

The Board of Deputies of British Jews and the initial phase of the Italian Racial Laws: reactions and strategies (1938–1940)

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to reconstruct the activities of the Board of Jewish Deputies, the central representative body of British Jewry, in support of the Italian Jews affected by the Fascist Racial Laws of 1938. By analysing the institution's documents and examining the most widely read Jewish newspaper in the U. K., the *Jewish Chronicle*, this research investigates how the initial phase of the Italian anti-Semitic campaign was received in Great Britain, and what measures were put in place by British Jewry in their attempts to help the Italian Jews. The Jewish historian, Cecil Roth, played an important role during this phase, in active collaboration with the leadership of the Board and the staff of the *Jewish Chronicle*, gathering as much information as possible on Italy and its history in order to shed light on the events that were taking place during the first years of the Racial Laws and until the entrance of Italy into WWII (1938–1940). The involvement of certain members of the Foreign Office with links to the Board, and the shared goal of helping Italian Jewry, was also fundamental in this period.

RIASSUNTO

Il saggio mira a ricostruire l'attività del Board of Jewish Deputies, l'organismo centrale di rappresentanza dell'ebraismo inglese, in favore degli ebrei italiani colpiti dalle leggi razziali fasciste del 1938. Attraverso l'analisi della documentazione dell'istituzione e grazie allo spoglio del più diffuso periodico ebraico in U.K., il *Jewish Chronicle*, questa ricerca si interroga su come fu recepita in Gran Bretagna la fase iniziale della campagna antisemita italiana e quali misure furono messe in atto dall'ebraismo inglese nel tentativo di aiutare i correligionari italiani. Un ruolo importante in questa fase fu svolto dallo storico ebreo Cecil Roth, che collaborò attivamente con la dirigenza del Board e con il *Jewish Chronicle* per fornire quante più informazioni sull'Italia e la sua storia, utili alla comprensione di ciò che stava accadendo, durante i primi anni delle leggi razziali e fino all'entrata in guerra dell'Italia (1938–1940). Fondamentale si rivelò inoltre, in questa fase, il coinvolgimento di alcune figure del Foreign Office che ebbero rapporti con il Board con l'obiettivo comune di aiutare l'ebraismo italiano.

KEYWORDS Board of Deputies of British Jews; Italian Racial Laws; Cecil Roth; British Jews; Italian Fascism

PAROLE CHIAVE Board of Deputies of British Jews; leggi razziali italiane; Cecil Roth; ebrei inglesi; fascismo italiano

Introduction

From 1937, the developments of political anti-Semitism in Fascist Italy, culminating in the Racial Laws of 1938, were followed with close attention by British Jews through their main press outlet, the *Jewish Chronicle*, and the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the central representative body of British Jewry. From the start of the nineteenth-century the Board represented all British Jews and had the task of developing links with the government and with similar Jewish institutions across Europe.

In 1938, after growing concern over the sudden change in the attitude of Italian Fascism towards Jews, the leadership of British Jewry decided to take concrete steps, mobilizing the Board's network of links, in order to know what was taking place at that time in Italy and to understand the impact of the Racial Laws on the Italian Jews. The close relationship between the Board and local Foreign Office English diplomats enabled the central Jewish institution to quickly organize a series of reconnaissance missions to the Italian peninsula in 1938 and 1939, to collect first-hand information on the events taking place. In order to achieve this objective, the Board relied on the advice of the well-known Jewish historian, Cecil Roth, who was an expert in Italian Jewish history and held in mutual esteem by Neville Laski, then president of the Board. Roth worked first hand in support of the Italian Jews, frequently collaborating with the *Jewish Chronicle*, in order to raise awareness in Great Britain of the plight of the Italian Jews affected by Mussolini's Racial Laws.

An essay by Sarfatti (2014, pp.146–147) analyses Roth's fundamental text on Italian Jewry (1946), highlighting the degree to which he understood the responsibilities of the Italians during the phase of the persecution of lives, however, despite this, his contribution fell into obscurity for many years. In this article, I have followed Sarfatti's suggestion and gone backwards in time, returning to Roth's analysis during the period of the persecution of rights, basing my argument, however, on his articles in the Jewish press and his correspondence with Neville Laski.

