

# Nuova Rivista Storica

Anno XCVI, Gennaio-Aprile 2012, Fascicolo I

## Abstracts

EUGENIO DI RIENZO - EMILIO GIN, L'ambigua intesa. L'Urss e le Potenze dell'Asse 1939-1941

The Nazi-Soviet Pact of the summer 1939 is widely known as one of the pivotal steps that eventually lead to the outbreak of the Second World War. In fact, that agreement with the Soviet Union dispelled the ghost of a war on two-front pushing Hitler to accelerate the 'solution' of the Danzig crisis. While this is undeniably true from an *événementiel* point of view, at the historiographical level things appear to be less certain when one turns to consider closely the motivations which inspired the leaders or to weight the political fallout of that historical signature.

Consequently, with an eye to the recent scientific achievements and archival evidence, the Authors outline the matter putting the Pact in its worldwide dimension. In that perspective it appears, in fact, less a fortuitous and precarious arrangement between two irresistibly opposed regimes than a real basis for a solid mutual cooperation between the two totalitarian giants. That as a case in point to further invigorate a reading of the history in which ideological components are considered in their right value giving more ground to the geopolitical interests as a driving factor in foreign policy grand decisions. In fact, the degree of the collaboration so started appears in its magnitude looking not only at the economic aspects, with the heavy flood of strategic materials granted to Germany from Russia and far eastern markets through the Russian railway system, but also at the logistical – not mentioning diplomatic – support given by the *Kriegsmarine* to the Red Fleet during the so-called 'Winter War' against Finland. A real comradeship which Moscow reciprocated with largeness, at the time of the Nazi invasion of Norway, when the German U-boats received shelter and supplies from Red Star flagged ships and in soviet harbors. With time, the partnership extended even at strategic planning level with the project for a joint invasion of Afghanistan and for combined attacks against the vital points of the British Empire. In a more revealing manner the collaboration had constructive effects on the activities of the *Abwehr* and soviet secret services with regular exchange of information and worldwide mutual support. At political level Moscow blocked any anti-German subversive activities while ordering the *Komintern* to increase those directed against the Western Countries.

Other results of Hitler's diplomatic drive without connection with ideological matters were, furthermore, the dramatic turnabout in the Soviet-Japanese relations, until then strained in bitter rivalry, and the deep deterioration in those with Fascist Italy embarked in the project to differentiate herself from the Third *Reich* in order to preserve a more flexible *champ de manoeuvre*. If this latter process was, in fact, justified in Rome primarily on ideological arguments, reviving old instruments against the Bolshevik danger, the move away from Berlin pursued by Ciano and Mussolini was just another example in the Italian *Realpolitik* in the prolonged efforts to maintain for themselves an open door even towards the Allies.

At the other end of the world, the Pact signed in august meant a real revolution in international affairs with the German diplomacy committed in granting a stable

*rapprochement* between Tokyo, Rome and Moscow prefiguring the grandiose scheme of a monolithic bloc of Countries, from Europe to the Far East, opposed to the Anglo-Saxons sea-based Powers. The attempt of draining the Ussr into the Axis, in the summer-fall of 1940, appears, then, less an expedient to deceive the next victim in Hitler's steady race for the world power under the agenda strictly dictated in the *Mein Kampf* rather than a serious effort of achieving a compromise – unstable as it will be – with a world power which shared a common enemy: the United States of America. The eventual Hitler's failure in gaining the full partnership with Moscow was due to the difficulty in settling the geopolitical spheres of influence in a timetable dramatically altered by the glooming – for him – perspective, made concrete by the British resolve to continue the struggle, of an early and decisive American intervention in the war. These perception and calculations spurred the German dictator to accelerate the hunt for the natural resources absolutely vital for a beforehand struggle against Washington. Therefore, once war started in the East, after the fateful decision of Hitler to invade the Ussr, the underground points of contact between German and Russian interests in countering the rise of the American power didn't lose their strength and appeal continuing under the form of subterranean contacts about a separate peace (subject of a previous article by the Authors to which this work is strictly connected: *Quella mattina del 25 luglio 1943. Mussolini, Shinrokuro Hidaka e il progetto di pace separata con l'Urss*, in «Nuova Rivista Storica», 95, 2011, 1, pp. 1-88) and granting a fictitious aspect of solidity to the Grand Alliance against Berlin.