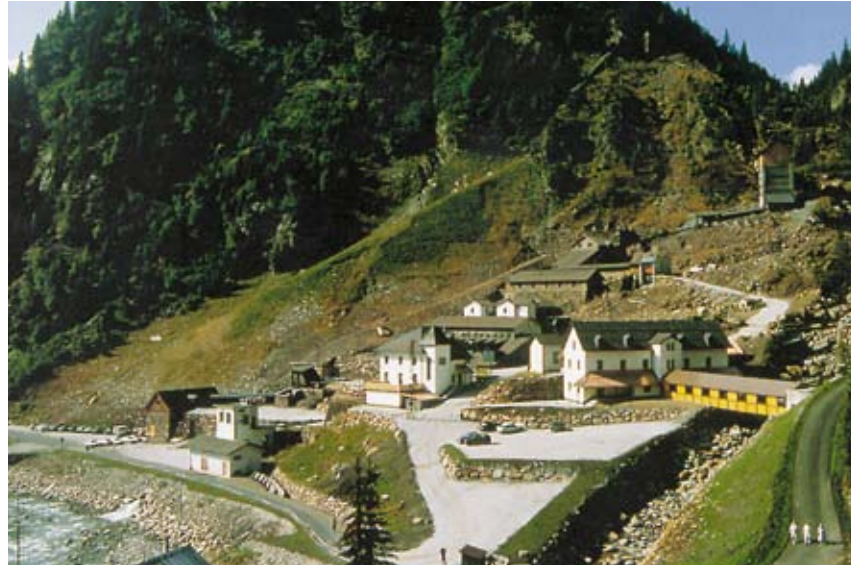
Another interesting branch of this activity was the cocoon production in Transcaucasia, where the CICE set up large, well-organised factories for the production of silk cocoons.

The CICE was also associated with the company Itrans and carried out excellent work throughout Eastern Europe and Asia, with agencies not only in Moscow and Leningrad but also in a great many other cities as far as Persia.

⁵⁰ Maiern is part of the territory of Ridanna.

The mines were those of Schneeberg and Fleres. Near Vipiteno, in the province of Bolzano, in the Western Breonie mountain range are the highest altitude mines in Europe (2,000 and 2,500 metres a.s.l.). Since ancient times these mines have produced silver-bearing galena used for the minting of coins; subsequently lead was also mined and, more recently, pitchblende, from which zinc is extracted.

The mining field of Monteneve (Schneeberg in German) is located on the mountain that divides the Ridanna Valley from the Passiria Valley. In the winter the Monteneve area is covered by a thick blanket of snow that reaches heights of 7–8 metres.



The mine is extremely old. Mining as an activity dates back to the dawn of history, and there is evidence that this particular mine existed at least as far back as 1237. The extracted silver was probably used by the Counts of Tyrol for minting coins. The period of the mine's greatest splendour was around the 1500s, when 1,000 miners were employed in approximately 70 tunnels⁵¹. The rail transportation system, built in the 1800s, was the longest in the world and carried the minerals for a distance of 27 km to Vipiteno.

There are approximately 150 kilometres of tunnels winding under the mining complex.

The Gavazzis owned the mine during the period between the two world wars. It had probably been purchased by Giuseppe, whose work took him through the Alps where he designed hydroelectric reservoirs (he was in charge, in fact, of the hydroelectric plant of Vizzate, near the mines). It was not a successful venture, however. Felice Gavazzi is on the record as having protested in 1928 due to having to pay out 4,000,000 lira for his share in the mine.

With the drawing up of the Saint Germain peace treaty, Monteneve also became the property of the Italian State. At the beginning, the State ran the mines itself, but in 1921 they were leased to the company SAIMT, which was known more simply as «Trentine».

During the First World War the mines technically fell into a state of disrepair, and huge investments became necessary in order to make them profitable again afterwards.

View of San Martino Monteneve, in the borough of Corvara, where the Gavazzis owned several mines.

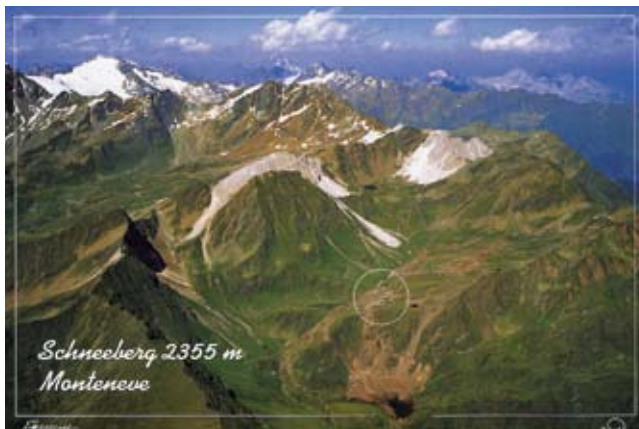


Period postcard showing the village of Monteneve.

⁵¹ From 1871 onwards zinc, which was present in large quantities, began to be extracted. The small village of San Martino on Monteneve underwent its greatest expansion in this period, including the founding of a school and various associations. The extreme weather conditions, together with the very hard work of mining, took a great toll in human lives.

The transport of the ore-bearing minerals had always been one of the main problems of the mine. For centuries, the pulverised rocks were packed into large sacks and carried down to the valley on horseback, then transported further in wagons pulled by horses or oxen. The year 1871, however, saw the construction of what was perhaps the largest open-air rail transport system for minerals in the world. This very risky system was composed of very steeply inclined braking planes, alternating with stretches of almost flat horse-drawn wagon railways. Many stretches of this transport system are still visible today. It was not until the year 1925 that Giuseppe Gavazzi built the cableway that made it possible to transport the materials down to the factory all year round.

During the period in which the Gavazzi family ran the mine with the companies PORFIDI and SAIMT (The Trentino Joint-Stock Mining Companies) a number of large and important installations were created, such as two impressive, 17 km-long cableways, and significant improvements were made on the flotation plant for processing the newly-extracted raw minerals from the mine.



Two postcards with panoramic views of Monteneve-Schneeberg.



Period postcard showing a fair at the village of Monteneve.

When, during the 1920s, the global economy recovered and the prices of metals rose again, the SAIMT probably reaped considerable profits, justifying the investment of capital in order to solve two great problems – the mineral transportation system and the dressing plant, which was inefficient and technically obsolete.

In 1925–26 the cableway was constructed, replacing the gigantic railway transportation system with inclined planes and haulage planes⁵².

The essential requisite for the modernisation of the dressing plant was a more efficient power supply. When this was guaranteed, the SAIMT was then able to install a flotation plant, which required a radical restoration. This plant was the most modern installation that existed in the dressing sector. The flotation process made use of the floating effect of certain chemical substances to separate the mineral-containing rocks particles from the waste rock.

The introduction of dynamite with fuse detonators in 1920 and the electrical compressor in 1923 signified enormous progress for the work in the tunnels.

The power supply came from a small hydroelectric plant installed at Seemoos, with the construction of an artificial lake, putting to good use Giuseppe's technical experience and skill. In 1926 cables for pneumatic drills were installed in the most important shafts and subsequently increased.

In 1928 there were 11 pneumatic drills in operation.

In the first half of the 1920s the conditions of the workers at Monteneve improved somewhat, after the restrictions caused by the war, thanks primarily to a wage increase obtained with a strike.

In the second half of the 1920s, Fascist policies caused the workers' wages to again be reduced, bringing them down to subsistence level. At Monteneve, however, it was still possible to survive, since workers were almost always paid by the piece, enabling them to keep their pay well above the limits established by the collective labour agreements⁵³.

In fact, the number of workers rose from an average of 136 in 1922 to 446 in 1926 and then fell to 290 in 1930⁵⁴.

At the end of the 1920s the SAIMT attempted to lower production costs and reduce the number of workers by one third. This was, in a sense, a harbinger of the forthcom-

⁵² Linking stretches between Monteneve and Masseria along the Lazzago Valley and Masseria and Mareta in the Ridanna Valley.

⁵³ The wages of unskilled labourers and workers in the mineral-dressing plant were around one quarter lower than the wages of the regular miners.

⁵⁴ The number varied considerably. In the winter less than 50 per cent of the workers employed in the summer worked part-time. For every ten men one woman was employed. In the 1920s, the nucleus of full-time miners was still made up of around 100 local workers from Ridanna and Passiria; the number of Italian workers from other provinces fluctuated greatly.

ing worldwide economic crisis, as a consequence of which, in 1931, the Monteneve mines closed down and all the workers were dismissed.

All the efforts to provide capital for the modernising of the plants were thus defeated by the great slump in mineral prices. The mines never recovered, and finally (around 1940) had to be closed down and sold in liquidation to a State corporation, the AMMI, after having examined for two years the vain possibility of selling the mines «as a last resort» to a large company using zinc or lead.

The AMMI, however, in the context of the autarchic politics of the regime and in preparation for the imminent entry into the war, had decided to submit all energy and strategic companies to the control of State⁵⁵.



Luigi Gavazzi, who was later to become Don Egidio, ran the mining complex from 1927, the year of his graduation in Engineering, until 1931, when on November 10 he took his orders. In 1933 he was replaced by engineer Giuseppe Marioni (the husband of Giuseppina Gavazzi, Giuseppe's daughter), who remained at the mine for around two years and continued to oversee the works afterwards, when he no longer lived at Maiern⁵⁶.

In the 1930s the mine, as we have seen, was partly closed for a period with work reduced to a minimum⁵⁷.

Giuseppe and Franco Gavazzi in the Alto Adige on a visit to the mines of Maiern with the directors of the mines.

⁵⁵ In addition to the mine itself there was also the processing plant, much further down the valley, with the main processing-flotation works. The cableway transported the mineral (pitchblende and galena) to the Maeirn washing plant downvalley.

⁵⁶ From 1928 to 1931 the Technical Manager of the mine, especially at Monteneve, was De Unterrichter, one of the engineers of the group used by the «Brotherhood». There had never been so many engineers in charge of the works, nor were there afterwards, when the AMMI took over.



Interior of one of the Maiern mines.

Miserably, after having absorbed so much of the family's money and having proved a real economic disaster, it struggled on as best it could with a few dozen workers, while in the initial years of the Gavazzi management it provided work for many hundreds of people⁵⁸. As well as the mine of San Martino Monteneve, Giuseppe owned a large share in another mine, or «mineral quarry», as it was called. This was the zinc and silver mine at Narcao, near Iglesias (Sardinia). He also had contracts for similar State-owned mines in the region of Gennargentu. In 1935–36 the superintendent of Monteneve, Teodoro Marcotto, transferred a series of machines from the processing plant to Narcao, where he had moved with his wife and small son, and where many of the South Tyrolese workers who had worked on the transplanting of the machinery promptly came down with malaria. For some time Giuseppe's son-in-law Giuseppe Marioni also was in charge of the mine there. In 1937 he still went regularly to inspect the mine, and came back with exciting tales of the local bandits⁵⁹. He also complained about the poor efficiency of the workers, claiming that two Sardinian workers were equal to one of the mainland labourers. Besides the natural diversity of work capacity, moreover, in Sardinia almost all the workers were sick with malaria.

⁵⁷ The table shows the total production of the Monteneve mine during the time it was run by SAIMT – Trentine. Source: Orazio Serafini, *AMMI, Mining District of Trento*; data collected by Enzo Sterchele.

**PRODUCTION TOTALS FOR THE MONTENEVE MINE:
Managed by SAIMT – Trentine**

Year	Raw ore prod. (in tons)	Treated ore (in tons)	Managed by	Pitchblende concentrate		Galene concentrate		Average person
				tons	% zinc	tons	% lead	
1911		3.270	Austria	1.069	37,20			
1919			Public Domain	1.070	41,01		57,51	148
1920			Public Domain	2.088	37,30	264	51,81	206
1921			Public Domain	1.742	37,90	37	75,01	149
1922			SAIMT	2.268	37,01	20	42,01	136
1923			SAIMT	3.070	38,30	69	70,01	247
1924			SAIMT	1.821	41,01	198	75,01	399
1925			SAIMT	6.888	39,01	515	72,01	431
1926			SAIMT	5.385	39,01	398	68,01	446
1927	26.700	31.724	SAIMT	8.314	41,01	159	52,30	355
1928	24.612	32.149	SAIMT	7.007	44,01	504	48,50	275
1929	41.411	44.411	SAIMT	5.960	44,01	781	47,30	241
1930	37.414	37.414	SAIMT	6.834	44,30	1.214	54,90	290
1931			SAIMT	2.898	44,30	306	55,01	100
1932–1937			Closed					
1938			SAIMT	3.845	48,06	1.017	56,79	228
1939			SAIMT	3.725	48,01	915	57,01	219
1940			SAIMT	2.664	48,01	951	57,40	325

⁵⁸ From 1937 to 1940 the position of manager or acting manager was occupied by Teodoro Marcotto, of Vipiteno, who was more a kind of factotum and local trustee. From Milan, Enrico Saita would come periodically up to the Masseria to check the accounts and report to the shareholders of the «Brotherhood». There were also frequent visits from experts of the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company, in Vicenza.

⁵⁹ These entries are from the diary of Franco Gavazzi, dated September 8, 1937.

Not until 1979 the Monteneve mine was finally judged to be too unprofitable and closed down permanently, after a full thousand years of extraction.

