

BANCA NAZIONALE DEL LAVORO

1. Assets managed on behalf of the EGELI

Article 10 of rdl 1728/1938 of 17 November, “Provisions for the defence of the Italian race” stated that Italian citizens of Jewish race could not:

- own or manage, in any manner, companies declared as being of interest to the defence of the nation [...] or companies of any kind employing 100 or more people, nor direct such companies, nor accept positions of administrator or auditor in them;
- own land with an overall value of more than L.5,000;
- own urban buildings with an overall taxable income of more than L.20,000. For buildings with no taxable income, this will be established on the basis of assessments carried out in order to apply the special tax on real estate [...].

Rdl 126/1939 of 9 February specified that the limitations of real estate ownership, established by art. 10 of rdl 1728/1938, “are determined by separately combining land and urban buildings in the kingdom and constituting the real estate possessions of Italian citizens of Jewish race at the date this decree comes into force”.

Regarding the excess quota, or that which exceeds the minimum threshold calculated by multiplying the cadastral income by a set coefficient, the new regulation established the following procedure: [...] after the owner has reported such possessions, the Land Revenue Assessment Office should make a valuation of them, distinguishing between the “excess quota” and the “allowed quota”, and leaving the Revenue Office the task of decreeing the transfer of the assets to the EGELI.

Mussolini’s decree of 9 June 1939 authorised the EGELI to delegate the management and sale of real estate transferred to it (including assets belonging to Italian citizens “of Jewish race”), assigning regional authority for the Marches, Umbria and Abruzzo regions to the Land Bank of the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro.¹ The agreement between the EGELI and the BNL Land Bank, made

¹ The administrative offices of the historic archives are at Via Veneto 119; the documentation is not inventoried and is held at the Pratica di Mare offices, while the staff archive is in Via degli Aldobrandeschi, Rome.

It was possible to consult the *Divisione credito Fondiario, Ente di gestione e liquidazione immobiliare (Egeli)* collection:

- b. 126 (1940-1959): contains 6 personal files including one relating to the Ditta Trevi Galileo fu Abramo (Ancona);
- b. 127 (1941-1950): contains 7 personal files including one relating to the Ditta Calderoni Carlo di Giuseppe (Ancona);
- b. 129 (1940-1951): contains 17 personal files including those relating to: Ascoli Silvana fu Leone (Milan), Ditta Ascoli Mario Vittorio fu Giuseppe (Ancona), Jona Guido fu Raffaele (Ancona), Krachmalnicoff Abramo (Perugia), Rossi Rinaldo (Ancona), Terni Gilberto (Ancona) and Terni Paolo (Milan);
- b. 130 (1940-1951): contains 15 personal files including those relating to: Ascoli Enrico (Ancona) and Trevi Umberto (Ancona);
- b. 131 (1939-1952): contains 9 personal files including those relating to: Ascoli Maria Luisa fu Leone (Ancona), Morpurgo Remo (Ancona), Vivanti Giacomo and Terni Pia ved. Vivanti (Ancona);
- b. 132 (1940-1958): contains: A) General paperwork (correspondence, circulars, accounts), B) General paperwork (schedules and notes), C) General paperwork (cases, Jewish race assessment directives, official gazettes), D) Drafts, forms, miscellaneous, E) Old inventory copies, F) Accounts;
- b. 133 (1940-1958): contains: A) Tax assets 27 personal files, B) Calculations, EGELI management fees 1940-1949, C) Accounts correspondence (Jewish assets, Allied assets, enemy assets (German), tax assets), D) Accounts, cases still current: 7 personal files, first notes and salaries, E) EGELI enemy assets name schedule.

on 13 March 1940, established in 27 articles all the rules covering the appropriation and administration of assets sequestered from Jews.