The main objective of this article is to shed light on the particular attention that the central British Jewish institution, the Board, paid to Italy, in a moment in which the attention of European and North American Jewries were focussed primarily on the fate of the thousands of refugees fleeing Nazi Germany.

The attention paid to Italy, not only by Great Britain, but also by the U.S. and France was motivated by the fact that since the Risorgimento the Italian State, with its successful politics of Jewish integration, was seen by central-Western Europe as a symbol of the felicitous fulfilment of the process of emancipation. The fact that even this was undermined by the promulgation of the Racial Laws in 1938 concerned the British Jews, who began to reflect on the long wave of anti-Semitism which was engulfing Europe.

As Michele Sarfatti highlighted (Sarfatti 2012, pp.2–3), the anti-Semitic Italian Legislation can be analysed by contextualizing it in the European scenario, paying great attention to two particular phases: the “Persecution of rights (1938–1943)” and the “Persecution of lives (1943–1945)”. Thanks to this convincing chronological subdivision of the periods of persecution, I believe it is now possible to better analyse the first reactions of the British Jews, through their most significant representative body.

I have chosen to focus my contribution on the first years of persecution, since the British Jewish press, and the minutes and correspondence of the Board focus most closely on the Italian situation during this period, with particular attention paid to the position of foreign Jews and those living in the colonies.

Initial reactions to the start of the racist anti-Semitic campaign in Italy

The racist politics of Mussolini and their anti-Semitic escalation in the summer of 1938 caused great consternation in the Western Jewish world, especially among British and French Jews, who were worried about the fate of their Italian coreligionists and the immediate future facing the foreign Jews living in Italy, who were affected by the decree of expulsion on 7 September 1938 (Catalan 2018; Guedj 2011; Sarfatti [2000] 2018; Livingstone 2014). Soon the U.S. Jews also turned their attention to the events unfolding in Italy and they initiated a collaboration with the British Jews to collect information on the events taking place in Italy (Luconi 2004).

Growing concerns about a radical about-turn in Italian politics against the Jews were evident in Great Britain in the Jewish press from the start of 1937. The events of Tripoli cast a dark shadow: in the Italian colony of north Africa a number of Jews had been flogged in the public square on the command of the Italian authorities, because they had failed to comply with the requirement to open their shops on a Saturday, in protest of the government’s decree.¹

After this episode in the Italian colonies of Africa, the *Jewish Chronicle*² followed the Italian developments more closely, reporting on all the news relating to episodes of anti-Semitism, especially in the Italian press, which intensified over the course of the year. The *Jewish Chronicle* also followed step by step the enactment of the anti-Jewish Racial Laws and their impact on the Italian Jews. The speed with which Mussolini’s Italy had suddenly manifested its racism and anti-Semitism was one of the aspects which most profoundly struck Jews abroad, and it initially suggested that the Duce wished to align himself with the anti-Semitic politics of his German ally. What concerned the observers was also the accelerating rate with which discriminatory laws were being announced. It is worth quoting here one of the observations on this aspect, published in the *Jewish Chronicle* on 9 September 1938:

With headlong speed, the Italian Fascists are embarking on their anti-Semitic course, and are proving themselves zealous followers of the German Nazis. It would seem that they are endeavouring to arrive within a few weeks, or months at the results achieved in Germany over a period of years.³

Thanks to studies by Michaelis (1978) and Sarfatti ([2000] 2018), and the historiography which has recently tackled this topic, we know with certainty that the racist progression of Italian Fascism was largely autonomous from Nazism and had developed progressively over previous years, reaching a process of maturation, according to Sarfatti's definition (2012, pp.9–12), in which both the national events of Italy and the European context, influenced by the racist politics of Nazism, played an important role.

At the time, however, the Italian anti-Semitic legislation seemed like a radical new direction in the political field, especially considering the widespread view of Italian Jewry as having been well integrated into the majority society since the Risorgimento and active on a political level, even during the Fascist period (Sarfatti 2017a).

The reactions of the European Jewish institutions to the Italian anti-Semitic campaign are important and need to be analysed, since they were able to collect useful information through direct witnesses in Italy, and assist persecuted Italian Jews thanks to the interventions organized by the respective ministries of foreign affairs at their embassies and diplomatic offices in Italy.