In 1991 the entire complex was turned into a museum, and today offers visitors a variety of different excursions. The «long tour» takes over 10 hours and includes long hikes as well as visits through the tunnels on foot and in a small train. The visit is quite interesting and exciting, and ends by crossing the mountain through a tunnel of more than 6 km.

It is an adventurous excursion for practised hikers. It takes the whole day, therefore, to complete, and includes a climb of 1,100 m. with an average gradient of over 47 per cent. The entire mining area can be toured, including the village. The museum supplies the necessary protective gear for entering the tunnels.



The church of the mining village.

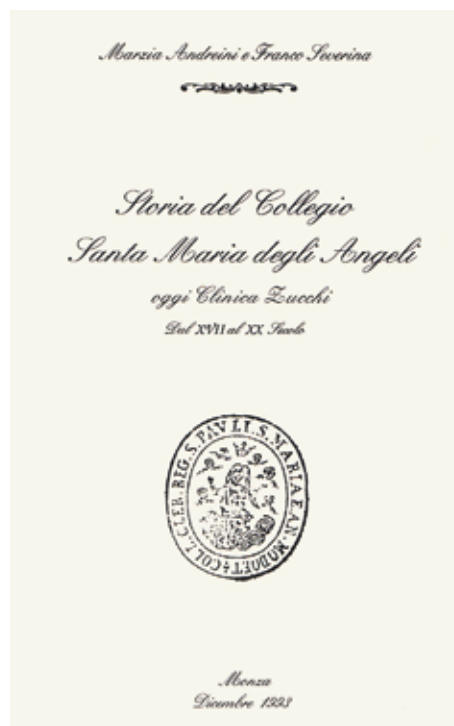
The Women's Health Clinic (the Zucchi Clinics)

In 1924 some cousins of Giuseppe from the San Pietro family⁶⁰ (relatives acquired through the Biella family) found themselves in great financial difficulty.

The eldest brother of the family, apparently a reckless character, had run up such an enormous debt that the whole family risked imprisonment and other very distasteful consequences unless it was paid up very quickly.

They therefore appealed to the Gavazzis, who decided to help them overnight. They asked what the cousins could give them in exchange. They were offered their shares in the Women's Health Clinic of Monza (an institution that had been founded at the end of the 19th Century in the ancient Santa Maria degli Angeli Boarding School, first rented and later purchased on February 22, 1902, by lawyers Giuseppe and Michele San Pietro with a minor share held by nobleman Marco Orombelli, son of Carlo, and Marquis Carlo Ottavio Cornaggia), 12 portraits of noblewomen by a famous Dutch painter, the cotton factory at Ponte Lambro, an expensive villa and a large piece of land on the outskirts north of Milan (today at the beginning of Viale Sarca). So it was that the Women's Health Clinic of Monza, in Via Zucchi, as well as the one in Carate Brianza, opened in April of 1892 in

Cover and title page of a book from 1993 dedicated to the «Santa Maria degli Angeli» boarding school, in Monza.



⁶⁰ From the diary of Franco Gavazzi, May 11, 1962: «I have spent a long time talking with Giuseppino [Chierichetti, who lived in Brazil], who now manages an electrical accessories factory belonging to Carlo San Pietro in San Paolo, Brazil. The San Pietro cousins are indeed strange (the grandmother of the present generation was a Biella, named Fanny, the sister of my grandmother on my mother's side). Always in some tangle or another, fed and supported for decades by our elders, disorderly, chronic failures – now this «rejeton» (TN: reject) named Carlo has become an important and extremely wealthy industrialist and is the owner – if I am not mistaken – of 7 or 8 factories all over the world.»



the Confalonieri Villa (later the Belgiojoso Villa), became the property of the Gavazzi family⁶¹. Some time later the 12 portraits were returned to the San Pietro family.

Gino Gavazzi, Giuseppe's brother, became the first Chairman. Because of his many commitments, Giuseppe often delegated his son-in-law Giuseppe Marioni to stand in for him. Marioni also ran the clinics, which later became the almost exclusive property of Giuseppe⁶².

The Carater Health Clinic was set up in the villa leased from the Belgiojoso family. 53 years later, in 1965, under the chairmanship of my father Franco, the owners decided to sell the villa, and a new block was built in the park.

Today this prestigious complex houses 300 patients, with a staff including 100 doctors, 40 of whom are full-time, and 300 employees, including nurses and administrative staff. The clinic has an annual turnover of around 40 million Euro.

It is recognised in Lombardy and throughout Italy as one of the major private Italian hospitals. In the eighteen years from 1952 to 1970, 60,000 babies were born there. The Clinic was unanimously recognised as a maternity home par excellence by the population of Monza. The clinics were sold in 2002.

The Irtrans

In 1925 Giuseppe Gavazzi founded and became Chairman of Irtrans, an Italo-Russian joint venture shipping company for goods shipped from Persia through the Caucasus. The company was set up in the context of the trade agreement made with Russia following the previously-mentioned visit of Giuseppe to the country (1922-23) on behalf of the Italian Government. The immediate result of this visit was the large Zelevoi contract, which guaranteed Italy the exportation to Russia of manufactured goods for a total value of 240 million lira.

Period photographs showing interior views of the Ladies' Nursing Home in Monza.

⁶¹ The official founding of what is today the Zucchi Clinic actually took place on May 2, 1913, when the joint-stock company of the Ladies' Health Clinic of Monza was established, with a deed of partnership signed in the studio of notary Antonio Mascheroni by Giuseppe San Pietro, Marquis Carlo Ottavio Cornaggia, Deputy in the Italian Parliament, and nobleman Marco Orombelli.

In 1972 the clinic took on its present-day name of Zucchi Private Clinic S.p.a.

⁶² In the 1920s the Donà delle Rose family, completely penniless, arrived in Milan looking for work, and were employed by Giuseppe. Some time later they became rich through the inheritance of an old relative's estate, and subsequently Neno married a daughter of the Gropallo family, one of the most prominent in Milan. The father of Neno Donà delle Rose remained in the Gavazzi orbit as an auditor for the Clinic and the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company.

The Bemberg

In 1930, as a result of the death of the chairman in that period, Giuseppe joined the Bemberg, a company that manufactured fabric and linings (founded in 1925). He was straight away assigned the position of Chairman of the Board of Directors, his merits being already so well-known abroad as to automatically earn him the complete confidence of the company, critical for such a position.

At the onset of the war, orders came for the seizing of the Anglo-French group (Courtaulds & Gillet) that owned all the shares of the company.

Thanks to complex dealings with the authorities governing at the time, the company was allowed to continue operating, on the condition that one third of the capital be subscribed by Italians. This was accomplished through an agreement with the owners, via Switzerland, in a reserved and fiduciary form.

At the end of the war the owners, in recognition of the merits of Giuseppe, confirmed the Italian shareholders, including Giuseppe and his friends, as owning a third of the capital.

In 1940 he became even more committed to public life⁶³.

The Gavazzi share was reduced to nearly zero in 2002.

The nomination as Senator

The nomination as Senator was the crowning addition to the prestige Giuseppe already enjoyed, not only in Italy but also on the international level, especially in his particular line of business.

The following is my father Franco's description of the event, who wrote in his diary on October 21, 1939: «On my return today to Desio in the early afternoon I was greeted with some wonderful news – Father has been nominated Senator of the Realm. To tell the truth we had begun to lose hope because, while there had been talk of it for so long, the lists regularly appeared without including Father's name.

The list that arrived today was the last, and with it the number of Senators was brought up to and fixed at 535. This nomination is a great honour for two reasons: first of all, because it is thanks to the personal affection and confirmed esteem of the Duce [Mussolini] for Father; and secondly, because there were few industrialists among the nominees, which means that these are undoubtedly the best. The news was broadcast by radio even before the official communication, and spread in a flash throughout the town and beyond, so there has been a continual flow of congratulatory telegrams and telephone calls from well-wishers.

One of the first to telegraph was the Duce himself, and some of the most rewarding messages were those of Minister Alfieri, Marinotti and Guidone Visconti. It was pure enjoyment opening, reading and commenting on the telegrams as they arrived, for us also who basked in



The «Oratory» in the Barnabite wing of the Ladies' Nursing Home.



Deed of the appointment of Giuseppe Gavazzi as Senator (1939).

⁶³ The ownership of the Bemberg was divided as follows: one third was owned by the groups SOPARA (Société de Participations de Rayonne) of Paris and TAF (Textile and Financial Company) Ltd. of Guernsey, Great Britain; one third by the groups AKU (Algemene Kunstzijde Unie N.V.) of Arnhem, Holland and CUPRUM (CUPRUM A.G.) of Glarus, Switzerland, and one third by Italians, including Giuseppe, with a large share, and the Zoia family.



Giuseppe Gavazzi, oil on canvas, painted by Gino Mazzoli.



Certificate issued by the French Republic to Giuseppe Gavazzi in 1919 as a *laissez-passer*.

his reflected glory. Father is truly radiant, and we are all doing our best to make a fuss over him and show him how pleased we are. We noted with displeasure that there was no message from the Podestà (that is, of course, Antonio Gavazzi, the Podestà of Desio; the Podestà of Milan immediately sent a very courteous telegram). Neither that ape Antonio nor his worthy secretary sent any word, while on the other hand all the authorities of the town sent their most heartfelt congratulations. It was to be expected, but this did not make less evident and reproachable the discourtesy and the lack of good form and correctness.

Along with Father, Raimondo Targetti was also elected, so that Desio, which by now is already well-accustomed to having renowned citizens, now boasts two Senators at the same time, and this evening at the Wool Factory firecrackers and fireworks were let off .»

On the following day Franco Gavazzi wrote: «Today, Sunday, there was renewed excitement, more telegrams and a coming and going of people all through the day. We had telegraphs from Prince Filiberto, Duke of Pistoja, who signed «most affectionately», and all the Ministers – it will be a big job answering them all! In the afternoon, when the rain, which persisted for almost the whole day, had let up for a while, the town band came into the garden and performed a long programme in Father's honour, complete with a good many jarring notes. The enthusiasm of the

children was indescribable – at each pause Egidio, who stood with hands folded the whole time, ready to clap, exclaimed very seriously: «encore!».

«I took part in the factory celebrations in Father's honour. The programme was modelled on that of the Targetti family, and was a great success, with much enthusiasm on the part of the workers and the guests. Bonali gave a wonderful «official» speech, followed by others from a worker in the dyeworks and then a young Fascist. After these it was the turn of the much-applauded parish priest and Senator Targetti; Father replied to them all. At the end of the ceremony refreshments were provided for all the guests and a plainer kind of buffet was laid out for the lower classes».

The title of Senator was re-confirmed after the war, in 1946.

Maria Grazia Gavazzi Sigray of San Marzano, the wife of Mino Gavazzi and niece in a direct line of Senator Lodovico Gavazzi, tells how at the end of the 1970s she was a guest at a friend's house in Mexico, where one evening the former Queen of Italy was invited to lunch.

As soon as the Queen Helen realised that she bore the surname of Gavazzi, she told her that she remembered well how her father-in-law (King Victor Emanuel) often spoke of the two Gavazzi senators.

Public offices and honours

Giuseppe was Senior Town Councillor of Milan from July 9, 1907 to January 31, 1909 (Council of Mayor Marquis Ettore Ponti, Senator of the Kingdom, a relative on the Gneccchi side of the family); Town Councillor of Milan from 1905 to 1910; Town Councillor of Desio (Milan) from 1920 to 1926; Member of the Italian Peace Delegation, participating actively in the work of the Commission for the Reparation of War Damages caused by the Germans in 1919; Senator of the Kingdom (October 19, 1939).

In March 1919 Giuseppe was asked by the Italian Government (in the person of the Minister of Foreign Trade, Procurement and Industrial Reconstruction) to go, with a pass for the civilian and military authorities, to Mayence and work with the French Mission of Mr. Frossard and other associated government delegations for the assessment of war damages and the reconstruction and revival of businesses.

He was also Grand Officer of the Crown of Italy (March 27, 1925), «Cavaliere» of St. Maurizio and St. Lazzaro (June 1, 1933), «Commendatore» of St. Gregorio Magno (Papal honour – February 6, 1937).

Other offices

In his lifetime, Giuseppe held a great number of offices. Some of these date back a long way, such as those of Board member (from 1904) and Vice Chairman (from 1937) of the Ambrosian Bank, Board member (from 1910 to 1949) and Vice Chairman (from 1944 to 1947) of the Milan Insurance Company, administrator of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Company (from 1935), and Chairman of the Bemberg company; others date back to the foundation of the Company (IAC-SAPEL).

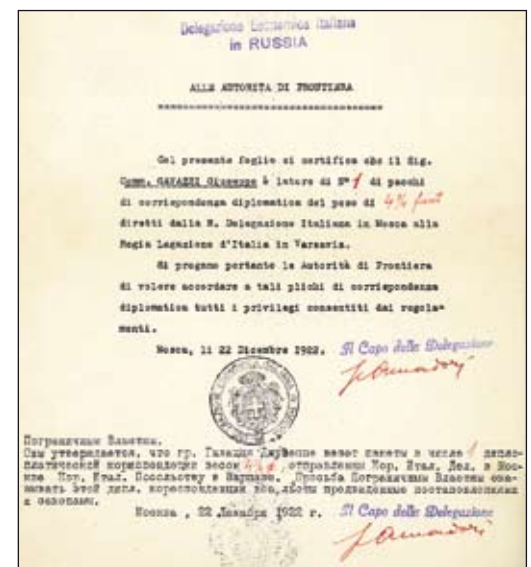
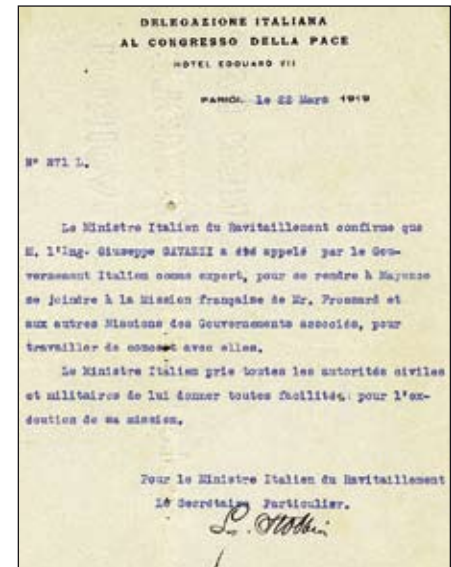
From the year 1916 he was President of the Desio Gas Company⁶⁴.