According to that agreement, the EGELI entrusted the managing bank with the task of:

- a) taking consignment of real estate and assets in the said area and assigned to the EGELI for management as sequestrator, in accordance with application of the War laws;
- b) managing the said assets: nonetheless in accordance with the instructions that the EGELI would communicate to the managing bank to comply with superior directives;

and sent the managing bank a copy of the decree for sequestration of the assets belonging to the enemy firm and appointment by the sequestering body, along with the EGELI's proxy, so the bank could take consignment of the sequestered assets and take over their management.

Jewish assets were initially reported by the owners themselves to their local prefecture, as laid down by the rdl of 9 February 1939. The BNL Land Bank, appointed by the EGELI, took care of making all the necessary checks regarding the size and value of the individual items of real estate exceeding the allowed quota. This operation entailed contact with various offices: the Direct Tax Office and the Land Revenue Assessment Office, through which the "allowed" share had to be divided from the "excess" share and the Jewish assets to be confiscated then registered. Once the legal investigations had been carried out, documented by a detailed final report on the property and its availability for sale, the Prefecture or Revenue Office had to issue the confiscation decree and inform the EGELI of this.

At this point the EGELI authorised the BNL Land Bank to proceed with confiscation of the property in question. So the appropriation, in cases where this actually took place, was the final stage of a long bureaucratic procedure that could take several years. The following table offers some examples to show the average time of the first stage of the bureaucratic procedure, from the initial report of ownership to the close of the legal investigation carried out by the BNL Land Bank.

TABLE 1. *Average duration of investigations for confiscation of the "excess" quotas*

<i>name</i>	<i>reporting date</i>	<i>close of legal investigation date</i>
Ascoli Silvana	10.5.1939	16.1.1942
Ascoli Enrico	12.5.1939	7.11.1941
Ascoli Mario Vittorio	11.5.1939	27.1.1942
Jona Guido	11.5.1939	20.3.1942

The files with paperwork on the following are missing: Sonnino Giacomo, Sonnino Vittorio, Sonnino Umberto, Mondolfi Giuseppe, Sinigaglia Angelo and Michelli Paolo.

There are specific references to the matter in V. Castronovo, *Storia di una Banca. La Banca nazionale del lavoro e lo sviluppo economico italiano, 1913-1938*, Turin, Einaudi, 1983; *Atti e documenti della Banca nazionale del lavoro, III, La BNL tra guerre coloniali e guerre mondiali (1937-1945)*, Florence, Giunti, 1999.

Trevi Umberto	12.5.1939	10.11.1941
Terni Gilberto	8.5.1939	15.11.1941
Rossi Rinaldo	12.5.1939	15.5.1942
Krachmalnicoff Abramo	11.5.1939	18.2.1943

The situation in the provinces within the geographical area of jurisdiction assigned by the EGELI to the BNL Land Bank regarding the reports of Jewish property following the rdl of 9 February 1939 was as follows:²

Ancona: number of reports 197; estimated value of land 274,486; taxable income from buildings 887,429; estimated land excess 99,312; taxable income from buildings excess 97,074.

Ascoli Piceno: number of reports 1; estimated value of land 1,233; taxable income from buildings 3,253; estimated land excess; taxable income from buildings excess.

Macerata: number of reports 10; estimated value of land 17,986; taxable income from buildings 28,886; estimated land excess 2,551; taxable income from buildings excess.

Perugia: number of reports 22; estimated value of land 24,098; taxable income from buildings 55,518; estimated land excess 908; taxable income from buildings excess.

Pesaro–Urbino: number of reports 22; estimated value of land 42,119; taxable income from buildings 41,635; estimated land excess 8,118; taxable income from buildings excess 1,847.