Recently I examined the links and the actions undertaken by the Jewish institutions of France and England during the outbreak of the racist campaign in Italy, focussing primarily on the role carried out by the major philanthropic agencies (the Anglo Jewish Association and the Alliance Israélite Universelle) and their capacity to respond on a European level to assist the Italian Jews persecuted by the Racial Laws (Catalan 2018).

In order to monitor the situation and fully understand and face the dynamics in action within the Fascist government, during 1938 the Board of Deputies of British Jews⁴ activated a network of contacts in the Italian peninsula through its president Neville Laski. He involved a number of diplomats from the Foreign Office, as well as the support and invaluable advice of Cecil Roth, the English historian who was greatly knowledgeable about the history of Italian Judaism and well known among the Italian Jews (Roth, C. 1946, 1965; Roth, I. 1982; Ruderman 1998).

The developments affecting the Italian Jews sounded an alarm bell for the Jewish communities of Western Europe, since striking the Italian Jews meant jeopardizing the success of a route of emancipation and integration which had until that time been held up as an example to all of Western Judaism (Schächter 2011; Ferrara degli Uberti 2017). Furthermore, the issue of the foreign Jews living in Italy, who numbered around 8,000 at that time (Voigt 1993–1996; Pizzuti 2010), and the concrete risk of a sudden

emigration of Italian Jews in the event of the situation worsening, were viewed by the Board as a further problem which needed to be added to that of the thousands of German Jewish refugees who were fleeing Nazism, and for whom it was proving difficult to find the necessary assistance.

Interest in the Italian Jews was fuelled in the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle* by several articles by Cecil Roth, who, in agreement with the president of the Board, Neville Laski, decided to avail himself of the journal, which at that time was not only read by the entire British Jewish community, but also by European Jewry. Roth intended to inform English Jewry about the exceptional nature of the anti-Semitic persecutions in Italy, as well as on the past and the peculiar characteristics of the Jewish presence in Italy.⁵ It is important to highlight that initially the British historian had publicly taken up a position in *The Times*⁶ reasserting his confidence in Mussolini's actions, which he believed would not go against the entire course of Italian history,⁷ which had stood out in previous centuries precisely due to its welcoming and inclusive stance towards Jews, and the lack of so many significant episodes of persecution as in other parts of Europe. However, this was at the very start of the official anti-Semitic campaign. A month after these assertions, Roth intervened in a full-page article on the long history of Jewish settlements on the peninsula, dating back to the Roman Empire, highlighting their greater ethnic purity, compared to the rest of the population. It is an aspect worth focusing on, because it is clear that Roth implicitly casts doubt on article 9 of the Manifesto of the Racial Scientists, published in the *Giornale d'Italia* on 14 July 1938 (see Sarfatti [1994] 2017b): where the Jews were explicitly defined as not belonging to the Italian race. It was Roth's intention – by referring to the secular presence of the Jews in Italy – to deconstruct the accusation levelled at the Jews of being different from the rest of the Italians.

The number of Jews in Rome alone, at the time of Herod, seems to have been very high – reliable figures indicate a population of 50,000. These, then, are the ancestors of the mass of Italian Jewry of today. It may be added that it is the only element in the entire country which perpetuates ethnically the tradition of the Italian population of Imperial days. The rest have had their blood diversified to an enormous extent by the Slaves of miscellaneous origin who were poured into the capital of the world over centuries; by Teutonic invaders in the North and Moslems in the south; by a long succession of devout pilgrims, not all of whom re-migrated and not all of whom were moral.⁸

If we look closely at Roth's assertions, we witness the influence of contemporary thought which tended to classify according to ethnicity: he somewhat casually adopts the key concept of a pure bloodline, if only to counter the anti-Semitic accusations levelled at the Italian Jews. Indeed, he claims: 'Only the Italian Jews may lay a reasonable claim to represent today,

virtually unchanged, an ethnic element which had its citizen rights in the country before the fall of the Empire.⁹

In the final part of his article the British historian turned to focus on what he considered the positive aspects of the previous century, claiming through various examples that Italy could be thought of as the country of Jewish emancipation and assimilation,¹⁰ and that precisely for this reason the events taking place should be considered a 'warning post' for British Jews as well. Roth also encouraged readers not to ignore the facts and to weigh the risks of anti-Semitism in Britain in a piece published in mid-October.¹¹ From this moment on Roth was in no doubt about the racist politics of Fascism, and he was personally involved in assisting the Italian Jews, always under the supervision of the leadership of the Board.