He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Cosulich company of Trieste, and of the Manerbio joint-stock wool-manufacturing company from 1930 to 1931. He was also President of the Civic Hospital of Desio. From 1926 he was President of the «The Farming Family», or the «Agraria»⁶⁵.

Giuseppe's homes

In 1897 Giuseppe is recorded as having lived with his parents, brothers and sisters, at n. 9 Via Meravigli, Milan (the legal offices of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Company). Later, when his father purchased the building, he lived both in Via Brera, at nos. 18 and 20 (Palazzo Gavazzi) and at the large villa in Desio, at Via S. Pietro nos. 14, 16 and 18 (previously no. 4).

Giuseppe later bought the Desio villa and the house in Via Brera from his brothers and sisters.



Two passes for civil and military authorities, issued to Giuseppe Gavazzi as a member of the Italian Peace Delegation.

⁶⁴ At the beginning of the war, the Chairman, Marquis Cornaggia, foreseeing a drop in profits due to a rise in coal prices, would have preferred to sell the gas-producing workshop, but the shareholders most closely connected with the local situation were against the idea (claiming that the large Société des Gaz of Milan, which was interested in the deal, would without doubt have raised the rates). Cornaggia then resigned as Chairman and was replaced by Giuseppe, who brought his brother-in-law, Luigi Lado, into the Board of Directors. Pietro Basilio Gavazzi (no relation to Giuseppe) retained his position as Managing Director; in 1918 he was joined by his son, Guido Gavazzi.

⁶⁵ See chapter 9, Egidio Gavazzi (1846-1910).



Authorisation and pass for free circulation in the Kingdom, issued to Giuseppe Gavazzi.

The house in Via Brera stood at the corner of a small square. It was a large, refined and pleasant-looking house, with two courtyards and several apartments. Inside was a garden that bordered on the botanical gardens.

Giuseppe's apartment was reached by a small but impressive curved staircase, flanked by pillars painted in a red and white faux marble design.

The apartment was arranged in the typical pompous style of the period, with anterooms, a living room with an adjoining area (looking onto the garden), followed by the main bedroom (where Aunt Mamà slept), which was fitted with a delightful round boudoir. The bedroom opened onto a smallish living room where the family usually gathered, and which was illuminated by a balcony closed in with windows (there were many such balconies in Milan; they were known as *vitre*).

The main living room flanking these rooms was very large. The servants' quarters, on the other hand, were appalling, consisting of a disorderly maze of rooms and closets. In those days, in fact, the servants' quarters were not considered as deserving of attention.

Giuseppe's bedroom opened onto the anteroom. On the same floor were the apartments of Fanny (where Father lived), Uncle Simone and Aunt Andreina with her children.

On Sundays the family all had lunch together, and on Tuesdays Aunt Mamà received guests.

A lost world

Before my father Franco bought the house in Milan and the country house, in Erba, he lived with his father's parents in Desio and in the summer with his mother's parents in Castelnovo d'Erba. The Desio house, where I was born, was immense, with 300 rooms, if one took into account the plainer, more rustic parts. The «noble» area alone had 75 rooms, including various living rooms and halls, as well as an impressive staircase where up to 12 of us kids could run up and down side by side.

The house was encircled by a beautiful park that the family crossed every Sunday to go to church (the Oratory of San Bartolomeo) at the other end of the garden, where we had our own private chapel for attending Mass. This was reached through a side door in the apse, which gave onto the park, and was therefore used only by us.

The house had three courtyards, a large tower and everything else that a house of such dimensions could have.

With time, it was divided into apartments. Besides that of Grandfather Giuseppe, there were the apartments of Aunt Rosa Pirelli, the widow of Uncle Gino Gavazzi, of Father and very many others; some were rented, others were reserved for family members.

Today the building had been transformed into a boarding school run by nuns.

Desio: childhood memories

I have a few memories of Desio. I was seven years old when we moved to Milan.

To a child such as I was then, the memory of the garden (or park, as it would now be considered due to its size) is the most vivid, with its ancient trees, the large, well-kept lawns, the gravelled avenues, the wooded areas, the little hill, the church, the tennis court and the greenhouse. These were all places I frequented with the enthusiasm typical of my young age, and formed the backdrop for our games of hide-and-peek, cops-and-robbers, etc.

We brothers were already numerous (there were five of us), and then there were our cousins, as well as friends and school companions, who longed to come and play in this earthly paradise.

Of the house itself I remember only my bedroom with its large terrace, the dining room, the staircase and an enormous living room.

I remember my first day of school, for which I had been prepared with a thousand lectures and admonishments. I was aware that, coming from the most prominent family around, I was expected to be especially well-mannered, obedient and disciplined. I wanted to set a good example.

In the classroom, after we sat down at our desks, the teacher made us stand up again, take our satchels, leave the room and come in again and find our respective places, so that in the next days we would each remember his own place. And so we came back for the second time into the classroom. I was one of the last and found my place occupied, so I protested to my usurping classmate, who insisted the place was his.

There immediately followed a furious battle using the satchels as weapons – these were made of leather and had metal mandrels along the top where the handle was. My classmate's satchel was very old and worn, probably having been used by generations of schoolchildren before him, and in some places the leather was worn, leaving a part of the metal piece exposed, almost like a blade.



Pia Gnechi Ruscone (1877-1914), wife of Giuseppe Gavazzi.

...A street (now), down the little square, where the pleasant garden used to be verdant close to the botanical one.

Relating the remains of that garden, then, their life is numbered: it's there that the new garage of the building is going to rise up.

In 1948 an apartment was purchased for Giuseppe in Via Cernaia no. 5, Milan, so that he could be better looked after by the family and the family doctors if necessary.

The marriage with Pia Gnechi Ruscone

On October 15, 1901 in Paderno d'Adda, in the Parish Church of San Giuseppe di Paola, Giuseppe married Giuseppina (known as Pia) Gnechi Ruscone (24.1.1877-9.12.1914),

I was cut as a result and reacted even more violently, so that the teacher came rushing to separate us. So much for my good intentions!

I remember Grandfather Giuseppe. He was by now old and ill, and spent his last days in bed. One day, I went to visit him in his room. I climbed up on his huge bed and, to his amusement, playfully began to bounce up and down on the mattress next to him, which he found amusing. Unfortunately, however, I either tripped or miscalculated my descent and fell on top of Grandfather, hurting him. The poor man cried out, and I was severely scolded. In the lecture they gave me it was emphasised that I should be very careful, because Grandfather was weak and ill. I felt terribly bad about having accidentally hurt him.

A few days later he died, and I was convinced that it was my fault. I was assailed by a sense of guilt, and my parents spent many days trying to convince me that Grandfather had not died because of the bump I had given him on his bed.

Father lived in Desio for nine years with his family.

We grew up with the run of a large house with a large garden. We ran, in fact, somewhat wild, having no idea whatsoever about how to behave in the city. Whenever we were taken there, we invariably caused great embarrassment. Egidio relieved himself against a shop-window in Via Manzoni, as if it were a tree in the garden. Marco, while passing by the Duomo in the tram, exclaimed excitedly: «Mamma, Mamma, look, what a lovely castle!». In the trams we swung on the metal supports as if they were monkey bars.

In Desio we were very much in the public eye. The factory came in handy when work had to be done on the house. Plumbers, electricians or carpenters came immediately and worked excellently, and furniture was moved with the company lorry.

At the same time, there were obligations and responsibilities; if one of the factory workers (who were mostly women) had problems at home, with her husband, she came to confide in my mother and ask her to intervene, as if she were the mother of all the workers.

daughter of Ercole and Maria Sessa⁶⁶.

Pia spoke very good German. When the couple got married and had children, however, Giuseppe told her that he would rather they learned to speak English. At home, therefore, during the day English was spoken, but when Giuseppe came home in the evening, so as not to tire him, everyone spoke Italian.

After the birth of her fourth child (Rodolfo), Pia was told by the gynaecologist that she should not have any more. She went on to have two more, however, and eventually died of

⁶⁶ Giuseppe was resident in Via Brera, nos. 18–20, and belonged to the Carmine parish; Pia, who was also born in Milan, lived in n. 8 Via Gesù and belonged to the Parish of San Fedele.

consequences from the births. Pia had one kidney removed and the other became diseased. She was diagnosed with pyelitis and taken to a kidney expert in Turin, and there she died, twelve years after her wedding.

She was a likeable, lively and intelligent woman. She was also a music lover and a member of the Symphonic Concert Society and the Quartet Society.



Maria Pollastri, the linen maid, known in the family as «Dumb Maria», who went to work for my father after my grandfather died.

The household staff

We musn't forget the household staff, who followed the family to Via Brera, Desio and Parravicino. The cornerstone of the staff was the cook, Adele Malberti, a local woman from Desio. She was indeed an extraordinary cook; not only did she know how to prepare almost any dish, but she also organised lunches and receptions for a large number of guests (up to 36 people seated at table). In those days it was unheard of to employ outside help. In addition to this, she assisted Aunt Mamà in dressing and did her hair. Moreover, since Aunt Mamà was afraid of sleeping alone, whenever her sister Fanny was not there to sleep with her, Adele the cook took her place, sleeping next to her in the double bed.

Then there was the chauffeur, Peppino, also extremely competent. The family saw little of him, as he spent most of his time travelling with Grandfather.

Third in order of ability were a succession of various waiters, of which the longest-lasting and most well-remembered was Dante, who had the habit of talking to Aunt Mamà (except, of course, when he waited at table) with a toothpick in his mouth. One day she told him: «Listen, Dante, you must stop talking with a toothpick in your mouth; it's not nice!» The next day he appeared again with a toothpick in his mouth and, when Aunt Mamà scolded him, he replied: «But it's not a toothpick, it's a match!.»

The rest of the staff was permanent. The most famous waiter was Angelo Tassan, who was extremely attached to the household. He claimed to be able to recognise the voices of everyone in the family instantly on the telephone, which naturally gave rise to a number of practical telephone jokes on my father's part, who succeeded in convincing him that he was someone else.

After he left us, he set up his own business, organising lunches and receptions throughout Milan. Whenever someone of the family happened to meet him, he was always extremely jovial, shaking hands and serving them before anyone else. If my mother and father, for example, were not invited to a gathering where he had been called, he took great offence, as if it were a personal affront.

Then there was the so-called Court des Miracles. «Dumb Maria» (Maria Pollastri), who was actually totally deaf and dumb, was in charge of the wardrobes; an intelligent woman, who could lip-read perfectly and spoke in a guttural tone; and we children used to have fun pretending to shout so that she would tell us to be quiet because Grandfather was resting. Aunt Mamà would give her instruc-

The death of Giuseppe

In the last years of his life Giuseppe was often bedridden, as he suffered from gout. In 1947 he had a stroke.

He died in Desio on November 5, 1949, and the news spread to every continent. The American Arthur G. Semo wrote of him that

tions in complete silence in a room full of people, and she would understand perfectly. She lived her last years in a respectable little flat in a house wedged among the gardens of Via Pontaccio, the rent paid by my father and uncles. Dumb Maria's assistant was Ida, who was completely crippled, and limped with her right leg. She had a sister who tatted lace, and who continually offered my father and mother little lace doilies (for money) which they did not want. My parents had a boatload of such things.

Then there was Giacomo, the man who did the heavy, manual chores; he also was lame, but in the left leg, not the right, like Ida. Aunt Mamà used to complain when he worked badly; but also when he worked well, as it proved he was able to. The two crippled servants eventually got married.

From my father's diary (February 26, 1977): «Old Ida Nava Bramani died in Parravicino, of a heart attack. After working in Father's house for many years as a maid, she had married, at a rather late age, Giacomo Nava, like her also of Parravicino and also lame, who worked for us as a scullery-boy and handyman. She was the niece of the old bailiff, and I had known her for around half a century, along with all her family.»

There was the tiny, almost dwarf-like housemaid, Nina. Then there was Cesare, an old servant who had become practically incapable of doing anything in his old age; he stayed on in the house, however, as in those days servants were simply not dismissed. His task was to peel the potatoes and wash the salad, and occasionally he also made coffee. When he died, in December 1941, Father wrote: «In the house in Milan our old Cesare Massironi died, after being with us for perhaps 30 years. He was a native of Calco, and had been a scullery-boy first for Grandmother and later for Father. Recently all he did was wash the rice and the salad and peel the potatoes – he was 70 years old. He was a typical Brianza character, and spoke with the characteristic and expressive language that used to amuse us so much as children.»