L'Aquila and Chieti:

Ancona was ninth in the rankings of Italian provinces by number of reports of Jewish owned real estate with: 1031 Jews censused; 10 reports; 10 land estimates; 12 taxable incomes from buildings; 11 estimated land excesses; 14 taxable income from buildings excesses.³

In the documentation examined at the BNL historic archive there is a list of Jewish assets whose cases were followed by the BNL Land Bank on behalf of the EGELI. There are 17 positions relating to Jewish property situated mainly in Ancona and its province (15), and one each in Perugia and Mondolfo (Pesaro). The list does not show property belonging to Maria Luisa Ascoli, Giacomo Vivanti and Pia Terni and Remo Morpurgo, whose cases were immediately suspended by the granting of “discrimination” status for them.⁴ There is a substantial balance of urban buildings and rural land.

In only two cases (those of Mario Vittorio Ascoli and Gilberto Terni) is there a mixture of property types (urban and rural).

² F. Levi (edited by), *Le case e le cose. La persecuzione degli ebrei torinesi nelle carte dell'Egeli 1938-1945*, Quaderni dell'Archivio Storico, Compagnia di San Paolo, Turin, 1998, pp. 37,38

³ *Ibid.*, p.40

⁴ BNL, Historic Archive, pacco 132, b. EGELI, fasc. 3.

TABLE 2. Cases managed by the BNL Land Bank

names

province in which the property is located

type of property

value of property exceeding the allowed quota

overall total

legal investigation completed, property appropriated

Sonnino Giacomo	Ancona	Rural property	L.372,708	L.372,708	22.8.1941
Sonnino Vittorio	Ancona	Rural property	L.138,377	L.138,377	25.8.1941
Sonnino Umberto	Ancona	Rural property	L.112,000	L.112,000	29.8.1941,
					appropriated on 16.8.1943
Mondolfi Giuseppe	Ancona	Rural property	L.46,559	L.46,559	Legal
					investigation ended or abandoned 28.6.1942
Calderoni Carlo	Ancona	Urban property	L.94,890	L.94,890	8.10.1941,
					appropriated on 16.9.1942
Sinigaglia Angelo	Ancona	Urban property	L.213,333	L.213,333	8.10.1941
Michelli Paolo	Ancona	Urban property	L.58,333	L.58,333	3.1.1941
Rossi Rinaldo	Ancona	Urban property	L.947,783	L.947,783	16.5.1942
Trevi Umberto	Ancona	Rural property	L.127,188	L.127,188	10.11.1941
Ascoli Enrico	Ancona	Rural property	L.538,011	L.538,011	7.11.1941
Trevi Galileo	Ancona	Urban property	L.227,600	L.227,600	23.12.1941
Ascoli Mario	Ancona	Urban property	L.266,668	L. 1,363,950	27.1.1942
Vittorio		Rural property	L.1,097,282		
Ascoli Silvana	Ancona	Urban property	L.71,803	L.71,803	16.1.1942
Jona Guido	Ancona	Urban property	L.36,866.60	L.36,866.60	20.3.1942,
					confiscation decree 29.3.1943
Terni Gilberto	Numana,	Urban property	L.570,605,20	L. 2,265,031,95	
					5.11.1941
	Ancona	Rural property	L.1.694.426,75		
Krachmalnicoff Abramo	Perugia	Rural property	L.21,781.60	L.21,781.60	18.2.1943
Terni Paolo	Mondolfo (Pesaro)	Rural property		L. 7,136.04	L.7,136.04

Total L.6,643,531.19

In the context of Jewish assets managed by the BNL, excess assets were sequestered by the EGELI in only three cases: Carlo Calderoni (16 September 1942), Guido Jona (29 March 1943) and Umberto Sonnino (16 August 1943). It is possible to reconstruct the sequestration and restitution of Calderoni's assets, but the documentary material relating to the Jona case is very fragmentary and that on Sonnino has unfortunately been completely lost. Apart from the Jona case, no other claims were presented to the provincial commission.

