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## Moving, cataloguing and preserving Gramsci's Prison Notebooks

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## Moving, cataloguing and preserving Gramsci's Prison Notebooks

### Abstract

This essay reconstructs some of the events which, even though not directly concerning either the content or the chronology of the composition of Antonio Gramsci's Notebooks, crucially marked their existence. The relevant events may be listed in four groups: 1) the January 1934 shipment of some of the notebooks Gramsci had had in the prison in Turi to the clinic in Formia where he was hospitalized and of some others to Rome, to the home address of his sister-in-law Tat'jana (Tatiana) Schucht; 2) the numbering and cataloguing of the Notebooks that Tat'jana Schucht did a few weeks after Gramsci's death. Special attention will be paid to the results of the skilful analyses carried out by the Istituto centrale per il restauro e la conservazione del patrimonio archivistico e librario on some of the labels that Tat'jana pasted on the notebooks she catalogued; 3) their shipment to Moscow, between 1937 and 1938, and their preservation until they were returned to Rome after the end of the Second World War; 4) the differences in the ways Gramsci's Notebooks were counted and the different total number that they were said to consist of. The proposed reconstruction will stress the importance of often underestimated data: the presence of a sketchbook among those normally referred to as notebooks; the fact that Tat'jana herself, while numbering thirty-one of Gramsci's notebooks, did not number two large-format notebooks, which can be assumed to have remained separate from the others for quite some time; and the existence of two other large-format notebooks on which Tat'jana began to prepare, without completing them, a catalogue of the topics and a complete transcription of the notebooks written by Gramsci. It will moreover become clear that the hypotheses put forward by those who have supported the thesis that one or more of the notebooks were subtracted lack solid foundations and are unnecessary.

### Keywords

Gramsci's notebooks; moving; cataloguing; preservation; Tat'jana Schucht.

# *Moving, cataloguing and preserving Gramsci's Prison Notebooks*

Nerio Naldi<sup>1</sup>

## *1. From the prison in Turi to the clinic in Formia*

As is well known, after Gramsci's very serious physical collapse on 7 March 1933 in the Turi prison, he was examined by a doctor indicated by the family, Professor Uberto Arcangeli. Following that visit, on 25 March, Tat'jana submitted a petition requesting that her brother-in-law be admitted to a clinic. The request remained unanswered, but after Gramsci's brother Carlo submitted two further

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requests (on 23 July and 23 August 1933) hospitalization was granted and the Ministry of the Interior chose Dr Giuseppe Cusumano's clinic in Formia as his destination. On 20 October, Carlo formalized his consent to bear the costs of Antonio's stay,<sup>2</sup> but, due to the misinterpretation of a letter to the *Direttore generale degli istituti di prevenzione e pena*,<sup>3</sup> Gramsci's admission to the Formia clinic was changed to an order to transfer him to the infirmary of the prison in Civitavecchia.<sup>4</sup> The first to be informed was Carlo, who in turn informed Antonio and Tat'jana. Both Gramsci and the lawyer Saverio Castellett, who had already followed his case, asked for the reinstatement of the first destination – this was granted, but in the meantime the second decision was carried out. Around the middle of November Gramsci heard that he was to be transferred to the Civitavecchia prison. On the evening of the 18th he was informed that the departure was set for the following morning and was accompanied to the prison storeroom to prepare his luggage – which he could do together with Gustavo Trombetti, who, as sometimes happened with sick prisoners, had been put in Gramsci's cell to help him with his daily needs. On the evening of Sunday 19 November, Gramsci was in the Civitavecchia prison.

### 1.1. Preparation of the luggage

A description of the way in which storage of prisoners' belongings was organized in the Turi prison can be found in a communication from Tat'jana to the PCd'I Foreign Centre (*Centro estero*) written in January 1929, shortly after her first visit to Turi:

[Anything] he may have is put in the prison storeroom where all the prisoners' things are kept. Linen, books, effects. In the cell the prisoner can only have one change of linen and a limited number of books.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, those expenses, as documented in Tat'jana's correspondence with her relatives in Moscow, were borne thanks to the transfer of funds from the Soviet Union - no source suggests that they were borne by the Italian government, as is instead attested in the case of General Luigi Capello, who was also detained in the same clinic in Formia (see Ministry of the Interior to DGIPP, 8 June 1930, ACS, MGG, L. Capello).

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Gramsci to Giovanni Novelli, 3 November 1933 (Gramsci 2020, p. 1183-5).

<sup>4</sup> These decisions too, as was the norm for everything concerning Gramsci, went through the evaluation of the Ministry of the Interior and of Mussolini (see ACS, CPC and MGG, A. Gramsci).