There were also many people who worked «free-lance»: the needlework and knitting teacher, who came daily for the girls, the German teacher, the piano teacher, and others. Lastly, there was the permanent English teacher.

Occasionally, the servants also organised gatherings in the servants' quarters, with the permission of the owners. When they were asked who they had invited, they would answer, for example: «The Belgiojosos, the Brivios, the Crespis, etc.», meaning the staff of these important families.



Desio in the 1930s. Photo of the Gavazzi children with all their nurses.

«he was not only a great company leader but also a father to all.» These words from overseas were widely echoed also among the English and the French, and Italians from all walks of life gave a wide-ranging testimony of how greatly and extensively he was mourned.



Giuseppe and Pia Gavazzi.

Inheritance

Giuseppe followed the traditions of the Gavazzi family, and left his inheritance to his children, in equal shares of 2/14 among his daughters and in larger shares (3/14) among the sons.

The interest was divided according to their needs and opportunities. He left, in fact, most of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi shares to Franco, who worked there (at the time, this business was at the height of its success), and the shares in the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company to Rodolfo, who worked there. The shares in the Ambrosian Bank he left to his daughter Giuseppina (thanks to which her husband, Peppino Marioni, joined the Board of Directors of the Bank, and remained there for several decades). Vittoria and her husband, Ernesto Beneduce, chose to refuse the company shares belonging to the Gavazzi family.

Unfortunately, the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company eventually closed down, the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company fell into difficulties and was sold off and the Ambrosian Bank was

brought to a tragic end by Roberto Calvi.

The house in Desio was passed down to the children, with the recommendation that, in its division, it should be assigned only to the males of the family. The heirs sold it almost immediately. It was bought by the Paola di Rosa Girls' Boarding School of the Ancella Nuns' Congregation, who already owned in Via San Pietro, on the opposite side of the garden belonging to the Gavazzi house, a school that my aunts went to as children. And so it was that the Desio house became a boarding school. All the other property and farm buildings owned by the family in Desio were also sold off.

A profile of Giuseppe

Giuseppe occupied a singular and important place in Italian industry, of which he was one of the most prominent figures. He was a captain of industry, technician, and an expert in the organisation of work. He had a naturally appealing character, enormous energy, a great command of details, the very rare faculty of being able to express himself well in both words and writing, a remarkable sense of fairness and the ability to instantly grasp the most salient points of any situation.

He was a skilled technician, an efficient manager and a true industrialist. A genuine creator of large companies and author of initiatives destined to change the lives of those involved in

them, he never boasted of his accomplishments.

When still a young graduate he was responsible for great improvements in the efficiency of the Brioschi, SAEB and Dinamo companies, respectively as Chairman, Board Member and General Director, thanks to his organisational talents and his exceptional technical knowledge.

When, after the First World War, he stopped working in the field of hydroelectric power to dedicate himself wholly to the Italian electrical industry, this new sector, with its enlarged and improved plants, registered a remarkable increase in previously unused work units.

In the context of the Italian wool industry he quickly rose to a very prominent position. Under his guidance, the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company became an important model company with a work force of 9,000, while thousands more workers found employment in the numerous supporting industries he also founded, some of which, like the IAC, were able to supply a large part of the dyes, solvents, fixers and general chemical products required by the national market.

In 1936 he wrote and published a study on the «Application of Substitute Fibres in Woollen Textiles», in response to the government policy of decreasing the importation of wool from abroad.

Vice-President of the International Wool-Manufacturers Federation, he opened new and important outlets in the Italian market. His major successes included, as we have seen, the construction of the Itrans, the trade agreement with the USSR and the international success of the CICE.

Giuseppe was a firm believer in the spirit of co-operation with the workers and made every effort to improve their living and working conditions. Professional schools of spinning, weaving and dyeing, medical clinics, nursery schools for the workers' children, seaside and mountain summer camps and libraries, as well as the setting up of a special fund for training and professional assistance, were the tangible proof of this constant commitment. «If we want to introduce a new atmosphere into an industrial company», he often said, «we must keep the workers informed regarding its progress, to at least the same extent that we keep the shareholders informed. The more they are up to date with the company's situation, the more likely it is that they will take a direct interest in the work. We cannot expect enthusiastic co-operation from mere tools.» To Michel Ghéon, of the Geneva office, who asked his technical opinion regarding the Italian workers, he replied: «The Italian work force, of a special nature, is one of the nation's greatest assets.» The efficacy of Giuseppe's work, however, was mainly the result of his intellectual qualities. His popularity was due to the fact that few men in Italy at that time were able to analyse economic facts and theories so clearly and precisely. It was typical of him, at the conferences he held (and he held many, especially on his return from long journeys or his frequent specialist meetings), to reduce the entire documentation to two or three facts written on a postcard. He explained with the utmost clarity, simplifying each question in his own basic terms and dispensing with all rhetorical treatment.

When, in 1947, he was first struck with the illness that was to claim his life, he was working on an important project that was intended to contribute to finding a solution to the persistent problem of unemployment in Italy. He had often spoken about it with his friends, and

meant to condense and formulate his ideas in a concrete programme – his last gesture of love for his country and its workers, who had always been close to his heart.

Accustomed to taking the human aspect of matters in consideration, he perceived that the Italian economic problem can never be completely solved unless the enormous wealth created through work is properly valued.

Unfortunately, Giuseppe's illness prevented him from concluding this project that would truly have been the crowning achievement of a life dedicated to work.

When he graduated with a gold medal as valedictorian, he could have chosen to carry on the family tradition, most likely by entering the large Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company, where he would have sought satisfaction of a different nature. Giuseppe's studies and temperament, however, led him to try something new.



Giuseppe Gavazzi with Benito Mussolini.

The city of Rome named a street after him, in the Casal dei Pazzi district, near Monte Sacro. In 1953, in Montorio Veronese, a marble bust was erected in his honour, as the founder and first President of SAPEL.

Also in 1953, a new hydroelectric plant in Bessi that supplied power to all the Rossi factories in the Vicenza area was named after him, as was a new research laboratory, opened in the same year in the IAC factory in Piacenza.

Although he was a very prominent figure, Giuseppe had a good, gentle, understanding and simple nature; he placed the energy of his own great mind at the service of an adamant conscience and a pronounced sense of duty.

He produced a steady stream of cultural contributions, in the form of articles, conferences and reports on his travels.

Giuseppe was one of the few Italians to appear in the *Who's Who International* in the years 1947 and 1948.

He was ambitious in an intelligent way. In 1938 he went to Rome to present Mussolini with an autarkic programme for the wool manufacturing sector. This was actually an excuse to make himself noticed, using a subject that was of known interest to Mussolini.

He was a versatile person, taking an interest also in constructions and inventions. He conceived and submitted to the Mayor a plan for supplying heating to the whole city of Milan – a type of heating system, today known as «district heating», with a centralised installation and underground pipes carrying hot water. This project would have meant saving on overall costs and the advantage of supplying heating to the very many homes that at the time were without it.

He designed and built – in the Formazza Valley – the first hydroelectric plant using channels formed by waterfalls in place of external piping. This plant was later claimed by Ettore Conti as his own creation.

Some said that Giuseppe was a tiresome man, too serious, too industrious, too faithful to duty. He was left a widower at the age of 37 (his wife died in 1914, when his children were still very young – the youngest, Vittoria, was only three months old) and threw himself into his work, which became his whole life.

His children were looked after by his sister Ernestina (Aunt Mamà), the widow of Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso, who adored her brother and ran his household for him.

At home Giuseppe did not assert his authority. In the family he gave the impression of being somewhat detached. A deeply religious man, he remained true to the memory of his wife, whom he had loved dearly. Perhaps, however, he interpreted religion in the form of conscience⁶⁷.

Apparently, he had considered marrying Bicetta Dalumi, a cousin who worked for him as a very efficient secretary, but his sisters had convinced him to change his mind. After his mother and Aunt Mamà advised him against marrying Bicetta (a union which, in any case, would not have been very passionate), he opted for chastity, for the sake of his religious convictions.

He had, therefore, exceptional self-control and developed his intelligence in his work. In many other aspects, however, he remained somewhat disconnected with the world. One day, a year or two before his brother Felice passed away, Giuseppe went to visit him where he was staying on the island of Capri, in hopes that the climate might improve his poor health. Ada greeted him – dressed obviously to suit the environment – with sandals on her feet. When Giuseppe returned home he told the family all about his visit, mentioning, as the most striking detail of his stay, the red nail varnish on Ada's toenails. His youngest daughter, Vittoria, told him it was a normal thing to do and the fashion of the time. He replied: *«te diset de bon?»* («You think so?»).

Before the First World War, Giuseppe drove a French Clément Bayard motor car, which was considered a first-class vehicle; its tyres, however, were continually going flat or blowing out. One day he arrived home late, and Pia asked him what had happened. He answered that he had had to change the tyres four times during a relatively short drive.

He would tell Aunt Mamà everything about his work, and she was not sparing with her comments and suggestions (which he, in fact, often followed).

His relationship with his children was filtered through their aunt – a fact that infuriated my father Franco. Aunt Mamà defended herself by saying that, if it had not been for her, he would have had a step-mother, to which Father would reply that at least she would have had the right, whereas his aunt was an intruder.

He declared, moreover, that Aunt Mamà's was «the longest-lasting dictatorship in history». His relationship with her always remained difficult.

The daughter of Giuseppe, Vittoria, who married Ernesto Beneduce, said she had four parents – her father, Uncle Simone, Aunt Mamà and Uncle Felice.

Ernestina used to say that a man like Giuseppe, who was so important but of small stature⁶⁸, ought to have a more impressive appearance, be more conspicuous. He obviously did not consider it problem, and made light of the idea.

⁶⁷ His energies were basically divided between the Church and his work. The director of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company, Albonico, used to say to his daughter Piera: *«Ecco, il so papà el se ammalà perché andava trop in gesa. Se invece l'andava con una quai bella donmetta in let, casa e così, l'era mei»* («Your father has fallen ill because he spends too much time in Church. He would do better to go to bed with a beautiful woman instead!.»)

⁶⁸ Giuseppe was 1.60 m tall.

*Poetry written between 1911 and 1914**by Pia Gavazzi Gnechi Ruscone about her children*

Siblings Piera (1902-1998), Giuseppina (1906-1998), Rodolfo (1908-1995) and Franco Gavazzi (1904-1984).

I promised you a poem
Then let it be so
This evening I will tell you
Everything I know

Piera is a little hunched
And looks just like an owl
Her arms are always up
Her jowls always down

Franco is a great trumpet
The way he deafens people –
Mum listen, listen Gina,
Look here, look there!
And his brain, oh what a shame,
He always uses it in vain.

Then there is Giuseppina
Who at nine in the morning
Briskly, briskly goes off to school
With her apron and her satchel
But she takes a good long while
To pull herself together.

Sister Romina, Sister Tiziana
Young Mother, old Mother
Of the convents and nunneries
Doorkeeper and charwoman.

Look there, what a lovely face
That is our Rodolfone
A big plate of risotto
And he is satisfied.

Giovanna is a real darling
Good and sweet and pretty too.

There is Gina, who has special
Protection from St. Vitale
For darning the holes
In the children's socks.

There is Miss Lillian, who really
With her face a little strict
Puts everyone in awe
With perfect education.

And Mother and Father
Are already perfect as we know
So I'll say nothing of them
But we'll greet them all together.

Aunt Mamà would tell him: «*Ecco, ti Giusepp con tutta la tua intelligenza che te ghè, te gavariset bisogn de vess un pò pusè altin*» («You know, Giuseppe, as clever as you are, you ought to be a little taller»), and Giuseppe would reply: «*Sì, meterò un foi de carta sota i pè.*» («Well, then I'll put a sheet of paper in my shoes.»)

Aunt Mamà clearly wanted him to present himself more elegantly, believing that this would help him in his career. Giuseppe proved, however, that he had no need for additional physical stature.

He was offered the possibility of taking the noble surname of Biella, from his late mother's family, but he rejected the idea.

Thanks to his mother, to himself and to other members of the family, St. Joseph was considered a special patron saint of the Gavazzi household and his name-day, San Giuseppe, was celebrated with great enthusiasm⁶⁹.

CARLO GAVAZZI (1877-1944)

He was born on March 19, 1877. Graduated in chemistry, as the testamentary heir of his brother Giulio, the late Podestà of Desio (1929), he financed the erection of a monument in honour of Pope Achille Ratti, Pious XI, who was from Desio. The statue, designed by Albert Dressler (1930), was placed in the Cathedral square.

A great reception was organised in the Gavazzi Villa (previously the Bonomi-Cereda Villa) in Via Bovisasca, Desio, which was attended by all the wealthy families and local authorities. The villa was furnished temporarily with carpets, paintings and valuable objects belonging to the family. A bachelor, he lived at n. 14 Via Meravigli, in Milan, on the premises of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company headquarters and in the Desio villa where, however, he seldom went.

Entrepreneurial activities

He was in charge of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Company, overseeing the factory works and the technical side in Desio. As a chemist, he focussed on the company dyeworks, of which he was manager.