An unheaded document dated 23 December 1942 regarding "Assets of former Jewish ownership" examines the call for the Florence branch to consider the request of a client interested in buying formerly Jewish owned property in the Marches and Umbria regions, and it is stated that "For the time being, however, the transfer procedures have been defined and only the following properties formerly owned by the Jew Carlo Calderoni, son of Giuseppe, in Ancona have been taken into possession: two apartments each of six rooms constituting the entire second floor of the building at Viale della Vittoria n. 75".

This situation seems to have remained unchanged at least until 4 May 1944, when sequestration of the assets of Jona and Sonnino is not mentioned in a note on "EGELI, management of Jewish assets agreement": "we would like, however, to inform you that the previous agreement had very limited application, in that only one property was managed by us, so it was not possible to practically ascertain the effective benefit of such service".

2. Particular cases

Guido Jona

On 29 March 1943 the Ancona Revenue Office issued the transfer decree for real estate owned by Guido Jona. On 19 May 1943 the EGELI informed the BNL Land Bank of the confiscation decree, asking it to notify the person concerned through the bailiff, and to see to appropriating the sequestered property.

On 11 June the Ancona branch advised that it had spoken about transfer of the property in question to a representative of Jona, who had advised that he did not have instructions for the owner's release in anticipation of an appeal against the Provincial Commission's decision presented to the Court of Cassation.

On 16 June 1943 the Ancona Prefecture served Jona with a writ for release of the property previously confiscated by decree of the BNL Land Bank within ten days, warning that if this was not carried out within the said term, it would resort to forced execution of judgement.

On 11 July 1943 Guido Jona's procurator, the solicitor Tasini, informed the BNL Land Bank, through a summons to the Ancona civil court, "that Mr Jona contests the right of the EGELI and therefore of the Sezione Autonoma di Credito to proceed with forced execution in that the Revenue Office decree of 29 March 1943 is null, void, illegal and without juridical effect as it was issued on the basis of the Provincial Commission's sentence of 16 December 1942, 4 February 1943, which must be considered non-existent and against which an appeal was made and properly lodged with the Court of Cassation on 13 March 1943. [...] Given that the Revenue Office decree must necessarily and certainly be annulled and repealed and that the legitimacy of the transfer of testate assets to the EGELI is being contested, the intended forced execution of the relevant decree is illegal and arbitrary and must in any case be suspended until the outcome of the pending proceedings and relative to reconveyance of the assets by invalidity of the deed on the strength of which the transfer was carried out".

It was not possible to reconstruct the developments of the Guido Jona case due to the fragmentary nature of the documentation, but a registered letter dated 30 May 1947 shows that on 31 March 1947 an act of reconveyance of the property owned by the same Jona was drawn up. It therefore seems clear that, despite the appeal presented by Jona, his assets were in any case sequestered and transferred to the management of the BNL Land Bank.

Carlo Calderoni

On 1 August 1942 the EGELI advised the BNL Land Bank of the transfer decree, issued on 22 June 1942 by the Ancona Revenue Office, for the properties included in the excess quota owned by Carlo Calderoni, asking it to give notice of this to the person concerned through the legal official of the Ancona court. The letter states that "That management shall ask Mr Calderoni to hand over the property in a friendly manner and shall therefore carry out the appropriation, taking all the necessary actions. If not, we ask you to notify the expropriated person of the release writ".

On 11 September 1942 the BNL Land Bank appointed Giuseppe Costanzo of the BNL to proceed on its behalf to appropriate and manage Calderoni's property. Costanzo was given the following instructions: "on 17 of this month, at 10 a.m., having first advised the person concerned, armed with documents, you shall go to the place where the properties are located and there, having verbally advised the previous owner of the property, or the person responsible, of your mandate, draft a report of the appropriation with a detailed description of the properties indicating, as far as possible, their value, keeping to general principles [...]".

The appropriation took place without difficulty a day early, on 16 September 1942, at the request of Calderoni himself.