<sup>5</sup> Tat'jana to the *Centro estero*, 1-8 January 1929 (Gramsci and Schucht 1997 p. 1422; see also Gramsci's letters to Tat'jana of 3 November 1928 and 11 January 1932: Gramsci 2020 pp. 304 and 715-16 [English translation in Gramsci 1994 I, p. 231 and II, pp. 125-6]).

Based on the examination of various documents and testimonies, Tat'jana's reference to 'a given limited number of books' can be understood to mean that, at that time, the number of books was limited, but was defined by the prison governor with a certain degree of latitude; a rather narrow upper limit (four books) was instead set in 1932.<sup>6</sup> Presumably also subject to similar rules were the note-books in which Gramsci, a few weeks after Tat'jana's first visit, was allowed to write.<sup>7</sup>

Precisely with regard to the notebooks, Trombetti, recalling his own participation in the preparation of the luggage, pointed out an expedient agreed upon in advance to place them, without being seen, in a trunk:

Around 11 p.m., they took us to the storeroom where the detainees kept their personal belongings, books, suitcases, clothing, etc.; there we had to fill a suitcase that Gramsci would take with him and a trunk that would then be sent to his sister-in-law Tat'jana in Rome. Gramsci, while waiting for them to take us to the storeroom, expressed his concern for the fate of his notebooks, in case the guard who was in charge of checking everything put in the luggage did not let those writings through. Certainly these would have been lost forever. So we came to an agreement, and made a little plan. At a certain point he would start a conversation in the Sardinian language with the guard, who like Gramsci was Sardinian, and, at the agreed moment, just as Gramsci duly placed himself between me and the guard, at that moment I took the pack of notebooks from the shelf and stuffed them into the trunk, taking care to cover them immediately with other things. In this way the operation succeeded, and Gramsci became calmer. Once the trunk was filled, it was bound up and sealed in Gramsci's presence, then in the next few days sent to Rome.<sup>8</sup>

Trombetti's testimony must be taken as a starting point for an overall reconstruction. There are three essential points of data that we can extract from it. 1) The objects Gramsci possessed were divided into two main groups: some went into luggage he took with him on the trip (a *suitcase*); others were prepared for sending on later. 2) His notebooks were stored on a shelf. 3) Gramsci feared

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Naldi 2023b.

<sup>7</sup> This authorization was granted in January 1929. On the number of notebooks he was allowed to keep in his cell, see Naldi 2023b.

<sup>8</sup> Trombetti 1992 pp. 86-87. Cf. also *Memories of a cellmate of "Antonio Gramsci"* (pp. 11-12, FB, Fondo G.Trombetti), Arbizzani 1987a, p. 11; Trombetti 1946 p. 235; Paulesu Quercioli 1977, p. 233 (2010 edn., p. 253); Arbizzani 1987b, p. 80; and the letter to Giuseppe Carbone of January 1952.

that the notebooks would be lost and Trombetti, in agreement with him, and unseen by the guard, put them in a trunk to be shipped.

Gramsci's fear seems perfectly understandable. That the notebooks were kept on a shelf is plausible, but it is also possible that Gramsci had taken them from one of the containers he owned and placed them on the shelf at that very moment. One of Gramsci's letters to Tat'jana (the one dated 4 December 1933) confirms Trombetti's statements regarding the preparation of a suitcase.<sup>9</sup> In another, written on 27 November, we find information on what Gramsci had left in Turi and how those objects had been distributed, but the picture that emerges is more complex than the one outlined by Trombetti. Gramsci does not refer only to a trunk, nor does he take it for granted that part of what he had in Turi could be sent to Rome; he speaks of material that could form *two railway packages* to be sent to the destination where he would remain for a reasonably long time and of *two trunks* to be left in Turi until his should have been sent 'home, if I were allowed to do so'. The two packages were to contain linen and books. Of the two trunks he said that the larger one contained only books, while the smaller contained books and perhaps a few items of underwear; he made no mention of the notebooks:

I left two trunks at the Turi prison, a larger one and the small English trunk [*bauletto inglese*] that you had purchased in Milan; I also left two railway packages, including linen and books. I don't know what to do with this stuff. Is it better to have it sent to Civitavecchia, and then have it travel again? The trunks can be left in Turi for some time; the large trunk is full of books that have no urgent interest for me and which I would have sent home, if I were allowed to do so. The small trunk [*bauletto inglese*], on the other hand, contains books that are still of interest to me for my studies (given that I am still able to study) and I think it also contains some linen items. I think that if you know anything about what is to happen to me, you can write to the Directorate of the Turi Prison giving directions for the shipment of the railway packages and asking them please to wait with the trunks.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Gramsci 2020 p. 1053; see also Gramsci to Tatiana, 20 November 1933 (Gramsci 2020 p. 1049).