The belief that the Italian population was not supportive of the anti-Semitic legislation can be found in the first memoranda about the Italian Jewish situation collected by the Board in 1938 and 1939, and it was a common feeling shared among the Jewish communities of France and Great Britain.¹²

The articles on Italy published in the *Jewish Chronicle* during Autumn 1938 often underline the critical behaviour of the Italians towards the Fascist machine of discrimination against the Jews, almost as if to sweeten the bad news: 'And still, to the discomfiture of the Jew-baiters, the mass of the Italian people are solidly rejecting the anti-Semitic outpourings of those in authority.'¹³

The Board's actions in the initial phase of the persecutions in Italy (1938–1940)

When analysing the Board's activities in these years, one of the elements which emerges most consistently, in all correspondence and also in public declarations in the Jewish press, is the positive opinion of the Italians which was held by British Jewry. In the aftermath of the enactment of the Racist Laws on 17 November 1938, for example, the *Jewish Chronicle* brought to light episodes of dissent in Italy against the anti-Jewish measures, closing the article with words of approval of the positive attitude of the king towards the Italian Jews in the same period. The king, as it turns out, had warmly thanked the Italian Jewish communities in November for the well-wishes he had received for his birthday.¹⁴ It was still not entirely clear, it seems, to the European Jewish observers, and also to the journalist of the *Jewish Chronicle*, that even the Savoy monarchy, so beloved by the Italian Jews, had signed Mussolini's Racist Laws in 1938, therefore permitting their promulgation.

The Italian monarchy, it seems, continued to wield great fascination for Jews in Italy, and further afield. Admiration for the role played by the House

of Savoy during the Risorgimento is also evident among Western European Jewries, as well as for the full emancipation granted to Italian Jews in 1848.¹⁵

The means of intervention adopted by the Board in order to give concrete assistance to the Italian Jews was formulated with the awareness that the Board could count on the diplomatic support of the Foreign Office, with whom the leadership of British Jews enjoyed a solid relationship (Catalan 2016). A number of trusted individuals were sent on reconnaissance trips to Italy at various points during the period of time examined here. The individuals sent by the Board were mainly diplomats, who had offered their availability to the leadership of the British Jewish institution.¹⁶ The detailed accounts which followed each trip formed the core body of information on which the Board later based its official petitions and unofficial requests to the British government, in which they called for diplomatic measures to be taken towards the Fascist government in order to support the Italian Jews and those living in the Kingdom's colonies.

Between November 1938 and January 1939 three reports were produced which analysed the Italian situation: the first was probably written by Cecil Roth,¹⁷ and differs from the second report, produced by the U.S. Jewish agency, the American Joint Distribution Committee,¹⁸ in its detailed historical background. Before painting a picture of the Jewish community's position under Fascism, five full pages of the document are dedicated to the history of the Jewish presence on the peninsula from the Roman period. Particular emphasis is placed on the Italian Jews' participation in the Risorgimento and their peaceful inclusion in liberal Italian society in the post-Unification period:

From this period onwards, Italian Jewry was a byword throughout the world for its enlightened treatment and the remarkable results. ... For, with the disappearance of legislative discrimination, all traces of anti-Semitic feeling, which had been imposed from above and had no basis in popular sentiment, disappeared also, with an astonishing rapidity and completeness. Throughout the country, and in every social stratum, the Jews were henceforth regarded as Italians like all others, distinguishable only by their religion and by their ethnic origin. ... Once the artificial repression from which they had suffered for so long was removed, they made very rapid headway.¹⁹

From the opening lines of this memorandum it is clear to see how deep-rooted the belief was that, even during the period of Jewish interdictions, anti-Judaism in the Italian peninsula was something artificial, which came from above and which was absent in the collective mentality.²⁰ This enables us to better understand the feelings of bewilderment which pervaded not just the British, but Western diplomacies in general, when the Racist Laws of 1938 were proclaimed. The report became more perceptive in its description of the Italian Jews' adherence to Fascism, and the Jewish community of Trieste was acknowledged as central to the political movement of Mussolini,

due to the participation of many Jews among the irredentist volunteers in the Italian army during World War I (Catalan 2000). There was, therefore, an awareness of the Italian Jews' approval of Fascism during the 1920 and 1930 (Sarfatti 2017a).²¹