Costanzo reported to the EGELI on the property sequestered from Calderoni as follows: “The building in which the properties taken over by the EGELI are located consists of 8 apartments, along with porter’s home, boiler room, coal cellar, air-raid shelter, entrance lobby and lift. So the ownership share of the common areas belonging to the EGELI is 2/8. The building was constructed between 1935 and 1936 in the most exclusive part of Ancona. The apartments are well laid out and are not in need of any repair, apart from the roller shutters in the Danesi apartment. The repair of these is both urgent and necessary, so I ask you to authorise this necessary work, which will cost a total of about L.300.

“The two apartments taken on consignment are rented: 1) to Dr Gino Danesi, who pays a monthly rental of L.350, plus L.12 towards the cost of the porter. [...] The rental contract expired on 31 August 1942, so I quickly renewed it for one year starting from the first of this month; 2) to Luigi Pozzo, who pays a monthly rental of L.370, plus L.13 towards the cost of the porter. [...] The rental contract expired on 31 August 1942, so I quickly renewed it for one year starting from the first of this month [...]. The entire building is insured against fire and third party risk with the Ancona branch of the Istituto Italiano di Previdenza, policy No. 27325.

“The EGELI’s share of the joint tenants’ fees is as follows:

<i>apartment</i>	<i>heating</i>	<i>lift</i>	<i>general</i>
Danesi	13.27%	10.77%	13.59%
Pozzo	12.32%	9.23%	11.65%

“The building’s administration has been paid up to 31 August 1942; the half-yearly share for the period 1 September 1942 – 28 February 1943, which for the EGELI is around L.325 for each apartment, is now due.

“As all charges and receivables take effect from the 16th of this month, the day possession was taken, I agree that the balance of costs and income from the two apartments should be made. [...].

“A summary estimation suggests that the assets in question may be given a commercial value of L.180,000-200,000. Please advise me as to whether I can take charge of the sale, as I have received requests.”

On 14 October 1942, the EGELI wrote to Costanzo authorising him to pay the cost of repairing the shutters and asking him to see that the balance of the rent and the taxes pending on the sold property were arranged with Calderoni, so that the sum owed to Calderoni of L.94,890 could be paid.

This sum was paid to Calderoni on 7 January 1943, as the balance of the price of the property transferred to the EGELI, plus interest from 16 September 1942 to 7 January 1943 of 3,1585408%, or L.90.

The management costs for the sequestered properties were recorded in detail in monthly reports sent to the EGELI.

On 12 February 1943, Costanzo informed the BNL Land Bank of an offer made by Massimo Pizzi to buy the apartment in Viale Vittoria 75, rented to Pozzo. The amount offered was L.120,000. Pizzi had paid L.20,000 as a deposit.

On 26 March 1943 the EGELI wrote to the BNL Land Bank about Pizzi's offer, asking it to tell him that the price offered was not considered equal to the commercial value of the property.

On 3 April 1943 the Ancona branch of the BNL wrote to the Head Office in response to the EGELI's refusal of the purchase proposal: "We would like to know, for our guidance, what price each apartment would fetch. Several people have not specified their offers as we have been unable to indicate the price asked for the sale".

On 1 May 1943 the EGELI declared: "we would like to inform you that this organisation does not make price requests for formerly Jewish-owned property transferred to it. Those interested must therefore present serious offers, with a non interest-bearing deposit of at least 10% of the total offered as guarantee of the serious nature of the negotiation".

On 28 May 1943 the BNL returned the deposit of L.20,000 to Massimo Pizzo: "as the EGELI does not intend giving a minimum sale price for the two apartments previously owned by Calderoni, it is not possible to carry on further negotiations".

On 2 September Calderoni asked for the return of the property tax paid up until that date for the two sequestered properties.

A statement dated 11 January 1945 on the management of Carlo Calderoni's properties shows a credit of L.9,953.25 and a debit of L.702.20 with the EGELI.