During the course of 1927 the Hat Manufacturers' Union of Monza had had an increase of capital from one half to one million lira. The encouraging business trend in this particular business in Monza had brought in new shareholders, including the new chairman Carlo, who had been a shareholder of the Frigerio company. The majority of the shares were in the names of the two brothers, Carlo Attilio and Giuseppe Vago. By the end of the year 1927, however, the company registered a heavy loss in profits, since a great quantity of foreign

⁶⁹ From the diary of Franco: «St. Joseph! *State luncheon* in Via Brera, with innumerable relatives. As a joint present we gave Father a recording of Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*. It would be interesting to determine how many Giuseppees and Giuseppinas there are among my relatives; I will make an attempt: 1, Father; 2, Mother; 3, Great-grandfather Gniecchi; 4, Great-grandmother Gniecchi; 5, Grandmother Gavazzi; 6, Grandfather Rossi; 7, Giuseppina; 8, Peppino Marioni, her husband; 9, my brother-in-law, Giuseppe Majnoni; 10, Giuseppe of Rodolfo, my nephew; 11, Aunt Tacoli; 12, Uncle Belgiojoso, and 13, Giuseppino Chierichetti – all in one family, and I may have forgotten someone! St. Joseph is therefore truly the household Saint!»

credit turned out to be irrecoverable, and the revaluation of the lira had blocked exports. In May 1928 the capital was lowered to 350,000 lira, and later raised again to 700,000 lira, thanks to the undersigning of new shares by the Board of Directors. Carlo had seen signs of recovery on the part of the international market, and, in actual fact, the financial year of 1929 closed with a slight profit. Due to the worldwide crisis, however, the following year closed with a loss of 63,000 lira. Consequently, in January 1932 a composition before bankruptcy was asked of the creditors.

Carlo's passion for numismatics

Carlo was a well-known numismatist. His collection of Italian coins was the most important in Italy, along with that of the King. It was said that whenever the King came to Milan, Carlo made a point of going away, so as to avoid the risk of Victor Emanuel asking him to sell a certain famous and unique coin that he knew the King, also an enthusiast and collector, was interested in.

The death of Carlo and his inheritance

When Carlo died, on August 27, 1944, his cousin Franco said: «His was a long agony, because for many months he did not understand anything, nor perhaps even recognised people. It will be interesting to see how his enormous wealth will be distributed, especially for his heirs, of which, unfortunately, I am not one. I myself am interested in knowing, however, if they intend keeping or letting go his extensive property in Desio, on which I myself for a long time have set my sights... covetously. How wonderful it would be if we appointed that large house – which none of the heirs would ever dream of living in or putting to good use – to be used by one or two of the town's charity institutions! And that splendid garden, how instantly it would solve the difficult problem of where to set up the girls' orphanage! If the matter could be worked out in the way I mean, that is, if the Company bought out all this part of the inheritance, for the rest – including the famous coin collection – let the heirs fight all they want, I don't care for any of it.»

Later, after the funeral, Franco wrote in his diary: «This morning there was poor Carlo's funeral, with a great influx of people, both local and from outside; the factory remained closed, so that the workers might be able to attend the service. To be quite frank, there is a certain festive air which, especially in the villages, forms the logical and necessary accompaniment to a funeral of one of our class. In church a Low Mass was celebrated by the parish priest, after which the coffin was taken on to Milan in the hearse. Many of the mourners were taken to the city in a special tram, while the closest relatives proceeded ... with the reading of the Will. The Will itself was very strangely drawn up and obviously inspired by an ancient and still-unquenched animosity, born of a family quarrel – the heirs were his brother Antonio, the children of Piero, his sister Adele Bigatti and the children of Egidia Cramer. He excluded (or rather, silenced with a ridiculous legacy of 400,000 lira each) his sisters Angela Dell'Orto, Letizia Pigni and Titina Dal Verme. The famous coin collection is tied up for 10 years and as of now divided among the heirs into 4 parts. I myself was also left very disap-

pointed, having hoped to see a few million (out of the 200 or so – in current value – that Carlo must have left) given to local charities, while the Will mentions the subject generally, without specifying. Ettore Dell’Orto really got the worst of it and I can understand him.» Carlo left his famous collection to Antonio, Adele, the children of Egidia and the children of Piero. And so it was eventually scattered, and almost all of it was sold. Fifty years later, many numismatists would proudly display a coin «from the Gavazzi collection», perhaps purchased in an auction in New York.

SIMONE GAVAZZI (1878-1963)

Simone was born in Desio on September 4, 1878. Simone married Maria Trabattoni (b. in Monza in 1880, d. in Desio in 1906). He proved to be a generous and gallant husband. Before they married, she fell ill with tuberculosis, but he refused to abandon her. She died two years after the wedding, at only 26 years of age.

The First World War

Like his brothers, Simone did not fight in the First World War. Some of them had a weak constitution (Luigi died in 1917), others were involved in industries which were also used to supply the military; Giuseppe, for example, was an engineer working on the construction of hydroelectric plants. However, in Desio, Enrico Galbiati, head of the Desio Socialists, president of the Emancipation Co-operative, sub-editor of the newspaper *La Brianza* and town councillor, continually accused the Gavazzi family of having «draft-dodgers» among its younger generation: «all the young and strong directors of the Gavazzi company can be seen walking around town sporting armbands.»

The Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Company

After graduating, Simone took the post of Chairman in the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Company, which had its head offices at n. 28, Corso Magenta, in Milan. Within the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi, Egidio’s sons worked mostly in the Milan offices, overseeing the administration and the commercial sector, while the sons of Pio (Carlo and Giulio), concentrated mainly on the Desio factory and the workers.

Simone, and even more so Luigi, were the most worthy successors of Egidio in the running of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company, seeing that their elder brother Giuseppe had chosen to follow his own path.

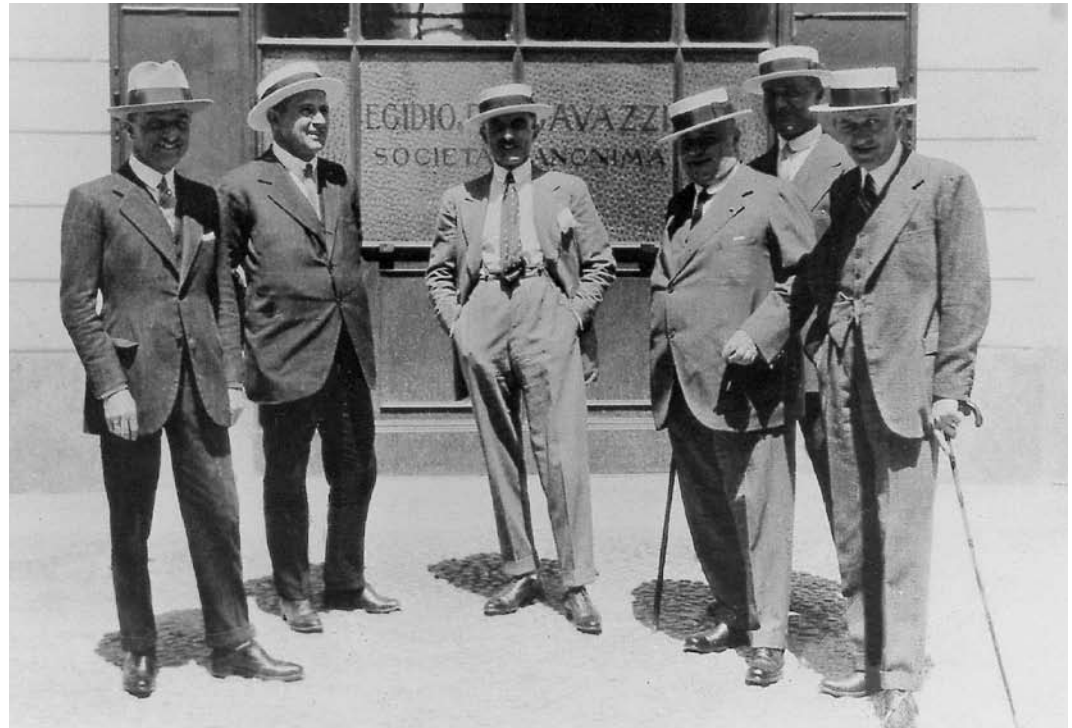
Luigi was more attentive in the management of the factory; he lived in Desio and was a good worker. Simone was more an administrative and commercial type and worked mostly in the Milan offices.

He mainly supervised, and with great success, the «umbrella» sector, which was at the time the cornerstone of the company. Carlo oversaw the «miscellaneous» department, Gino handled



Simone Gavazzi
(1878-1963).

Partners and managers of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi in the 1920s. From left: Felice Gavazzi, Piero Gavazzi, Simone Gavazzi, Antonio Gavazzi, Gino Gavazzi (behind) and Luigino Lado.



the administration; Luigi, as we have mentioned above, was in charge of the factory and social welfare activities, and Felice concentrated on the commercial aspect. With regard to Pio's side, Antonio, although he worked in the company, was in charge of nothing in particular. Piero also worked in the business without specific duties and responsibilities. Giulio concentrated on secondary activities (as well as non-company activities, such as his position as Podestà of Desio). The man who was most dedicated to the company was undoubtedly Simone, who, in fact, became its Managing Director.

Simone's relationship with his cousins in the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi was far from good, especially with Antonio, with whom he shared his office but was not on speaking terms. A firm Liberal in his conception of the market and the economy, he was broad-minded and enlightened.

The dispute against «war trappings», expressed unanimously in the Bergamo conference of January 1919 (which was attended by 700 representatives of the most prominent companies of Italy), concealed other contrasts that were by no means secondary. These different trends had already emerged in the answers of certain Milanese industrialists in a questionnaire on «post-war preparation», put forward by the newspaper *Corriere Economico*. On this occasion, Simone declared openly that «it cannot be repeated enough that while the interference of the Government in industrial affairs may prove useful to certain shrewd industrialists, it is generally fatal to all forms of industrial activity.»

After the funeral of Enrico Santambrogio, the very competent Vice Chairman of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company (1938), Franco wrote in his diary: «A group of us followed right behind the coffin - Aunt Mamà, Uncle Simone, Margherita and I; next to us, a little apart, were Antonio Gavazzi with Uberto; Bonali (manager of the weaving factory) moved from one group of owners to the other, in his eternal function as *liason*».

In around 1938, with the co-operation of Albonico and Grebler, a printworks was set up on the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company premises.

Albonico was very close to the Gavazzi family, whom he visited regularly. He entered the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company in 1905 and died in 1946 at the age of 68, having worked right up to his last day. Under his guidance, the dyeworks had achieved great renown.

In the 1930s the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company had an important branch in Brooklyn for its US customers, but in another period, exports to England accounted for the main part of the family's wealth.

Egidio Dell'Orto was Chairman of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company until his death in 1939, when he was replaced by Riccardo Dell'Orto, «the true King Log».

Simone won a famous lawsuit against the Silk Board, being successfully defended by three «princes» of the law court.

In addition to Bonali, in 1940 Annibale Malberti also held the position of director at the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company.

In November 1941 the company donated 300,000 lira to the Hospital of Desio.

In 1943, with the bombings of Milan, the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi offices were moved to Desio, where they were set up not in the factory, but in the Gavazzi house in Via San Pietro.

In 1947 the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company had a house built for its workers. Its construction was assigned to a newly graduated engineer, Giuseppe Majnoni d'Intignano, my uncle.

In 1948 a nursery school was founded for the children of the employees.

From the diary of Franco Gavazzi, dated December 20, 1953: «Last Sunday 13th, in the morning, I went to the Opera Theatre to attend the awards ceremony for the senior workers. Out of little more than 800 throughout the province of Milan who received prizes, 60 belonged to our Company, which is a good sign of merit, for the workers and employers alike.»

By this time, the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company had too many relatives among the shareholders and staff, as well as on the Board of Directors (Simone, Antonio, Uberto, Franco, Pietro, Pio and (from 1955 onwards) Giovanni Gavazzi, Ettore Dell'Orto, who was Chairman in '50, his son Egidio, Luigino and Ignazio Lado, Piero Dal Verme and Gino Bigatti).

In this period there was also a female cousin on the Board of Directors, Eugenia Pirinoli Speroni, who represented a group of descendants of Carlo Gavazzi, the elder brother of Egidio and Pio. Simone was far from over-zealous at work. His nephew Franco used to say that Simone had the spirit of a true industrialist, a quality he did not attribute to his father Giuseppe, whom he defined an excellent engineer.

The Bank of Desio

In 1935, after the death of his brother Gino, Simone took his place on the Board of Directors of the Bank of Desio and became its Chairman. He remained in this office until 1939, and in 1941 went back to being a Board member.

Tombstone of Simone
Gavazzi (Town Cemetery,
Desio).



Extending his fathers' heritage
For more than fifty years
Doctor Simone Gavazzi
gave his all
To the family firm
—

Blessed with a deep sense of fairness
Simple in his speech
Always ready to listen to the needy
he put his faith in his workers
and reaped dedication and affection in return
—

During his long and painful decline
his piety instead itself refined
in the spirit of humble charity

b. Desio September 4, 1878
d. S.ta Margherita September 8, 1983

A profile of Simone

He was closely involved in the family life of his brother Giuseppe, although he did not allow himself to be dominated by Aunt Mamà.

Since his wife had died quite young, he had become very close to his sister Fanny, who was herself also a widow. He used to refer to himself as «Uncle Purscel» (Milanese for «pig»), which yields everything after its death, unlike «Uncle Caval» («horse»), which gives everything while it is still living.

He was an intelligent man, but was limited by his greed, judging everything in terms of money.

He had a good sense of humour, but he was rather miserly and a real fanatic about saving money, never spending as much as one lira on himself. In Santa Margherita instead of a lampshade he used a horrendous, ugly object that allowed him to save a little on electricity. At home he used fluorescent lighting, because it was cheaper.