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Gramsci to Tatiana dated 27 November 1933 (Gramsci 2020 p. 1051; in English Gramsci 1994 II, p. 340; the standard 1994 English translation is here modified for greater precision and to bring it into line with the wording used in the present text).

What Trombetti reported will be reconsidered in section 1.5 in the light of these elements and others that we shall now examine.

### 1.2. *Shipment of the luggage*

On 7 December, Gramsci was transferred from Civitavecchia to Formia. Three days later Tat'jana informed him that she had written to the Turi prison 'for the shipment of the railway packages to be prepared with personal effects and books'.<sup>11</sup> In all likelihood, the request for the shipment of the *railway packages* had been sent between 7 and 10 December:

I hereby beg you to arrange for the dispatch by means of two express railway packages of the items already prepared for packing and dispatch by Gramsci himself. Naturally, the consignment will be carriage paid, including all expenses incurred by your Administration. Two trunks of books still remain in Turi which, as soon as I am able to obtain instructions from Gramsci, I will let you know how and where they are to be sent.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, on 22 December, when asking the director of the DGIPP (General Director of the Institutes of Prevention and Punishment) for his permission regarding the magazines Gramsci had already been receiving in Turi, Tat'jana added:

I would also ask you to speed up the shipment from Turi to Formia of that part of the clothing and books that my brother-in-law had asked to be sent to him by railway packages and which have not yet reached him.<sup>13</sup>

Certainly it was perfectly clear to both Tat'jana and the DGIPP that the *railway packages* did not include the two *trunks*. In fact, on 29 December the DGIPP forwarded that request to the Ministry of the Interior specifying that

Regarding the request to send the clothing and books left by Gramsci in Turi, contained in the aforementioned request, we inform you that the Governor of the aforementioned prison assures us that on the 23rd of this month a part of these belongings and books was sent, and that the remaining objects belonging to Gramsci, contained in two trunks, will be sent as soon as

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<sup>11</sup> Tat'jana's letter to Gramsci of 10 December 1933 (Gramsci and Schucht 1997 p. 1393).

<sup>12</sup> Tat'jana to the governor of the Turi prison, 7-10 December 1933 (FIG, AAG, Carte Tatiana Schucht, Correspondence).

<sup>13</sup> ACS, CPC, A. Gramsci.

the person concerned requests them, in accordance with the wish expressed by him when he was moved to Civitavecchia.<sup>14</sup>

These were essentially the same words that the management of the Turi prison had used on 25 December to inform the DGIPP that the shipment of packages had been carried out:

I inform you that, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of this month, part of the articles of clothing and books left in the storeroom of this Penitentiary at the time of his departure were sent [to Gramsci]. The remainder of Gramsci's belongings, contained in two trunks, will be sent as soon as the person concerned requests them, in accordance with his wish expressed when he was moved to the Civitavecchia Penitentiary.<sup>15</sup>

None of these documents contains any reference either to the notebooks or to the sending of one trunk to Formia and the other to Rome. This suggests that on 25 December the management of the Turi prison had not yet examined the contents of the two trunks prepared by Gramsci and that, if at the time of his departure he had made a formal request that one of the two trunks be sent to Tat'jana, its examination had also been postponed. But on 29 December, Tatiana sent Novelli a new request, devoted exclusively to the two trunks lying in Turi. Tat'jana asked

to make provision for two trunks of books and objects of use left by the prisoner Gramsci Antonio in the Turi penitentiary. One large trunk of books which are not currently of interest to Gramsci could be delivered to the undersigned, while the other smaller crate could be addressed to Gramsci himself in the nursing home of Dr Cusumano in Formia, where the prisoner is a patient. Naturally, all this with your permission and if you consider agreeing to such a request. If you wish to make such provisions to the Penitentiary of Turi, the undersigned will take care of all related expenses. If not, please inform me how to proceed with the recovery of books and how to avoid the storage – perhaps contrary to regulations – of objects belonging to a prisoner who has been transferred elsewhere.<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime, the DGIPP had also received another request written by Gramsci on 24 December. As Tatiana had already done on 22 December, Gramsci asked to be allowed to receive the

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<sup>14</sup> ACS, CPC, A. Gramsci.

<sup>15</sup> ACS, MGG, A. Gramsci.

<sup>16</sup> ACS, CPC, A. Gramsci (Gramsci and Schucht 1997 p. 1388 n. 1; Gramsci 2020 p. 1054 n. 4).

magazines he had already been able to receive in Turi, but gave them in detail and added a further request to be allowed to read some other magazines and newspapers. The two new requests of 24 and 29 December were transmitted by the DGIPP to the Ministry of the Interior on 4 January, specifying that they concerned the same subjects as the request of 22 December<sup>17</sup>. However, Tat'jana's petition of 29 December no longer referred to the *two packages* mentioned on 22 December, but to the *two trunks* – and we know that the contents of the trunks were not limited to *clothing effects* and, above all, were different from those of the *packages*. Tat'jana – who had spoken of *books* and *personal belongings* [*effetti*] – had not concealed those differences, but it is likely that someone at the Ministry of Justice had been confused by the succession of the three instances and by their apparent similarity and that the same had happened at the Ministry of the Interior. In any case, none of those involved had mentioned the presence of notebooks.