Another part of the report concentrated on the escalation of anti-Semitic measures in Summer 1938 and examined the difficult position of the foreign Jews, including those who had acquired Italian citizenship after 1919, and those living in the Italian colonies in Libya and the Aegean. Finally, after having analysed point by point the initial consequences of the laws on the social, economic and cultural Jewish life of the country, the report underlined that the Italian regulations regarding emigration were stricter than the German ones in terms of the sum of money which each refugee was permitted to take abroad.²² The British Jews were particularly alert to this fact, since it could result in hundreds of Italian Jewish refugees arriving in Great Britain without sufficient means to support themselves, in addition to the foreign Jews affected by the decree of expulsion from Italy. One of the most important Jewish aid associations, The American Joint Committee, which had immediately contacted the American ambassador in Rome, estimated that approximately 8,000 foreign Jews would be unable to leave Italy before 12 March 1939.²³

The Italian Jewish community, according to the sources available to the Board, had great expectations regarding the visit of the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, to Italy at the beginning of 1939, and in light of the visit prepared a memorandum on the position of the Jewish refugees in Italy, which was sent to Eric Drummond, Earl of Perth, the British ambassador in Rome.²⁴ The hope was to convince Chamberlain to intercede on behalf of the Italian Jews with the Italian government. The Italian Jews asked also the representative of the American Joint Committee to help them to establish contact with the American ambassador, William Phillis, which was later achieved.

At this time, Sir Andrew McFadyean, a one-time British diplomat, also presented his memorandum dated 25 January 1939 to Neville Laski, president of the Board.²⁵ His report – unlike the previous ones which had dedicated their opening pages to the idyllic conditions of the Italian Jewish past – is very dry and directly addresses the issue which all the investigations centre on: how the British Jewish world could assist their coreligionists in Italy, especially the foreigners and the Italians whose citizenship had been revoked because it had been granted after 1919. Sir Andrew declared that during his stay in Italy he had been in constant contact with the British ambassador, but he had not, however, had any contact with the American diplomats, or with representatives from the Italian government. After claiming that: 'anti-Semitism outside a restricted Government circle is non existent',²⁶ he espoused the theory that Mussolini had aligned himself

with the racist positions of Germany for political motives, but he also acknowledged that, if prolonged, the anti-Semitic campaign could influence the less enlightened minds of the Italian population. The report then focuses on the Italian Jews' hopes regarding Prime Minister Chamberlain's visit to Italy, the effects of which had yet to be felt.²⁷ He reflects bitterly on this issue, stating: 'the feeling after his visit was that there was no change in the general situation.'²⁸ In the final section of his report, McFadyean proposes a European perspective as a means of interpreting Italian anti-Semitism, claiming that whatever was done for Italian and German Jews would indubitably create greater expectations of material support from Western democracies amongst Polish, Romanian and Hungarian Jews. He closes his account on a bitter note, with a cutting consideration regarding the position of European Jewry and its expectations:

Above all, nothing should be done in the German and Italian cases which makes the export of Jews a profitable operation for the economies of the exporting countries. Putting all moral questions aside – and it is not moral to pay a black-mailer – financial sacrifices made by the outside world which might satisfy Germany and Italy would become intolerable when extended to cover all Central European Jewry. A general solution, the execution of which would necessarily be spread over many years, should be possible, but if not, hard as the saying is, there is at least one Gentile who is sincerely convinced that nothing more should be attempted, except perhaps the minimum of humanitarian relief, and that the time has already come when the Jews in Totalitarian States must be regarded as hostages whom it is impossible to ransom, or kidnapped persons for whom blood money cannot be provided without increasing the appetite of their captors to a degree which can never be satisfied.²⁹

The Board shared this report widely, sending it both to the Foreign Office and international Jewish organizations, and it formed an important departure point for activating the first forms of aid for the Italian Jews who chose to emigrate (Catalan 2018).