He had a great liking for beautiful women, who were he considered such as long as they had «straight legs.»

In the family it was said that Simone, having lost his wife at a young age, used to complain that he could not live without a woman. He therefore set about finding himself a companion. However, this meant extra expenses, and so he made an agreement with his brothers-in-law, Mario Trabattoni, who was also penny-pinching and in need of company, to share the girlfriend between them – one day for Simone and one day for Trabattoni.

From the diary of Franco Gavazzi, January 18-19, 1962: «I am going to pay a visit (in Santa Margherita Ligure) to Uncle Simone in this rapid – and perhaps fatal – decline of his. In spite of the many contrasts there have been between us during my life, I want to heed only the voice of kinship and the feelings of solidarity that have always bound me to my family.» «I was quite struck by the sight of him, because I had not seen him since September – he can hardly speak and cannot move at all. He is very alert, however, and even asked me (with great difficulty) about Egidio and his work.»

Simone died in Santa Margherita Ligure on September 8, 1963.

In 1965 the Simone's brother-in-law died. Again from my father Franco's diary: «Our old friend Mario Trabattoni has passed away – he must have been around ninety. He was the brother of Aunt Maria Gavazzi, wife of Uncle Simone, who died around half a century ago. He leaves neither heirs nor relatives – I believe that his sizeable inheritance will go to the family of his old maid.»

ADELE BIGATTI GAVAZZI (1880-1972)

Adele was born in Desio on April 15, 1880. In Desio, on October 8, 1904, Adele married Antonio Bigatti, who came from a family of jewellers.

Antonio died on November 17, 1957. Adele died 15 years later, on November 14, 1972.

RICCARDO GAVAZZI (1881-1919)

He was born on October 7, 1881. Riccardo graduated in Engineering from the Polytechnic of Milan. He remained a bachelor all his short life. He worked in the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company, where he had a seat on the Board of Directors.

He lived in n.14 Via Meravigli, in Milan.

In Melzo, where his brother Piero was Podestà, and where there was a Gavazzi factory, there is a street named Viale Riccardo Gavazzi, probably after him; his uncle (1.8.1836-15.2.1903) was also named Riccardo.

GIOVANNI BATTISTA GAVAZZI (GINO) (1882-1935)

He was born on January 9, 1882. Giovanni Battista was a university graduate, landowner and «Cavaliere». In 1912 he lived at n.21 Via Bigli, in Milan.

After the death of his brother Luigi, he took over the management of several of his businesses. He efficiently supervised the management of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company.

In 1924 he took over the chairmanship of the Gas Company of Desio from his elder brother Giuseppe⁷⁰.

He was the first President of the Women's Health Clinics of Carate Brianza and Monza. In 1926 he became Board member and Chairman of the Bank of Desio.⁷¹

He was «a refined and handsome man». When he married, although remaining very attached to his brothers, he became the dressè of the Pirelli family.

He died suddenly of a heart attack on the day of the engagement of his nephew Franco Gavazzi with Margherita Majnoni d'Intignano: April 21, 1935.

The Milan Football Club

A century ago, soccer in Italy was not at all like the game we know today. It was indulged in as a hobby, as a challenge or merely to fill out the numbers.

In early 20th century clippings from the sports newspaper Gazzetta dello Sport we find the name of Gino Gavazzi mentioned as a member of the Polytechnic team.

In those days, with the exception of a few wealthy natives who amused themselves by testing their mettle in diporto (Italianism for 'sport'), and professional British players living in Milan, the ranks of the Red-and-Blacks were mostly made up of students from the Polytechnic and the Cattaneo Institute.

In the years 1901 and 1902, in fact, the Milan students' team was proclaimed the winner of the academic football title by the Ministry of Education.

⁷⁰ The electricity branch had just recently been hived off.

⁷¹ He was, therefore, the first chairman of the bank when it was transformed into a joint-stock company and became Gavazzi property.

The wedding of Mr. Antonio Bigatti with Miss Adele Gavazzi

This morning was blowing a breeze
So full of the dust of confetti
That the cords of my lyre tightened
Though it be no longer worth a cent.

But the sound that it gave me is the same,
My dear newlyweds – happiness and love;
So as not to neglect giving little kisses
Do make, now and then, a little baby.

On this matter, actually, we should be glad
that this couple
Have reflected well on they were doing,
Why should we hurry, only to tire ourselves?

In any case, at this pace, eventually
These young Bigattis of ours will spin them-
selves into
A cocoon that will last a hundred years.

Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
Desio, October 8, 1904

Nozze del Signor Antonio Bigatti colla Signorina Adele Gavazzi

Stamattina tirava un ventisell
De polver de benis insci impregnaa
Che i cordett de la lira s'iin tiraa,
De la mia lira che la vaar pu on ghell.

Ma el soon che la me dà, l'è semper quell
Car i me spòos; amor, felicità.
E per no lassà andà i basitt trasaa
De tant in tant on quei bagaiottel.

Quest chi del rest l'e el caas de ves content
Che sti spòos han faa i robb con riflission.
Perché hem de corr? per fas vegni l'affann?

Tant che andand de sto pass in conclusion
Sti noster Bigattitt filaran dent
Una galetta de duràa cent'ann.

Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
Desio, 8 ottobre 1904



Gino Gavazzi (1882-1935).



A beautiful image of the Pirelli Villa (previously owned by Piero Pirelli) at San Vito di Luvinate (Varese).

On the Milan team, besides Gino, there were other members of well-known Milanese families. These included Antonio Dubini (Senior), Giulio Ermolli, Alberto Pirelli, Angelo Parodi Delfino and many others. The Milan team was founded in 1899, and the Pirelli family was one of its original sponsors.

The marriage with Rosa Pirelli

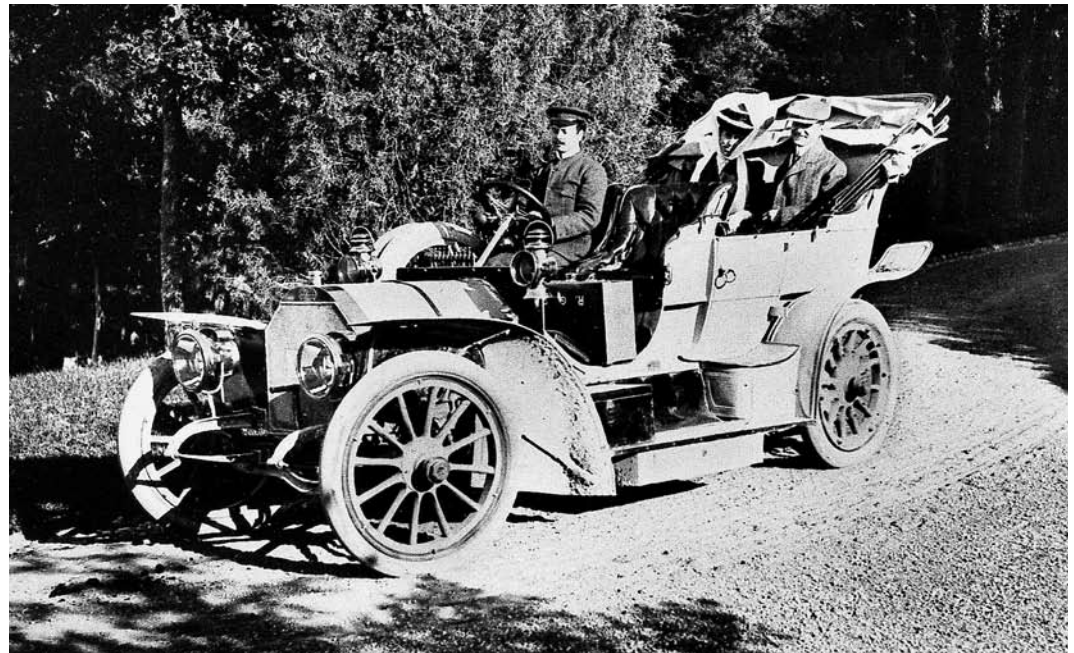
In 1906 he married Rosa Pirelli (29.3.1884 – 30.6.1962) who, shortly after the death of her husband, announced that she herself was not feeling at all well, and spent the rest of her life, which came to several decades, in bed⁷².

He tended to humour his valetudinary wife in her eccentricities. Once she went as far as ordering a special train to take her to the coast.

In actual fact, his wife spent her whole lifetime nursing her weak heart. For many years she did not even leave her bed (so as to avoid tiring herself); she was often affectionately made fun of by her relatives, since she did not appear at all ill. This must, in fact, have been a family obsession, as her brother, Giorgio (whose name was never mentioned in the Pirelli family), had the same characteristic.



Gino Gavazzi with his wife Rosa Pirelli (1884-1962) on their wedding day and (right) leaving for their honeymoon.



⁷² There already existed connections (not through kinship) between the Gavazzis and the Pirellis dating back to the pioneering days of Giovanni Battista Pirelli (b. in Varenna in 1848, d. in Milan on 1932), who was the founder of the Pirelli industry and who had met the Gavazzis while attending the School of Mathematics.

In the correspondence between the same Pirelli and Alberto Riva there are many references to the Gavazzis. In a letter dated March 29, 1871, written from Rapperswill, Riva refers to a common friend, Walter, a visitor to Italy and guest of the Gavazzi family; in another letter, dated May 25, 1871, again written by Riva from Rapperswill, he states: «I am in exactly the same situation as the Gavazzis and Carganigo; the example of these two, who continue to increase the number of their looms, encourages me to take the risk; ... the Gavazzis remain, and although their production cannot yet boast great renown on the market of Como, nevertheless they must be running their business well, judging by the growing importance of their factory. On the other hand, however, you must remember those that were not successful, of which there are a great number here in Switzerland, again with regard to the development of this industry...».

From the diary of Franco Gavazzi, February 23, 1947: «The great news of the day is that Aunt Rosa walked on her own legs as far as Father's living room, after years and years of never leaving her bedroom!»

She well knew how to cultivate her image – fine linens and two nurses, in addition to her personal domestic staff. She demanded frequent and punctual visits, at the end of which the nurse would appear to announce that the «audience» was over. She was informed about everything and conversed on subjects such as theatre performances and shows of all kinds, which she wouldn't have dreamt of seeing.

She was quick-witted and intelligent. It was she who, from her bedroom, cultivated the right relations and managed to direct some of the Pirelli inheritance to her own children.

She travelled in ambulances. One day, little Egidio (Franco's son) saw her arriving in Desio; looking at her on a stretcher he exclaimed: «But she's alive!»

She lived in Via Principe Amedeo (today Via Turati), in Milan, and later in Via Borgonuovo, in a rented apartment (the Gavazzis, in fact, did not believe in owning their own homes because this meant tying up capital, which grows only when it circulates. Felice, Simone and Gino did not, in fact, own their homes).

Rosa was accustomed to spending the month of September in Via San Pietro, in Desio; she was determined not to give up her stays in Desio, where she was perfectly at ease with her late husband's family.

From the diary of Franco Gavazzi, June 30, 1962: «While I was lodging at the Club for the wedding reception organised by Ricky Resta in honour of the two newlyweds (Uberta Resta and Riccardo Gavazzi), Teresa Cicogna entered with an almost festive air to announce that Aunt Rosa had died! Naturally, I rushed to Via Borgonuovo no. 24, where the children and the sons and daughters-in-law were all gathered around the coffin. Although her death had been expected for many years, everyone feels enormous grief, because Aunt Rosa took up, and still holds, an important place in the life of all of us.»

FELICE GAVAZZI (1883-1940)

Felice was the ninth child of Egidio and Giuseppina (of the aristocratic Biella family). He was born on April 2, 1883 in Via Meravigli (Gavazzi house), in Milan. He was named after his uncle, Felice Biella.

Felice studied without any particular enthusiasm until he did his military service in the regiment of the Dragoons Cavalry.

Of a somewhat frail constitution, in the military he was under the protection of his uncle (on his mother's side) Vittorio Alfieri (General, Senator and Minister of War in 1917-18) and did not take an active part in the fighting of the First World War.

He had lived for a long time in the large building at n. 18 Via Brera, with his mother.



Postcards of the Pirelli Company illustrated with the typical graphics of the period.



Santa Caterina di Vernate (Binasco). Farming property owned by Rosa Pirelli and run by her son Giovanni, who had a degree in agriculture.



Felice Gavazzi (1883-1940).



Felice Gavazzi and his wife Ada Terragni (1902-2000).

Work and entrepreneurial activities

Throughout his life he worked with his brothers in the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company, first at n. 14 Via Meravigli and later at n. 48 Corso Magenta.

In 1933 he became Board member of the Bank of Desio.

While his father Egidio was still alive and the office was still in Via Meravigli, he used to walk to the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi offices with Felice on his right and Simone on his left; they looked like three brothers.

He was placed in charge of relations with foreign clients, who he frequently visited in Germany, France and German Switzerland, being always received warmly by all.

The marriage with Ada Terragni

On December 29, 1929, he married Ada Terragni, who was born in Tortona on October 14, 1902 and was almost twenty years younger than her husband.

Felice was eclipsed by his wife's powerful personality. She was small in stature, but pretty, attractive and intelligent. One day, Felice wanted to introduce her to his friend and cousin, Count Emilio Turati, who had a beautiful villa on Lake Garda, at Gardone Riviera. The couple arrived by car. Ada was wearing a pretty black-and-white checked dress. When Turati saw her and was introduced to her, he exclaimed: «*Oh, che bell quadrettin!*» («Oh, what a lovely quadrettin!») [Translator's Note: «Quadrettino» means both «square» and «little picture», so the comment could be interpreted as meaning «pretty as a picture», or the less daring «oh, what a lovely dress».]