Be that as it may, the Ministry of the Interior accepted the description made by the Ministry of Justice and on 13 January informed the Questore of Rome and the DGIPP that 'the Ministry of the Interior does not object to the acceptance of the two aforementioned requests'.<sup>18</sup> Tat'jana's request was summarized in these words: 'she asks that her brother-in-law Gramsci be granted the belongings left by him in the penitentiary of Turi di Bari'.<sup>19</sup> The Ministry of the Interior did not mention either Tatiana's request that one trunk be sent to her and the other to Gramsci or the presence of books and other items. This may have left the matter entirely in the hands of the DGIPP and of the Turi prison management.

In actual fact, one trunk was sent to Gramsci and the other to Tat'jana: on 29 January 1934, the governor of the Turi prison informed Tatiana that the two trunks (which now appeared to contain only books) had been sent:

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<sup>17</sup> ACS, CPC, A. Gramsci.

<sup>18</sup> ACS, MGG, A. Gramsci.

<sup>19</sup> ACS, MGG, A. Gramsci.

Some days ago, the trunks of books left here by the prisoner Gramsci Antonio were sent, and, in accordance with his wishes, the large one was forwarded to Formia, while the small one was directed to you.<sup>20</sup>

This communication, as well as leaving one in doubt as to the contents of the trunks, leads one to believe that the shipments were made in the opposite way to the one which Tat'jana had specified on 29 December: the large trunk to Formia instead of Rome and the small trunk to Rome instead of Formia. However, from what Tat'jana wrote to Sraffa a few weeks later (again, without mentioning the notebooks), it can be deduced that her and Gramsci's instructions had been followed:

he received the books from Turi, the ones he had put aside to be sent to the Clinic, with the Ministry's authorization. It was also granted that a trunk of books should be sent to my address.<sup>21</sup>

### *1.3. Could a prisoner's notes leave the prison?*

With regard to the removal of a prisoner's personal belongings, we know that the *Regolamento carcerario* (Prison Regulations) in force since 1931 covered only three cases: items that the prisoner had had with him when he entered the prison and had been taken over by the management (usually documents, money and valuables); items that a prisoner took directly with him on the occasion of a transfer; and items to be returned to relatives in the event of the death of a prisoner.<sup>22</sup> For items that were to follow a detainee on transfer, there were two separate arrangements:

If a convicted person is to be transferred, the biographical file, the health certificate and the list of prison property left with the convicted person and, at the discretion of the governor, a part of his money, for the costs of food to be

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<sup>20</sup> FG, AAG, Carte Tatiana Schucht, Correspondence (Francioni 2016, p. 27 footnote 47; and Lattanzi 2017, p. 59). Tat'jana had already written to Giulia on 4 January 1934 that Gramsci had received 'the monthly magazines' and that he had 'everything he needed to write' and that she hoped he would soon be able 'to work again, more or less assiduously' (Schucht 1991, pp. 154-6). It is probable, however, that Tat'jana was referring simply to the writing paper or new notebooks she had brought him, without implying that the notebooks written in Turi had already reached him (as we shall see, it can be assumed, however, that at least one of those notebooks Gramsci had brought with him).

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Tat'jana to Sraffa dated 16 February 1934. A written communication containing 'the authorization of the Ministry' to which Tat'jana referred is not preserved, but in all probability Tat'jana was referring to a communication of the Ministry of Justice (i.e., of the DGIPP).

<sup>22</sup> *Regolamento carcerario*, Articles 66, 111, 113 and 179; *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, No 147, 27 June 1931, Ordinary Supplement.

incurred during the journey, shall be remitted to the head of the escort. The money and other objects and documents are transmitted directly to the governor of the prison of destination.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of Gramsci's transfer from Turi to Civitavecchia and thence to Formia, the preparation of a list was therefore only foreseen for the objects he took directly with him;<sup>24</sup> the dispatch of the other personal objects, which had to follow him, does not appear to have been subject to any provision. However, Gramsci had, on several occasions, delivered books to relatives who had visited him in Turi (Tat'jana, Carlo and Gennaro) and this, as far as we know, had happened without difficulty. In fact, his correspondence bears witness to the fact that up to the spring of 1932, he had sent or delivered books to relatives on several occasions, and in one case he indicates how this was done following authorization.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, communications between the governors of the prisons of Lucca and Alessandria, the DGIPP and the Ministry of the Interior which took place from May to November 1933 show how sending to family members books and magazines that the prisoners had received in prison took place following authorizations and checks to ensure that they did not contain clandestine messages.<sup>26</sup>

