

RISPARMIO POSTALE

Unlike the banking and insurance sectors, which were represented on the Commission by authoritative spokesmen, allowing various investigations whose results are shown in the Report (especially the banking sector), the question of postal savings did not receive the same suitable attention.

Leaving aside the question of just how many Italians opted for postal savings in the period in question, there is no doubt that this form of account was fairly widespread. This was due partly to the broad representation of the postal system and to the lesser development of the banking system at the time. Whatever the case, a quick glance over a sample of confiscation decrees clearly shows that many of these also included the confiscation of postal passbooks.

So the Commission is aware that the research made in this sector was not on a par with that of the other sectors and, partly for this reason, has noted the need for further studies in the “Concluding remarks” at the close of the Report. In any case it seems right to refer to the information and main facts acquired by correspondence and direct contacts with Poste Italiane Spa.

In the “Summary Report”, reference is made to the relations established with the company, which were of two kinds: the first intended to gather information on specific cases; the second more widely aimed at setting out overall information on postal savings in several towns thought significant because they also housed internment camps or because Jews were also confined in them. The first contact with Poste Italiane Spa was made with a letter of 22 April 1999, which stated that: “As copious documentation relating to postal savings accounts undersigned by [...] has come from Parma, Poste Italiane is kindly asked if it would like to use the enclosed list of deceased subscribers of ‘Jewish race’, many of whom, moreover, died in the Nazi death camps, to verify whether any trace remains in its archives of securities in their names [...]. If such traces are found, it is also asked to ascertain whether such securities were acquired or confiscated in application of the sequestration and/or confiscation measures by the PT administration of the time, or by other public or private bodies at the time appointed ‘sequestrators’ or ‘confiscators’ of the same assets”.

Poste Italiane Spa replied to this letter pointing out that “regarding the list provided by the city of Parma about the ‘Jewish citizens’ who were former holders of savings accounts, I have arranged to reopen the accounting for the said securities – which have in the meantime been prescribed in accordance with art. 168 of dpr 156/73 – updating the overall credit of interest to 31 December 1998”. The same note asked “whether such accounting items should be discharged and if so, on what date, and to whom the respective sums should be sent”.

In a subsequent note of 15 October 1999, the Commission referred to a list provided by the Contemporary Jewish Documentation Centre “in which the names were shown of citizens ‘declared

Jewish' by the racial legislation then in force, who it is presumed opened a postal savings account at the Post Office in question (Vò Euganeo) at the time of being interned in the camp set up in the municipality of Vò Euganeo (Padua). The attached photocopy shows that the balance in the said accounts was sequestered by German soldiers. With regard to the above, Poste Italiane Spa is asked if it could kindly ascertain whether that sequestration took place (to the prejudice of which people and for what sums) and whether, after the War, any form of restitution or compensation was made to the holders or their legitimate heirs (also, possibly, reviving the said accounts that had remained 'dormant') [...]. Poste Italiane Spa responded to this request saying that the studies carried out, also on site, had proved negative.

With a subsequent note of 21 February 2000, information was requested about the opening of postal savings accounts at the Post Offices of Fossoli di Carpi, Borgo San Dalmazzo and Bolzano Gries. The company had already learnt that the accounting for the accounts traced at the Bolzano office, branch 4 (formerly Gries di Bolzano) had been reopened, while a negative response – despite the extension of the research to the Carpi office – had come from the Modena branch, due to the confirmed closure of the old records in the Fossoli office. Poste Italiane also advised that no information had been received from the Borgo San Dalmazzo office.

Information on the final outcome of three postal savings accounts was requested in a more recent letter of 31 October 2000, and on the final outcome of the deposits in the Cassa Depositi e Prestiti at the Cassa di Livorno. Poste Italiane replied indicating that it could confirm, apart from any unlikely contrary accounting results, the prescription of accounts 1,018 (32/64), 21,466 (63/336) and 20,707 (28/105), which could be reopened. The company advised that it had asked the Cassa Depositi e Prestiti about what had been referred to regarding some deposits in Siena and Livorno, and again asked whether the reopened accounting positions had to be closed and where the respective sums were to be sent.

A further specific request was sent to the Financial Customer Services Department of the Bassano, Vicenza, branch on 9 May 2000 regarding postal savings accounts opened in the village of Canove, in the Roana (Vicenza) town council district, between 1940 and 1944 by foreign Jewish citizens resident in Italy. More particularly, it was asked how many of such deposits there were and what movements had been made in them since September 1943. Apart from verification of the documentation recently received by the Bancoposta Department of Poste Italiane, there was no reply to this letter.

