

Nuova Rivista Storica

Anno XCV, Gennaio-Aprile 2011, Fascicolo I

Abstracts

EUGENIO DI RIENZO - EMILIO GIN, *Quella mattina del 25 luglio 1943. Mussolini, Shinrokuro Hidaka e il progetto di pace separata con l'Urss*

On the late morning of the 25th July 1943 Mussolini received, at Palazzo Venezia, the Japanese ambassador Shinrokuro Hidaka, for his latest State appointment as Prime Minister before being overthrown from power by the King's decision. Since then the only versions of that meeting were given by the Duce himself in his memories, *Storia di un anno*, published in 1944, and by the under-Secretary of Italian Foreign Office, Giuseppe Bastianini, in a dubious *compte rendu*. In this account, Bastianini recorded Mussolini's attempt to persuade Hitler – via the Japanese mediation – to come to terms with Soviet Union in order to re-orienting the Axis' military effort against the western Allies. For a long time thereafter, the Italian historiography paid scant attention to this Duce's last diplomatic move, judging it a simple bluff to improve his domestic political position. In a similar manner the whole of the Italian foreign policy during the Second World War has been viewed as hopelessly bound to the German strategic decisions especially after the initial military failures in North Africa and Greece. With an eye on the latest scholarly debate and acquisitions and another on the primary archival sources, the Authors of this paper try to give a different look on these matters. In the first place, the discover of the message which Hidaka sent to Tokyo after the 25th July, intercepted and deciphered by the allied intelligence, demonstrates the truthfulness of the version that the Duce gave on his part, adding other interesting particulars on the event. On another level, after a cross review of the diplomatic papers, the Authors stress that the attempt made by Mussolini with Hidaka on the subject of a separate peace with the USSR, far from being an occasional and desperate act useful only in his political gambling corresponded to a precise trend of the Italian diplomacy, which met significant correspondence both in German and Japanese political circles. In particular the Authors, in the final paragraphs of the article, address the complex question of the nazi-soviet negotiations (from 1941 to 1944), for a compromise peace with the Japanese good offices. Drawing mainly on unpublished archival resources, the Authors then highlight how the state of the relationships within the Axis partners and the Allies themselves was far from being as adamant as one should suppose, making the point on a long neglected aspect (somewhat *terra incognita* for the Italian historiography) of the diplomatic context of the World War Two.