If a prisoner had been authorized to write in his cell, it might be obvious that what he had written would follow him when he was transferred to another prison.<sup>27</sup> In this specific case, Gramsci was admitted to a clinic, but was in detention and subject to consequent supervision: that his manuscripts would follow him should have caused no particular difficulty. However, one might wonder whether the decisions regarding their shipment to the Formia clinic were the responsibility of the governor of the Turi prison or that of Civitavecchia, on which he had come to depend – in fact, as we have seen, the *Regolamento carcerario* provided that *the other items* were

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<sup>23</sup> Regolamento carcerario, Article 179; Gazzetta Ufficiale, No 147, 27 June 1931, Ordinary Supplement.

<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, this list is not preserved.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Gramsci to his mother of 12 August 1929 (Gramsci 2020 p. 399-400; not in the English translations of the Letters from Prison – ed. note).

<sup>26</sup> It is possible that these checks had seen the systematic involvement of the DGIPP and the Ministry of the Interior only after July 1932 (i.e., after the discovery of clandestine connections between communist detainees in a number of Italian prisons and the *Centro estero* of the PCd'I; see Naldi 2023b and ACS, MGG, R.Bauer and M.Vinciguerra).

<sup>27</sup> Documents relating to Renzo Rendi and Bruno Tosin confirm this supposition (ACS, CPC and MGG, R. Rendi and FG, BMT, B. Tosin).

to be ‘transmitted directly to the governor of the prison of destination’. But, as proved by the letter from the governor of the Turi prison to Tat’jana dated 29 January 1934 mentioned in section 1.2, and by the two lists and the receipt mentioned in section 1.4, the shipment was made from Turi.

On the other hand, with regard to sending Tat’jana some of the notebooks written in Turi, the case may have appeared particularly delicate and it seems reasonable to assume that the governor of the Turi prison consulted the DGIPP and that the latter consulted the Ministry of the Interior. However, it cannot be ruled out either that, given the confusion that, as we have seen in section 1.2, had been created around the three petitions presented by Tat’jana and Gramsci between 22 and 29 December, the governor of the Turi Prison considered that he had been authorized to send Tat’jana the objects contained in the trunk specially prepared by Gramsci and that he could decide directly on each individual object according to the usual criteria – the case of the notebooks, in particular, could be assimilated to what was explicitly provided for in the *Regolamento carcerario*:

Prisoners may not receive or send letters and other writings without these first having been read and inspected by the executive authority.<sup>28</sup>

Some clues in the sense of the latter hypothesis are contained in two communications from the governor of the Civitavecchia prison (Alfredo Doni) to the DGIPP: the first is dated 22 February 1934 and concerns Bruno Tosin, detained there; the second is dated 5 March 1935 and concerns Edoardo D’Onofrio, who had been released from prison on 27 September 1934.

Responding to a request for information sent him by the DGIPP on 23 December 1933, the governor of the Civitavecchia prison thus commented on an application that Tosin’s parents had addressed to Mussolini:

Lastly, with regard to the possibility of allowing the convicted person to take with him, on his release, the notes compiled in the notebooks provided to

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<sup>28</sup> *Regolamento carcerario*, Article 103; Gazzetta Ufficiale, No. 147, 27 June 1931, Ordinary Supplement. The question of the controls to which Gramsci’s notebooks could be subjected is touched upon in Frosini 2015, p. 49.

him during his detention, I have nothing to say with regard to the provision set out in Ministerial Order No. 126337/25-9, office 6 of 20-12-933 XII.<sup>29</sup>

Tosin's release, although not far off, was not imminent (it took place in July 1935). One must therefore assume that the parents' request, certainly inspired by their son, reflected a widespread concern among prisoners that they might have the material results of intellectual work done in prison taken away from them. But, as the governor's reply tells us, a recent communication from the DGIPP office dealing with prisoners had intervened on the matter. Unfortunately, *Ministerial Order No. 126337/25-9* is known to us only through this reference, but it is remarkable that it was placed exactly between Gramsci's arrival in Formia and the shipments, one to Rome and the other to Formia, of the two trunks containing Gramsci's notebooks. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that it was a communication addressed to the two prisons involved in that consignment (on 20 December 1933 Gramsci's notebooks were still in Turi, but were in the keeping of a prisoner who had passed into the jurisdiction of the Civitavecchia prison).