The family (all very practical-minded) criticised Felice for these extravagant expenses, which they claimed would ruin him, and blamed Ada, whom he adored. His brothers sympathised with him but he was «Felice» (meaning «happy»).

His wife was initially somewhat snubbed by the family, since she had been his lover before marrying him. She allowed herself to be courted easily. Intelligent and sensitive as she was, however, she succeeded in transforming herself completely.

Ada obtained a pilot's license in the 1930s. She worked with the Red Cross during the war, aboard a hospital ship that sailed to Tripoli, where it even came under a bomb attack. After working as a Red Cross nurse, she settled in Desio.

In 1944 she went to Capri. When she moved, Franco Gavazzi wrote in his diary: «Aunt Mamà and Aunt Fanny are amazed that Ada, although taking with her almost all her wardrobe, has left as many as 24 dresses and 18 pairs of shoes in Desio. Evidently, they have the different ideas about the nature of the wardrobe of an elegant lady.»

Her niece, Giovanna Riva, is «credited» with a famous faux pas. Ada was speaking about her mother-in-law (Donna Peppina), and expressing admiration for her, especially for the fact that she had affectionately welcomed into the family a daughter-in-law who was rather undesirable because of her past history. Giovanna exclaimed: «Ada, don't be so hard on yourself!» Unfortunately, it was not to herself that Ada had been referring, but to Andreina Costa Kuliscioff.

She funded, with large sums of money, the Felice Gavazzi Nursery School of Desio, which was established after her husband's death.

With her financial contribution the ancient villa which housed the Health Clinic of Carate Brianza (the Zucchi Clinic) was restored and renovated, and re-named «Villa Ada» in her honour. She was long a member of the boards of the Zucchi Clinics of Monza and Carate. She founded the Felice Gavazzi Nursery School in Via Don Minzoni, Desio, and the Felice Gavazzi Alpine Home in Teglio (Sondrio). To both of these she gave generous donations.

For many years she had a charming apartment in Santa Margherita, which she continued to visit regularly even after selling it.

In Milan she lived at n. 8 Via Vigoni. In 1952 she bought some apartments in the building at n. 7 Via Stoppani, in Milan. The building was the undivided property of the heirs of Egidio Gavazzi (1846–1910), who in that year had decided to sell it. Ada chose to keep the property, no longer as a joint estate, but in the form of a shop and a storage room.

At the time of her death, at the ripe old age of 97, she had almost 500 descendants on the Gavazzi side of the family⁷³.

The death of Felice and his testament

In frail health since his childhood, he was struck down with a severe nervous disorder. In April of 1940 he donated 300,000 lira to the Charity of Don Orione, hoping to be healed. From the diary of Franco Gavazzi, his nephew, April 16, 1940: «This morning I went with Pietro to see the Cardinal Archbishop, on behalf of Uncle Felice, who wants to ask for a special blessing, and at the same time make a large offering to the Archbishop. Since it all has to be kept secret from Ada (!!) and since, at the same time, Uncle Felice cannot climb stairs, it will be necessary for the Cardinal to give him an appointment right in the «Palazzo» and to agree to meet Uncle Felice at the foot of the staircase. The Archbishop received us very kindly and even offered to come and visit the patient himself; in the end, however, we arranged the meeting as planned (otherwise, Heaven help us!), and the interview will take place on Thursday at 3.00 pm. Rather, His Eminence will come and speak with Uncle Felice in his car, and I hope he will speak those words that are so much more effective than medicines and clinical treatment.»

Felice passed away by degrees in 1939–40.

His nephew Franco remembered him as a kind and generous man. In his will (besides the inheritance he passed on to his wife and his brothers and sisters) Felice left each of his nephews and nieces a sum of 400,000 lira.

Again from Franco's diary, «It seems certain now that Uncle Felice's recent decision to leave his inheritance in equal shares to his nephews and nieces, including the Chierichettis and the Lados, is due to skillful pressure *in extremis* on the part of his notorious sisters. Here, then, is

⁷³ 13 nephews and nieces, 146 in the second generation, 228 in the third generation and 95 in the fourth generation, for a total of 482.

another motive for «gratitude» on our part towards Aunt Mamà and Aunt Fanny. Certainly, Uncle Felice, when speaking with me of his will just a few months ago, only mentioned «13 Gavazzi nephews and nieces» (there are actually 15, but Luigi is in a monastery and Anna Maria in a convent, are therefore do not count). Therefore, at least until that point, he did not intend to include as many as ten more people in his will.»

He also left a considerable sum to the Girls' Orphanage of Desio.

A profile of Felice

Felice adored his father, who used to tease him about his mania for having his shoes made in London and keeping them always perfectly polished; he was nicknamed «the Marquis de la Shoe». When Egidio passed away, Felice, like all the rest of the family, was distraught, and for ten years afterwards he refused to set foot in the room where his father had died, in Via Brera. Finally, his mother Peppina told him, «Felice, take your father's room», and so he did. Just as he was a good cavalryman in the military, in civilian life he proved to be an excellent motorist; he preferred the Lancia, and especially the convertible Lambda, which he liked to drive fast. One day his garage hand, who evidently admired his flair for driving, told him: «*Lu dovaria fa el corridur!*» («You ought to have been a racer!»), to which Felice replied: «*Mi no! Perché dovaria fa il corridur? Mi fo il sciuur!*» («No, why should I be a racing driver? I'd rather be a gentleman!»).

He used to go to Switzerland to pick up the Isotta Fraschini (not the entire car, but only the *chassis*). He would cross the Gottardo Pass into Italy wearing his leather coat with its opossum collar and a cap, and would have the bodywork of the chassis done in Italy. After he had used the car for three or four months, he would sell it. He was convinced, in fact, that it was cheaper to change cars regularly, while they were still almost new; or, alternatively, to keep it as long as humanly possible, for as much as 90,000 kilometres, for example. A happy medium was not appropriate in this case, in his opinion. Ada used to say: «Yes, but you say that also because you have someone to break it in for you!», referring to herself (breaking in the engine was extremely tedious).

He was a very cautious driver, in spite of his love for speed. «In the snow and ice I become a coward», he was known to say. Felice was considered to be a very good driver even by professional racing drivers.

He loved the opera and was a frequent patron of La Scala, where he had season tickets.

He was always elegantly dressed by the best tailors in Milan and bought many accessories in London.

Felice attended horse races and international *grand prix* races, and liked to wager, though only moderately. He was a member of the Lombardy Horseracing Society.

He used to leave his office at the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company at 5.30 pm., after which he often visited antique shops.

He was not fond of going to the Club (unlike his brother-in-law Luigino Lado, who, according to Felice, adored going), but he did attempt to join a Club in London. He enjoyed gambling, however, and was a frequent visitor to the casinos.

Later in life he purchased a small collection of antique paintings, including two remarkable 15th Century Sienese Crucifixions.

He was the most humorous member of the family. He frequently made amusing and good-natured remarks in Milanese dialect.

One day, while travelling to Cremona with Ada, the two found themselves beside a completely dry riverbed with pebbles and stones in view. With them was Letizia Pigni, who said: «This must be the Oglio River», to which Felice answered: «If it is the Oglio, it must be the ‘Oglio Sasso’» [Translator’s note: there is a famous brand of Italian olive oil (or «olio») named Sasso, which also means «stone»].

Senator Treccani used to say jokingly to Felice: «You are a degenerate Gavazzi», and he would accept the remark good-naturedly, because he knew it was said in good faith and that the expression «degenerate» referred to fact that he was more of a «free thinker» than the rest of his family.

GIULIO GAVAZZI (1884-1932)

The son of Pio Gavazzi, Giulio was born on April 30, 1884. He was a bachelor and a university graduate, and was awarded the honorifics of «Commendatore» and «Cavaliere».

At the beginning of the 1920s he took back the control of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Company of Desio from Senator Lodovico, of the Milanese branch of the family, after his father Pio had handed over the management to his cousin when he became too old and tired to continue. In the company, Giulio was a member of the Board of Directors.

At the onset of the First World War (in 1916), Giulio was awarded honorary citizenship in Desio (in spite of heavy opposition from Socialist town councillor Enrico Galbiati) and, as a sign of his appreciation of this honour, he donated the generous sum of 10,000 lira to the Aid Committee in favour of «potential» disabled ex-servicemen.

From 1919 onwards he supported and worked for the Fascist Movement. Later, in 1926, he took his father’s place as Podestà of Desio.

Again in the town of Desio, he was trustee of the silk weaving group at the Fascist Industrial Union, President of the Balilla National Institute, of the Target Shooting Club, of the Home for Chronic Invalids, of the Fire Brigade and of the Green Cross.

In 1926 he became Board member of the Bank of Desio and was a member of the Farming Co-operative of Milan and Surrounding District.

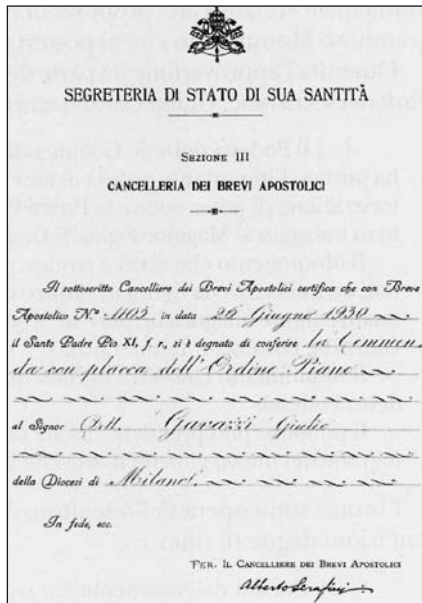
He donated an impressive statue of Pope Pius XI to the city of Desio, the work of the sculptor Dressler, which was erected in the main square in front of the Duomo (Piazza della Conciliazione). He also gave Desio the Hospital and the Pio and Ninetta Gavazzi Home for the Elderly, which was built on a parcel of his own land, and sponsored the Desio Ring Road.



Giulio Gavazzi
(1884-1932).

Monument to Pope Pius XI donated to the town of Desio, birthplace of the pope.





Honour conferred upon Giulio Gavazzi on June 26, 1930.

He lived at n.5 Piazza Castello, in Milan, but he was co-owner of the splendid Bonomi-Ceresi Villa in Desio (Via Bovisasca), which, in 1922, was specially furnished on the occasion of a reception in honour of Pope Pious XI.

He died on December 3, 1932.

FRANCESCA DUBINI GAVAZZI (FANNY) (1885-1979)

Fanny was born in Milan on January 4, 1885. In 1912 she married Carlo Dubini, a lawyer (b. in Milan on 23.2.1878, d. on Mount Vodige on 27.5.1917). Her husband fought in the war as a lieutenant and fell at the head of his Alpine troops on Mount Vodige. He had been seen dead, but when they returned for his body, the front had shifted and it had disappeared. He remained one of the many «missing», and was awarded a silver medal. He was greatly mourned by his wife, who lost him after only five years of marriage.

Fanny remained childless, a fact which added to her bitterness and cast a cloud over the memory of those five happy years, as she herself sustained.

She was a woman of stern appearance and manners, but had an admirably strong faith. She dedicated her whole life to others, not only through charities but also among her family. First of all her mother, to whom she was a constant support, helping her in every way possible. After her death, she became a kind of lady companion to her elder sister (Aunt Mamà), and later to her brother Simone. She also lived in symbiosis with her widowed siblings Ernestina, Giuseppe and Simone. Franco, her nephew, used to say of her: «she is all good taste and good sense, in spite of her many flaws». Her young sister-in-law, Ada, considered her a bit of a «schoolmistress». Extremely religious and pious, she was director of the San Vincenzo Charity Institute in Desio.

At the time of the 1946 elections, due to her long and accomplished practice in the field of social welfare and charity, she was placed on the famous «Independent List of Candidates», which included all the right wing parties.

After a life spent in the service of others, in 1954 she was awarded the First Class «Meritorious» Gold Medal, a nobiltà *ad personam*. This high honour (initiated by Pope Pious VII for military distinction in the defence of the Papal States, and subsequently transformed by Pope Pious XI into an award for special merit in the field of charity) was her reward for many years of hard work on behalf of the Foreign Missions and the San Vincenzo.

Her home in Desio was known as the «managers' canteen», Franco's way of jokingly referring to Fanny's mania of inviting the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi managers to dinner.

Fanny had a magnificent painting of the Madonna, which was most likely the work of Sodoma or his School, and less likely that of Leonardo da Vinci. Nevertheless, the painting was displayed in the Leonardo exhibition of May 19, 1939, at the Triennale Gallery in the Sempione Park in Milan.

This *Madonna* came from the Dubini family, and was later left to her younger sister Pea and from her passed down to her son Ignazio.

Fanny had a beautiful house in Ponte di Legno and shared an apartment in Santa Margherita with her brother Simone. After the death of her sister Enestina, she also had the use of a third part of the villa in Parravicino.

She died in Desio on October 6, 1979, in an apartment she had bought herself. After her death, the «Fanny Gavazzi Prize» was established at the «Pro Desio» social club, to reward local citizens for exceptional work in favour of the community.

LAURA BORGIA GAVAZZI (1886-1959)

Laura was not on good terms with her stepbrother Adolfo.