On 5 February 1945, the Ancona branch of the BNL wrote: "We specify that until now we have received no instructions regarding the restitution of property confiscated from citizens of Jewish race. We therefore ask that, until new instructions arrive, you continue the above mentioned administration as in the past, advising Mr Calderoni to make his enquiries claiming the restitution of the assets confiscated from him directly to the EGELI".

On 14 April 1945 Costanzo reported on the management of Calderoni's properties: "The last statement made for the management in question refers to May 1944. Since then – as I informed you on 13 November 1944 – no administrative action has been taken as the two tenants, having moved north, have not paid the rent. The balance on hand at present is L.8,158.10; this sum is deposited in

a current account at this branch. It seems that one of the apartments is being permanently occupied by a certain Riccardo Carloni, while the other has been requisitioned by the Allied troops. I would like to know clearly whether I must continue to concern myself with the administration of the property as it seems that Mr Calderoni does not think so". The same day, the EGELI wrote to Calderoni informing him that the laws for the reconveyance of assets to Jewish citizens provide for this to take place at the request of the person concerned and take effect from the day on which the request was made to the organisation. "This means that the profits from the properties reconveyed go to the person requesting the reconveyance only on the above mentioned day, while until that day the person concerned has the right to collect the interest on the special personal certificate issued at the time; such interest, already established at 4% gross, will be raised to 5% gross on the basis of the above mentioned supplementary laws." In the specific case of the assets in question, given that Calderoni's request was received by the EGELI on 30 March 1945, the effects in question became operative from that same date.

On 26 May 1945 the BNL informed the EGELI that Calderoni's assets had no longer been administered since May 1944. "Indeed, having no longer received the rent, nor paid the share of the condominium expenses, taxes and charges (which are not yet inventoried) nothing has been done for the administration in question. The apartment rented to Mr Pozzo has been illegally occupied by Mr Carloni, as the previous tenant was a Fascist who moved north. Procedures are under way to obtain compensation for occupation of the other apartment by Allied troops."

On 7 July 1945 the BNL told the EGELI that the act of reconveyance to Calderoni had been drafted and the special personal certificate for the sum of L.94,800 (on which the six-monthly interest for 1 January – 1 July 1944 – 1 January 1945 – 1 July 1945 totalling L.15,680 still to be paid) had been returned to the bank.

Once the act for the reconveyance of the assets to their owner was drawn up, taking effect from 30 March 1945, all subsequent correspondence between the BNL, the EGELI, the Land Bank and Costanzo through to February 1950 relates to balancing the income and charges relating to the properties for the period before 30 March 1945.

The main difficulty faced by Costanzo in definitively closing the management balance of Calderoni's assets was recovery of the rent due both from the original tenants and from the Allied troops who had occupied the apartments from July 1944. Regarding the original tenants, Pozzo, who had been executed in the North, had paid only up to the end of April 1944, while Danesi, resident in Verona, only partly settled his debt on 3 September 1945. Costanzo was also forced to apply to the Military Supply Engineer's Office to recover the balance due from the Allied troops. The directives for payment of this balance, communicated to the BNL by the Engineers Office on

16 March 1946, established that the mandates were in favour of the EGELI from the date of occupation until 30 March 1945 and in favour of Mr Calderoni from 31 March on.

3. BNL staff archive

Study of the staff archive on the basis of a personal card index showed that, by checking these against the list provided by the Banca d'Italia historic archive, which shows the names of 20 Italian Jewish staff censused and dismissed (following rdl 1728/1938) from the BNL, there are two additional names, those of Giuseppe Ascarelli and Omero Emilio Jarach. So 22 Jewish staff were actually dismissed from the BNL rather than 20, including two managers, Federico Pollak and Isaaco Astrologo, respectively of the Trieste and Naples branches, and 20 clerks of various grades (Fulvio Ara Coen, Franco Ascoli, Albano Basevi, Settimio Caivano, Guido Camerino, Arnaldo Costa, Eraldo Del Valle, Emanuele Di Cave, Giacomo Jarach, Lia Marta Levi, Luigi Liebman Levi, Guido Macchioro, Carlo Pacifico, Enrico Sabbadini, Paolo Schloss, Eraldo Sonnino, Vittorio Tagliacozzo and Romeo Volterra).