What the governor of the Civitavecchia prison wrote about Tosin seems to imply a positive answer to the question that could be asked when a prisoner was released. But from other sources we know how such an answer was conditional on a check of the contents of the *notes* similar to that provided for correspondence and that such a check had to be exercised by the governor of the prison where the prisoner was held. Firstly, we may consider a document included in the correspondence concerning the return to Edoardo D'Onofrio, who was released in September 1934, of the notebooks he had compiled during his imprisonment. In that case, on 5 March 1935, the governor of the Civitavecchia prison – solicited by the DGIPP, which had certainly received a request from D'Onofrio to have the notebooks that he had not been able to take with him at the time of his release – explicitly stated that he had not been able to carry out 'the appropriate verification' because those notebooks were 'written in a foreign language for the most part', and for this reason he now sent them to the DGIPP.<sup>30</sup> The latter sent them in turn to the Ministry of the Interior, which con-

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<sup>29</sup> ACS, MGG, political prisoners, envelope 20, Tosin Bruno. The application of Tosin's parents is not preserved, but was certainly sent after August 1933.

<sup>30</sup> Civitavecchia Prison Governor to DGIPP, 19 February 1935, ACS, MGG, E. D'Onofrio.

sidered it inappropriate to return them to D'Onofrio and retained them.<sup>31</sup> However, if the governor of the Civitavecchia prison had been able to read them and had not detected anything suspicious, we can assume that he would have been entitled to return them to D'Onofrio already at the time of his release from prison, without consulting either the DGIPP or the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>32</sup>

In Gramsci's case, we can assume that a check was carried out with some regularity by the management of the Turi prison. This seems in fact to be implied by what we can read in the already mentioned manuscript of Trombetti dated 1951-52:

Speaking about the use he would make of the notes he made for "his Notebooks" Gramsci told me that if he had come out of prison alive there would have been abundant material to develop, but if he had not come out alive, others would not have been able to elaborate it fully, since he had deliberately written in such terms that many concepts would be obscure to others – and this he had done in order not to give arguments to the prison management for seizing his notebooks, or taking away his authorization to write.<sup>33</sup>

All this makes it plausible that, perhaps responding in the *ministerial letter* of 20 December to a request for clarification sent by the Turi prison, the DGIPP reaffirmed the applicability of the normal level of controls entrusted to the prison management even to the case of sending manuscripts produced in prison by a prisoner to family members.

What has been said so far can be further supplemented by considering a number of other clues.

On the one hand, it can be assumed that the *ministerial letter* of 20 December had in turn referred to already established methods of checking. This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that four of the notebooks kept in the BMT series of the Gramsci Foundation in Rome and all the notebooks kept in the CPC file in D'Onofrio's name bear stamps from the Civitavecchia prison and their covers

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<sup>31</sup> See ACS, MGG and CPC, E.D'Onofrio.

<sup>32</sup> See also ACS, CPC and MGG, R.Rendi.

<sup>33</sup> *Ricordi di un compagno di cella di "Antonio Gramsci"*, p. 6, FB, Fondo G.Trombetti; see also Trombetti 1965, p. 31. In this regard, it is also interesting to recall a sentence from the 1987 interview with Trombetti: 'I used to try at times to read what he wrote, but it wasn't very easy to understand [...] and so he said to me: "you see, these notes are only useful to me, because here I say many things with words that are a bit disguised, you understand? I say one thing here ..." so as not to strike the imagination of the prisoners when they read them, because they read them' (Arbizzani 1987a, p. 18).

reveal how, in 1932, the *Tipolitografia delle Mantellate* had produced notebooks specifically designed to be *supplied* to prisoners: these were notebooks with pre-numbered pages and covers designed to receive the name and personal details of the prisoner, the date of delivery of the notebook and the date of its collection. It is clear that if such notebooks were distributed to prisoners allowed to write, the operations relating to their management must have been regulated – and the *ministerial letter* of 20 December 1933 may have referred to those rules.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, one can formulate the hypothesis that in the case of Gramsci's notebooks a specific check had indeed taken place in December 1933 or not long before. We know from Trombetti's testimony that during the months when he was in Gramsci's cell, Gramsci was examined by a doctor who took at least one of his notebooks from the storeroom and examined it: 'after reading it, he had come to the following judgement: "disconnected concepts", "nebulousness", "nonsense"'.<sup>35</sup> The doctor, who had declared himself to be 'a devotee of Freud's psychoanalysis',<sup>36</sup> was certainly Filippo Saporito, governor of the judicial asylum in Caserta and sent to Turi by the Ministry of Justice in April 1933 to examine Gramsci's conditions of health. On the other hand, we know from Tat'jana's letter to Sraffa of 27 August 1933 that Rodolfo Liccione (a doctor recently appointed at Turi prison) had informed her that he had read 'some' of the 'many works' written by Gramsci.<sup>37</sup> If in December of that same year the governor of the Turi prison found himself having to assess the contents of Gramsci's notebooks, it is plausible that he also based his assessment on a judgement of harmlessness formulated by Saporito, which the inspector, although not including it in his official report,<sup>38</sup> may have communicated to him verbally, and on a discussion with Liccione. But one can also hypothesize that between the summer of 1932 and December 1933-January 1934

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<sup>34</sup> In the 1931 *Regolamento carcerario* the subject was not touched upon.