She was born on April 18, 1886. Laura married nobleman Cesare Borgia of Velletri and Ferentino (b. on 26.2.1886, d. on 17.11.1928), Commander of the Sovereign Military Order of the Knights of Malta. The Borgia family had themselves called Counts (sometimes Marquises or even Dukes).

Laura is believed to have been extremely wealthy (it is said that when she married she brought a dowry of a billion lira) and owned showcase buildings in the centre of Milan (entire blocks of houses from Via Durini to Corso Europa). Her husband, however, was a money-squandering megalomaniac, who administered poorly and eventually managed to gamble away all of his wife's immense fortune.

From the diary of Franco Gavazzi, September 14, 1959: «My old cousin Laura Borgia Gavazzi has died. She was the only child (according to the law of that time, because in actual fact she had an elder brother, Adolfo, born before her parents' marriage, with whom she was not on good terms) of uncle Riccardo Gavazzi, grandfather Egidio's brother. In her day, she had been one of the richest young ladies in Milan.

Later, her Cesarino took it upon himself to spend, in dribs and drabs, her considerable fortune, by dint of gambling, betting and other predicaments.» She died on September 13, 1959.

PIERO GAVAZZI (1886-1938)

Piero was born on June 15, 1886. He was the director of the joint-stock company De Capitani Brothers, of Lissone, and a member of the Symphonic Concert Society.

On April 30, 1908, together with Gian Maria Riva, Carlo's son, he founded the partnership Gavazzi & Riva for general commerce.

He married Milly Orio (b. on 27.4.1895, d. on 13.1.1980) in 1919. He lived at n. 2 Via Ricasoli, in Milan, in an apartment that was decorated with beautiful 15th century furniture. Piero died on May 3, 1938, of pneumonia, which had lasted only a few days and appeared to have left him, but his heart was not strong enough to take the strain. He left his young wife, Milly, and four small children. One of these, Lilia, married Count Luigi Treccani degli



Cesare Borgia (1886-1928), husband of Laura Gavazzi.

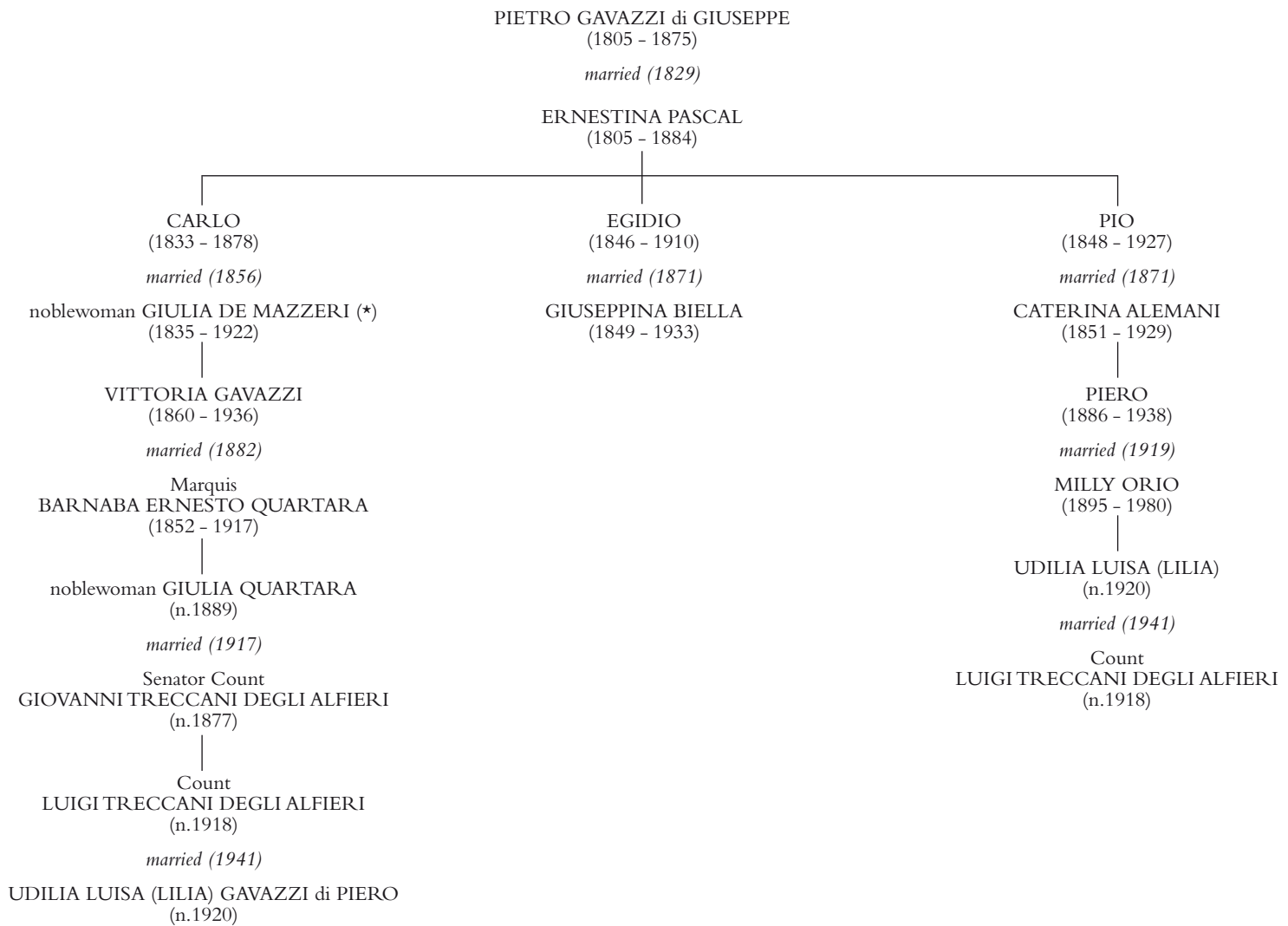
Laura Gavazzi Borgia (1886-1959) with her daughter Eugenia.



Alfieri, whose great-grandfather Carlo Gavazzi (1832-1878) was the elder brother of Lilia's grandfather, Pio Gavazzi (1848-1927).

According to Franco, «he was the best of that foolish rabble of brothers and sisters.» At his funeral there was a real overabundance of flowers and wreaths. Many people had come from Melzo, where he had been the well-loved and respected Podestà.

Marriages between the Gavazzi family and the Treccani degli Alfieri family



(*) Her second marriage, in 1886, was with Federico Terzi (1828-1911).

MARIA PIERA LADO MANCA GAVAZZI (PEA) (1891-1982)

The three «Little Pieras»

Pea's parents had previously had a baby named Pierina (in 1874), who had died less than one month after her birth. Almost immediately afterwards, in 1876, they had another daughter, also named Pierina, who died after five months.

In 1888, following a series of more fortunate births, they had another daughter, whom they again dared to call Piera (not Pierina). She also died after a month. She was the eleventh child. With the twelfth pregnancy it was decided that, if the baby were a girl, they would add the name Maria to the unlucky Piera. So it was that Maria Piera, or Pea, was born, on February 7, 1891. The story of the three Pierinas is famous in the family.

The following is a touching account from the diary of the then 16 year-old Ernestina (the future Aunt Mamà) regarding the last Pierina: «Wednesday, December 19, 1888 – The death of my dear god-daughter, my little Pierina, who passed away today at 1.30 pm. in my arms. – Forty days earlier at the same hour I had again held her in my arms at the baptismal font. Oh! What joy I felt at that moment! How far I was from think-

ing that this little treasure would soon be taken from me. I am downhearted and distraught, life seems to have become empty without the prospect of my Piera. Everything reminds me of her and, although she was here in Milan for so little time, I seem to see her everywhere. Friday 21st – Today was the funeral.

I did not attend, because Mother was afraid it would upset me too much. She went, however, along with Bice and Giovannina. All three returned home greatly moved by how much compassion the good people of Desio showed us. Part of the two parish recreation centres, the band of the men's centre, and a great number of children dressed in white accompanied our little angel to her final resting-place. Poor little one! How much pain you have given me...! – Then there was the whole village, with the clergy in full dress. In short, it was a true display of affection towards us on the part of the entire village. They laid her to rest in the family chapel where, at the same time, they also brought the other two little Pieras. Now, therefore, there is this chapel inaugurated by three beautiful angels. Of the first two I have only a vague memory, which is more a memory of things I have heard repeated, but the third little angel, oh! God, how I wish she were still here on earth!»

The marriage with Luigi Lado Manca

On November 22, 1915 she married in Desio the President of the Court of Appeal, Luigi (Luigino) Lado Manca (14.12.1885 – 10.3.1959), «Cavaliere», officer, lawyer and nobleman. Originally from an aristocratic family of Sassari, he had come to Lombardy following the assignment of a vacant post there as judge. He changed his surname from Ladu to Lado.

At the wedding, Franco Gavazzi acted as «pageboy, in a suit of black velvet with a flat, starched collar. It was one of those warm, autumn days, with the guests strolling around the garden. Laura (Gavazzi) and Cesarino Borgia arrived in a luxurious purple closed automobile which, at the time, must have appeared quite magnificent».



Tombstone of the «three Pieras» (Town Cemetery, Desio).



Maria Piera Gavazzi (1891-1982) and her husband Luigi Lado Manca (1885-1959).

The mother of Luigino was Carolina Biella, the younger sister of Giuseppina, wife of Egidio Gavazzi. They were, therefore, first cousins (the father of Luigino and husband of Carolina Biella was also named Luigi).

In Desio he was for some years, as the son-in-law of Egidio Gavazzi, a shareholder in the Drinking Water Company and Board member in the Gas Company, which he had joined in 1916 at a difficult time due to the resignation of Cornaggia Medici.

In 1924 he joined the Board of Directors of the Bank of Desio (the former Agricultural Bank of Desio, which was transformed in the same year, 1924).

In around 1925 the Palearis, important partners of the bank, choosing to lessen their own commitment to the bank, left the field to the Gavazzis, who had already decided to work towards transforming the company from co-operative society to joint-stock company, in order to render valid in all respects their position as «major shareholders».

Nel 1926 the Bank became, therefore, a joint-stock company. Gino Gavazzi and Giulio Gavazzi joined the Board of Directors, and an increase was made in the company stock where the Board assumed, at their own expense, the unallocated shares. Thus the presence of the Gavazzi family was consolidated among the various shareholding components. In 1939 Luigi Lado became Chairman of the Bank.

In 1956 he took on the responsibility of the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company, of which he was already Chairman, after Rodolfo Gavazzi was forced to leave his office and his duties following criticisms regarding his handling of business. He used to say that he found it extremely easy to reduce costs by simply eliminating the endless extra and useless expenses induced by Rodolfo, beginning with his enormous fees.

The wool factory, due to the difficult situation created by Rodolfo, was soon sold off, a little at a time, because the Gavazzis had not respected the Union agreement. It was purchased by a Sicilian speculator and businessman named Virgillito.

Luigino was a brilliant and sociable man. He was fond of going to the Union Club. Luigino and Pea were good *bridge* players.

He used his wife's money to build himself a good and successful career, and laid the foundations for the Lado fortune, administering well and acquiring merits that brought wealth to his family.

A profile of Pea

Pea was always very careful to safeguard her own interests. Like Aunt Mamà, Pea was strong-willed and domineering. She was also very sociable: the house was always open and she was continually surrounded by her friends and those of her children.

For years, she tried to learn to drive. Every day at 4.00 pm she would go out in the car with her driver Annibale Malberti. She had lessons daily, but never learned. This was when she was in Desio, because Annibale did not trust to drive in Milan (even though in those days the traffic was quite different from now).

Pea spoke French well. In the Gavazzi household the generation of Pea, like those of her parents and her grandparents before her, French was learned fluently and often spoken also at home among the family members. Only in the following generations did English and German begin to be taught.

She inherited the house in Parravicino d'Erba from Aunt Mamà, and also had a beautiful villa in Ponte di Legno.

During the war, until 1948 she lived in Desio, though not in Via San Pietro; she had a rented apartment in the Gavazzi House in Via Bovisasca (belonging to Pio).

Pea died on May 9, 1982.

To my sister-in-law Maria Piera

The young lady Pea, surrounded
by great flaws,
At the age of twenty has the quality
Of giving her in-laws, from time
to time,
And without ulterior motives,
some little gift.

Today, for a start, she gave me
A fine, silk-lined wallet
Filled with such affection
As to be a good omen for banknotes

And I who, deep down, am like a boy
That goes into raptures for kind gestures
If they are also sincere,

To thank her I wish her a husband who is
As full of tender feelings as myself
But with a wallet that is fuller than mine.

Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
Milan, November 25, 1910

Alla cognatina Maria Piera

La sura Pea che in mezz ai gran difett
Di sò vint'ann la prend la qualitaa
De fag de tant in tant ai sò cugnaa,
Senza secondi fin, quai regalett.

La m'ha, per comincià, incoeu regala
Fodraa de seda, un bel portabiliett
Pien nell'interno de quel tal affett
Ch'el fa l'auguri di cart-moneta.

E mi, che in fondo in fondo sont on tôs
Che in broed de sciger, per i gentilezz
El va, se hinn anc consolidaa, in effett,

Per ringraziala, mi ghe' auguri on spôs
Ch'el sia pien come mi de tenerezz
Ma cont el portafeui pusee complett.

Giuseppe Barbiano di Belgiojoso
Milano, 25 novembre 1910