The only files that have remained complete are those relating to Pollak and Astrologo.

What mainly emerges from the personal files are fragments of the lives of people who from one day to the next found themselves without a job or salary and were forced to survive by inventing a job and a different life.

The case of Federico Pollak is an interesting one. He was manager of the Trieste branch from April 1932 and was dismissed on 31 December 1938 following the directives of rdl 1728/1938.

On 21 July 1939 Pollak wrote to his friend and colleague Luigi Simeoni, Head Office manager of the BNL, asking him to intercede in his case. A few weeks earlier, Pollak and his wife had been deprived of their Italian citizenship. The Pollak couple had immediately presented a claim to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but Pollak sought the aid of someone with influence in Rome through Simeoni. No reply from the BNL to this request has been retained.

During the War, as shown by a letter sent by Pollak to d'Agostino on 31 August 1942, Pollak was summoned by Head Office for Public Security, which accused him of having collaborated with foreign banks, mainly English, probably as a result of an anonymous report. In the letter in question, Pollak asked d'Agostino to intervene in his favour to clear him of such accusations. A handwritten, anonymous note on the letter says "we do not have anything to do with it".

After the various difficulties he experienced during the War, Federico Pollak was reinstated on 25 September 1944, again as general manager.

Another documented story is that of Arnaldo Costa, who was dismissed like all the other Jewish staff as a result of rdl 1728/1938, despite having an Aryan father and having been baptised in 1918.

After his dismissal, Costa went frequently to the Livorno branch of the BNL to ask about his severance pay and whether the Head Office had altered its decision, given his particular racial situation. This state of things and the fact that he had shown great devotion to his work and to have properly carried out numerous tasks involving the handling of money prompted his former colleagues to give him occasional jobs despite the racial measures. Costa was entrusted with the task of making some payments into third party postal current accounts or to labour or secondary organisations, and took possession of a sum of L.18-20,000. Costa took the cash from the teller, signing the withdrawal slip, but did not make the payment at the Post Office, keeping the sum or part of it. It was Costa himself who reported his theft with a letter to the manager dated 12 December 1938:

“It is with disturbed mind and tormented spirit that I write this. Recent events have made me lose my head; [...]. With hopes of saving my job now lost, I saw the ruin of my family, poverty and the children with no bread; in short, everything that unfortunately anyone with a little common sense can foresee, which with the development of events may happen. The hope of receiving severance pay and with that being able to manage was also dashed, because having been so infrequently at the Banca del Lavoro, it will be very little. I needed an amount to try to arrange matters after leaving. And so now, dear Manager, I am writing to ask your forgiveness for a serious error committed and for which I also ask your personal forgiveness [...]. I continued going to the bank during my suspension, to take on the task of making payments for the labour organisations at the post offices against the issue of postal cheques. I made many of these payments this month, some of quite considerable sums. Unfortunately the whole state of affairs, of which I have already spoken, and the numerous obligations I was faced with, induced me to do something I shouldn't have: three of the last payments I had to make for the farm workers health insurance fund, I did not make because, making a lightning decision, I thought that that was the figure I needed to leave and look for work, to be able to continue to give bread to my small, beloved children, who have no blame for what happens in the world. I left, meeting various obligations, and am now going to France with the hope of being helped and directed to do some work, even the most menial, and with the strong desire to in some way repay everything I borrowed through to the last cent [...].”

On 11 January 1939, the general manager of the Livorno branch arranged to subject Costa to the disciplinary procedure of art. 74 of the staff regulation for having stolen the total sum of L.18,000 from the bank.