<sup>35</sup> Trombetti 1965, p. 31 (see also *infra* note 47). In the already mentioned manuscript of Trombetti dated 1951-52, the judgment included an additional sentence: 'in short, your writings confirm my thesis of psychic illness' (*Ricordi di un compagno di cella di "Antonio Gramsci"*, p. 4, FB, Fondo G. Trombetti).

<sup>36</sup> Trombetti 1965, p. 31.

<sup>37</sup> AAG, Fondo Sraffa; see also Gramsci to Tat'jana 24 July and 13 October 1933 (Gramsci 2020, pp. 1011 and 1037; in English Gramsci 1994 II, pp. 313 and 327 respectively).

<sup>38</sup> ACS, MGG, A. Gramsci; Casucci 1965 pp. 442-5.

some of the notebooks were seen by Mussolini himself and that control and *approval* came directly from him. The hypothesis is not documented, but rests on the possibility that Gramsci's sending of notes out of prison had been reported to the DGIPP and the Ministry of the Interior and on a sentence in Yvon De Begnac's *Taccuini mussoliniani* that has often been referred to: 'I read the notebooks of those sentenced by the Tribunale speciale'.<sup>39</sup>

#### 1.4. *What came to whom?*

Having seen how the shipment of Gramsci's notebooks from Turi to Formia and, above all, to Rome is unlikely (but not totally impossible) to have taken place without certain authorization and control procedures being punctually fulfilled, we can return to the question of what was actually sent and to whom. The answer has been partially anticipated by saying that the notebooks written by Gramsci in Turi were divided between *two trunks*. The contents of the two trunks and their destination are illuminated by three documents: two lists of items and a railway dispatch note.<sup>40</sup>

The identity between the hand that wrote the two lists and the hand that had prepared the numbering of the sheets in the notebooks today referred to as *6, 8, D, 10-17, 17 bis* and *17 ter* reveals that those lists, although lacking the stamps of the Turi prison and the signatures of the staff, were prepared within that prison structure.<sup>41</sup> A similar indication emerges from the heading of one of the two lists: 'List of objects belonging to the detainee Gramsci Antonio sent to him at the Formia Penitentiary'.<sup>42</sup> The

<sup>39</sup> Cf. De Begnac 1990, p. 423; Francioni 1992b, p. 731 n. 48; and Naldi 2023a.

<sup>40</sup> FG, AAG, *Carte personali*, Trasferimento alla clinica Cusumano; see also Lattanzi 2012, p. 52; Francioni 2016, p. 24-6; Lattanzi 2017, pp. 57-8; Gramsci 2020, p. 1054 n. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Francioni 2016, p. 25. Notebooks *17 bis* and *17 ter* are two notebooks that were stamped and endorsed in Turi prison but remained blank. They were donated to the Istituto Gramsci in 1981 by Giuliano Gramsci (Lattanzi 2017, p. 143 n. 413) and their existence and relevance for the reconstruction of the events relating to the composition of the notebooks written by Gramsci were first pointed out by Gianni Francioni, who included them in the numbering proposed by Gerratana on the basis of elements that allow to bring them close to notebook *17* (Francioni 1992a, p. 155 and pp. 160-1 n. 13; and Francioni 1992b, p. 714 n. 5; see also Gramsci 2009, vol. 16 pp. 253-5).

<sup>42</sup> AAG, *Carte personali*, Trasferimento alla clinica Cusumano (the document was donated to the Gramsci Foundation by Antonio Gramsci jr. in 2006 - see Francioni 2016, p. 25 n. 44). It cannot be ruled out that both lists were sent to Tat'jana, perhaps included in the box sent to her home or, more likely, attached to the aforementioned letter sent to her on 29 January 1934 or to the registered letter with which the Turi prison management sent the keys to the two trunks (Direzione del prigioniero di Turi a Tatiana Schucht, 29 January 1934: AAG, *Carte Tatiana Schucht*, *Corrispondenza*). It seems unlikely that the two lists were prepared in Gramsci's

heading of the other list is simpler: ‘Dott.<sup>ssa</sup> Tatiana Schucht Via Alpi N° 2 Roma Elenco degli oggetti’.<sup>43</sup>

It is possible that the two lists describe two shipments, those of the trunks sent in January one to Formia and one to Rome. It must be considered, however, that the quantity of linen and personal use items reportedly sent to Formia is considerable, while Gramsci himself, with reference to the *English trunk*, had only mentioned ‘a few effects of linen’; a presumably larger quantity of linen can be assumed to have been set aside to ‘pack two railway packages, including linen and books’.<sup>44</sup> It can therefore be assumed that one list cumulatively describes all the shipments to Formia (two railway packages and a trunk) and the other the contents of the trunk sent to Rome.