The reply from the Poste Italiane to the letter of 16 December 1999 asking if it had a national general list of all savings accounts current in the years 1938-45 and whether there was a national list

of all the accounts that had not been closed by the holders and which have presumably been prescribed, is almost entirely reprinted in the “Summary of the Commission’s Work”.

The Poste Italiane gave its most significant assistance in recent months. On learning that accounting positions relating to accounts issued by the Post Offices in all municipalities of Italy are still retained – or at least were until 1972 – the Commission asked to see the accounting positions, starting from their respective reopening, related to the postal savings accounts opened in the Post Offices of 26 municipalities where there were internment camps (limited to specific periods) and eight municipalities where Jews had been confined. Poste Italiane Spa met this request by providing the Commission with photographic reproductions of all the pages available regarding the issue and interest period of postal savings accounts in the Offices indicated.

Due to complex procedural difficulties, the documentation was received by the Commission too late to be evaluated and referred to in the Report. It seems quite obvious that the Commission will use its own most suitably qualified members to study these documents more closely, within, but also beyond, its term of expiry. Such study will be aimed in particular at ascertaining whether Jewish citizens are also among the postal savings account holders indicated in the numerous accounting positions now available for consultation; whether there are accounts that at the time were not closed and which were then prescribed; and whether, as indicated by Poste Italiane Spa regarding other accounts, they can be reopened. On the basis of this documentation, there is now a chance to make a more systematic study and Poste Italiane Spa will certainly confirm its willingness to cooperate also after the Commission’s work has ended.

It will here only be noted that the Postal Administration was also involved in the matter of confiscations, as is clearly shown in some parts of the chapter “The confiscation of Jewish property in Parma 1943-1945”.

The Treasury – Paymaster General – EGELI Liquidation Office was also interested in the question of postal savings. The Liquidation Office stated in a letter of 26 November 1959 to the provincial Post Office of Genoa that it was in possession of a personal savings passbook, No. 20707, issued by the Genoa Post Office on 6 December 1943 in the name of Carolina Tedesco, daughter of Carlo, with an apparent balance of L.2,500 on 8 February 1944. This account had been sequestered in application of the “racial laws”.

The Liquidation Office continued: “As in the terms laid down by articles 1 and 2 of dlgt 393/1946 of 5 May, none of those entitled to do so has exercised the right to claim provided for in the said decree and, given that it has therefore been subject to positive prescription, in accordance with law, [...] that Administration is asked to provide for the close of the deposit in question in favour of this office, crediting the relative sum with interest matured in the meantime, to account [...]”.

The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications was posed the same question and replied to the Treasury with a letter of 12 January 1960. “[...] notice is given that the response made [...] cannot be accepted, being impeded by the legal provision contained in art. 140 of the postal code in force, according to which all savings accounts and credits in them cannot be the object of sequestration or seizure, except by order of the penal judicial authorities, even for the recovery of costs”. The statement of principle that follows is interesting: “Regarding this, in fact, it is necessary to recall that the first legal effect of the quoted dlgt 393, issued to remedy the abuses committed against Jewish private property, is precisely that of having reinstated the previous order and so to have re-established, also with regard to the account quoted above, the principle of not being liable to sequestration, in accordance with the dictates of the law just mentioned. Given the above, and considering that no notification has ever been received of the effective sequestration of the security concerned, we would like to inform you that this Head Office cannot but continue to hold the relative account, until expiry of the terms of the 30 year prescription, alone to which the account itself can now be subject, after which this same Head Office will provide to directly confiscate its credit, in accordance with art. 151 of the cited PT code, modified with dl 393/1948 of 9 February. In view of all this, this Office is asked to transfer the said passbook to the writer for its rightful safe custody and, in order to verify any other similar cases, precise information would be appreciated as to whether and which other accounts and postal investment certificates are still found there for similar reasons to that indicated here”.

This position of the Ministry of Post was shared by the Treasury which, with a subsequent letter of 29 March 1960, stated that: “The two postal savings passbooks mentioned below and attached to this note, previously held by the EGELI Liquidation, are consequently forwarded, meaning that no others exist among the files and documents of the said Liquidation:

- 1) Passbook No. 20707 – (28/105), registered to Carolina Tedesco, daughter of Carlo, issued by Genoa Post Office No. 10 on 6 December 1943 and having an apparent balance of L.2,500;
- 2) Passbook No. 21466 (63/336), registered to Cesare Franco, son of Edmondo, issued by Turin Post Office No. 18 on 8 October 1942, and having an apparent balance of L.20.

We await your kind acknowledgement of receipt”.