From January 1939, the Board took steps on a diplomatic level in order to discover if there was any possibility of granting asylum in Cyprus to the Italian Jews living in Rhodes (approximately 150 families, amounting to a total of around 700 Jews, who were affected by the expulsion order). The Board was supported in this endeavour by the Alliance Israélite Universelle (Catalan 2018).³⁰ The assistance of Malcom McDonald, an official of the British colonial office, was sought, but failed to yield positive results. According to the British government, Cyprus was unable to offer aid to the refugees from Rhodes due to its limited resources; furthermore, there were already recorded tensions between the local population and several Jewish refugees who had reached the island individually.³¹

Cecil Roth also explored the possible routes of emigration available to the Jews in Rhodes who had been stripped of their Italian citizenship, as

referred to in a letter addressed to the secretary of the Board, Adolph G. Brotman. It appeared to him that a solution could be found either by granting visas, or by offering the opportunity to emigrate to Salisbury in Rhodesia, since there were already 'very close relations' with the local Jewish community.³² From the documentation preserved in the Board's archives, however, it appears that the attempts to find a solution for the Jews living in Rhodes ended there, despite the insistence of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, who were urged in their endeavours by the Jews in Rhodes.³³ In all the issues addressed by the Board regarding Italian Jewry, the direct line between both Neville Laski and Adolph Brotman, and Cecil Roth, was a constant in this period. Indeed, Roth constantly updated the leadership of British Jewry on his encounters with Italian refugees abroad, and in some cases he even warned the Board about some risks of espionage. For example, in a letter to his friend Laski, written in February 1939, Roth describes a recent encounter in Paris with 'La Salfatti', as he terms the ex-lover of the Duce, who he claimed maintained 'a tactful silence' on the Italian political situation, but who was preparing to leave for the U.S. Taking this opportunity, Roth closed his letter by urging the leadership of the Board to be 'very careful in dealing with Italian refugees, as some of the best-known among them are suspected of being in the pay of the Government – the Italian Government, of course'.³⁴

The difficulties of finding financial resources for the Italian Jewish refugees in Great Britain soon became a serious problem for the Board, who, until 1940, had hoped that the anti-Semitic campaign in Italy would be relaxed, allowing them to return. In January 1940, however, a letter from Sir Robert Vansittart, on behalf of the Foreign Office, confirmed that even the information collected by the embassy in Rome left no room for continued hope:

It appears that there is no reason to think that the anti-Jewish measures introduced in 1938 have been relaxed to any appreciable extent. The legislation enacted at that time has been neither rescinded nor modified. There might have been some slight relaxations towards those Jews who still remain in Italy, though if this is so it has been very slight indeed. I am afraid it looks as if there is no hope of Italian Jewish refugees being allowed to return to Italy and resume their professions or occupations.³⁵

Conclusion

From the sources consulted relating to the activities undertaken by the Board of Deputies of British Jews in support of the Italian Jews during the enactment of the Racial Laws of 1938, the Board's constant attention to the development of anti-Semitic politics in Italy is clear. Initially the Jewish press and the Board were incredulous about the events unfolding in Italy, and trusted in the legacy of the past, which had been characterized by

a peaceful and positive cohabitation between Jews and non-Jews in the Italian peninsula over an extended period. In 1939, however, this image of an Italy which was reluctant to accept the politics of the regime against the Jews diminished. The way in which Italian and foreign Jews were treated, in Italy and in the colonies, led to the realization in 1940 of how harsh and ruthless the laws were, and removed all doubt regarding their continuation.

Notes

1. "Saturday opening becomes law. Italian Jewry's bitter disappointment." *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 January 1937, p.29; "Jews flogged in Tripoli." *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 January 1937, p.13. On the racial politics in Italian East Africa see: Barrera 2003; De Felice 1978; Roumani 2008.
2. Founded in 1841, the *Jewish Chronicle* is still today the most important Jewish newspaper in Great Britain. It is considered a fundamental source to study the history of Anglo-Jewry. For an accurate analysis of the period 1938–1940 see: Cesarani 1994, pp.158–172.
3. "Roman Orgy. "Jew-Purge" in full swing. Mass dismissals and expulsions." *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 September, 1938, p.25.
4. On the Board see: Newman 1987.
5. C. Roth, "Italy and the Jews. Antiquity of Residence and Complete Assimilation." *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 August 1938, p.18, p.21.
6. C. Roth, "Jews in Italy: A Long Established Community." *The Times*, 26 July 26, p.13.
7. Reported in: "The Threat to Italian Jewry." *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 July 1938, p.8.
8. C. Roth, "Italy and the Jews. Antiquity of Residence and Complete Assimilation," *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 August 1938, p.18, p.21.
9. Ibid.
10. For understanding the view of Roth about the assimilation' process see: Roth 1946, pp.504–509. It's important to consider that this critical view was written after World War II.
11. C. Roth, "A Lesson to Anglo-Jewry." *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 October 1938, p.26.
12. For a more detailed discussion: Catalan 2018.
13. "Public Sympathy with the Persecuted." *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 October 1938, p.28; see also: "Italian Fascists who oppose anti-Semitism." *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 December 1938, p.28.
14. "Italian People Revolted by Nazi Frightfulness." *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 November 1938, p.26.
15. Unfortunately, at present there has been no historiographical work on the relationship between the Italian Jews and the king, from the unification of Italy to World War II. Perhaps Italian Jewry considered itself secure for so long, despite the clear signs of anti-Semitism, precisely because of its faith in the Savoy monarch.
16. The most well-known and well-documented trip was the one made by Sir Arthur McFadyean. (Catalan 2018).
17. London Metropolitan Archives [henceforth LMA], *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/513, *Memorandum on the situation in Italy*, November 1938.