A letter from Costa dated 5 May 1940 addressed to the general manager of the Livorno branch shows that the former Jewish employee was then being held in the Livorno prison. He had been

arrested while trying to secretly return to Italy and was sentenced by the Livorno court on 11 September 1939 to 17 months' prison and a L.6,000 fine. The Costa case was closed in May 1956 with his reinstatement by the bank and payment of the final sum due (L.21,909).

The Head Office informed the management of all branches with circular No. 40 of 12 September 1944 that the Commissary Board of the bank had decided, with regard to the legislative directives in force, that all employees who had been dismissed because they belonged to the Jewish race were to be readmitted to service on demand. They were to be reinstated at the rank and qualification they had had at the time they were dismissed and would be given the same financial conditions as at that date, plus all the increases of a general nature made in the meantime.

A note of 2 August 1949 reconstructs the events relating to some Jewish employees reinstated after the end of the War. It concerns the financial situation of five of the more qualified Jewish employees: Federico Pollak, manager of the Trieste branch, Isacco Astrologo, manager of the Naples branch, Levi Luigi Liebman, Settimio Caivano and Guido Macchioro.

“Employees of Jewish race who had been dismissed from service in 1938 were reinstated in June 1944, following abolition of the racial laws. As known, at the time of their reinstatement, the seniority they had acquired from the time they were first engaged by the bank was recognised, and their social security fund revived, by means of the bank crediting its contributions for the entire period of the interruption as if nothing had happened.”

The Ordinary Commissary Board, in its session of 14 May 1945, however, decided that in the case of the employment relationship subsequently being terminated, the person concerned would have to repay the amount of the severance pay received at the time of dismissal, plus 5% interest, capitalised six-monthly. This was to be calculated from the date of receipt of such settlement, regarding the social security fund, and from 1 January 1944, regarding the longevity pay (for economic purposes, reinstatement was dated from January 1944 and not June 1944). In accordance with the above mentioned decision, the amounts due were therefore set aside and regularly increased with interest, with six-monthly capitalisation.

Since such debt exposure increased considerably over time, the individuals were advised, in their own interest, to pay off the respective items, possibly in instalments or resorting to normal advances on their salaries which the bank would willingly provide.

Federico Pollak, Luigi Liebman, Settimio Caivano and Guido Macchioro all accepted the proposal and on 31 December 1948 paid off their debts.

At 30 June 1949 only Astrologo's debt was still outstanding.

He was questioned on the matter both verbally and by letter of 18 July, to which he replied on 22 July that he was prepared to pay off the debt but “mainly moral and legal reasons confirmed his

conviction that he was not obliged to pay interest on the sums received given that the longevity pay had not been requested by him but forced on him by the iniquitous racial laws". He declared that he was, however, prepared to pay interest on the social security fund, given that it had been revived from January 1939, but not on the longevity pay.

The personnel office did not share Astrologo's opinion: having had their careers reinstated, the employees of Jewish race would receive severance pay at the future termination of their employment calculated on the basis of their seniority dating from their original engagement. It therefore seemed fair to the office that it should be incumbent on them to pay interest on the sum they had received when dismissed from service, due from the day on which they were paid such sums. The exception suggested by Astrologo had not been presented by the other Jewish employees, with whom an inequality of treatment would be created if that same interest they had already paid was deducted in the case of Astrologo.

The following is the detail of Astrologo's debit position:

Severance pay at 31 December 1938

– Social security fund L. 52,282.80

5% interest capitalised six-monthly from 8 February 1939 (date of the collection of the severance pay) to 30 June 1949 L. 35,080.20

total L. 87,363

– Longevity pay L. 101,385.50

5% interest capitalised six-monthly from 1 January 1944 to 30 June 1949 L. 31,640

total L. 133,025

– Sum owed by Astrologo at 30 June 1949 is L. 220,388.

– Astrologo did not intend paying the sum of L. 31,640".

The remaining correspondence shows that, despite repeated requests, Astrologo only settled his position on 9 June 1950.