The document is not signed by Roth, but his authorship of the historical part of the document is almost certain, because there is a later note by the historian among the documentation which recalls this work and makes several further observations.

18. On the memorandum of January 1939 written by the Joint, see: Catalan 2018.
19. LMA, Board of Deputies of British Jews, ACC 3121/E3/513, Memorandum on the situation in Italy, November 1938., p.5.
20. Recent historiography about Italian anti-Semitism has debunked the myth of a liberal Italy completely devoid of anti-Jewish intolerance. See: Toscano 2003; Battini 2010; Nani 2017.
21. LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/513, *Memorandum on the situation in Italy*, November 1938, pp.6–7.
22. *Ibid.*, p.13. The Nazis allowed Jews to take 7 per cent of their capital with them, Roth claims, while the Italians (whether they were Jewish or not) had a fixed cap of 2,500 lire.
23. LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/513, American Joint Distribution Committee, *The Jewish Situation in Italy*, January 1939, 1.
24. *Ibid.*, pp.4–5.
25. LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/513, Sir Andrew McFadyean's Memorandum, 25 January, 1939. For further information on this trip see: Catalan 2018.
26. *Ibid.*
27. The Italian Jewish leadership had, at their own risk, prepared a memorandum for the occasion, to give to the British diplomats, in which they related their fears surrounding the fate of the foreign Jews who were unable to leave Italy in time. They also requested that the Board's envoy put them in contact with the American ambassador, Phillips, who agreed to meet with them at any time. Cf. LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/513, American Joint Distribution Committee, *The Jewish Situation in Italy*, January 1939, pp.4–5.
28. LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/513, Sir Andrew McFadyean's memorandum, 25 January, 1939, p.5.
29. LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/513, Sir Andrew McFadyean's memorandum, 25 January 1939, p.7. The Board's attention to the Italian situation did not diminish during 1939, as another, anonymous, memorandum after September 1939, attests. This report primarily focuses on the effects of the discriminatory laws on the lives of the Jews and their codification in two new civil codes. Cf. LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/12/50, *Memorandum re. the Present position of the Italian Jews in Italy*.
30. The 150 families were considered foreigners because they were originally from Turkey. They had obtained Italian citizenship, but this had been revoked in accordance with the Racial Laws. However, according to the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the process should not have taken place since their Italian nationality had been conferred as a result of the Treaty of Lausanne and could not, therefore, be revoked. Cf. LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/12/50, Letter from A. G. Brotman to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 16 February 1939.
31. LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/12/50, Letter from Malcolm McDonald to Neville Laski, 13 March 1939; Letter from Laski to

McDonald, 15 March 1939. On the Jewish community of Rhodes, see: Clementi and Toliou 2015.

32. LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/12/50, Cecil Roth to A.G. Brotman, 6 January 1939.
33. On the Jews of Rhodes, for whom the persecution continued, see also Cecil Roth's letter to Brotman on 14 August 1940, in ACC/3121/E3/541/1 where the historian clearly refers to the mistreatment inflicted by the Italians to the Jews of the island.
34. LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/271/1, Letter from Cecil Roth to Neville Laski, 16 February 1939.
35. LMA, Board of Deputies of British Jews, ACC/3121/E3/541/1, Letter from Vansittart (FO) to Laski, 8 January 1940.

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Notes on contributor

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