With the shipments to Formia, Gramsci would then have received 53 books, 40 magazines, a parcel of unopened magazines, 4 written notebooks, 2 blank notebooks and a considerable amount of laundry and clothing items and other items for personal use and writing. Tatiana was allegedly sent 119 books, 59 magazines, 16 written notebooks, 21 blank notebooks, a packet of correspondence, a crate,<sup>45</sup> and a few items of underwear.

Going back to the descriptions we find in Gramsci’s letter to Tat’jana of 27 November 1933, it therefore seems possible to confirm that Tat’jana had been sent the *large trunk full of books* and Gramsci the two *railway packages* packed with linen and *books* and the *English trunk* containing *books* and *some linen*. The management of the Turi prison would therefore have made a mistake (exchanging items sent and recipients) only when, on 29 January, they wrote to Tat’jana to inform her of the shipment of the two trunks.

The railway receipt dated 25 January 1934 and kept in the Gramsci Archive documents, regarding how on that date a package

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presence on the night between 18 and 19 November 1933, on the eve of his departure for Civitavecchia. The indication of Formia as destination leads us to believe that the compilation did not take place before December. In fact, on 20 November Gramsci clearly wrote to Tat’jana that he had been informed before his departure that his destination was the Civitavecchia prison (Gramsci 2020 p. 1048; in English Gramsci 1994 II, p. 338).

<sup>43</sup> FG, AAG, Personal papers, undated. The date and acquisition of this document are not known, but are likely to coincide with those of the other list (see Francioni 2016, p. 26 n. 45).

<sup>44</sup> Letter from Gramsci to Tat’jana dated 27 November 1933 (Gramsci 2020, p. 1051; cf. in English Gramsci 1994 II, p. 340).

<sup>45</sup> This may have been the *box* Gramsci had mentioned in his letter to Tat’jana of 20 October 1928 (Gramsci 2020 p. 300; in English Gramsci 1994 I, p. 229).

weighing 79 kg was sent from Turi to Formia station containing ‘used books’<sup>46</sup> – notebooks or other items, is not mentioned.

### 1.5. Re-examination of the testimony of Gustavo Trombetti

Given the documents collected so far, composing an overall picture of the events surrounding the shipment of the items Gramsci had with him to Turi requires reconsidering Trombetti’s testimonies, which have long been seen as the main source of information. As regards the subject of our present interest, their substance can be assumed to be true, but some details need to be rectified.

Firstly, the number of trunks and packages that were to be shipped was certainly greater than the number indicated by Trombetti and their shipment did not take place in the days following Gramsci’s departure, but about two months later. Trombetti limited the preparation of the luggage to a suitcase and a trunk and stated that the notebooks were placed only in that trunk.<sup>47</sup> However, we know from Gramsci and Tat’jana’s correspondence and the two lists that two trunks were sent, that there were two other packages and that the notebooks were sent partly to Rome and partly to Formia. In general, it seems possible that in Trombetti’s recollection, the events of those moments tended to be reduced to the actions he himself performed. In particular, as far as the notebooks are concerned, we can imagine that he did not realize that he had only put away those that were left on the storeoom shelf after Gramsci had already taken a small number of them. If, on the other hand, the notebooks had been kept inside a trunk and not on a shelf, we can imagine that Gramsci had only placed on the shelf those which he wanted Trombetti to put in the trunk to be sent to Rome and that the others he had left in the other container. As to the six notebooks (four written and two blank ones) mentioned in the list of items sent to Formia, and thus included in the *English trunk* or in the railway packages, it is reasonable to assume that Gramsci had selected them on purpose – perhaps they were the notebooks he hoped to get to work on

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<sup>46</sup> FG AAG, Personal Papers, 1934.

<sup>47</sup> Note also that in the manuscript dated 1951-52 (cf. *supra* note 35) Trombetti said that Gramsci had put *all his personal clothing* in the suitcase – which is contradicted by the letter Gramsci himself wrote from Civitavecchia on 27 November 1933 (Gramsci 2020 p. 1051; in English Gramsci 1994 II, p. 340) and by the two lists produced in the Turi prison.

sooner (but sending one part to Rome and another to Formia could also have been a way of protecting himself against the risk of one of the two crates being lost).<sup>48</sup> We can assume that the expedient mentioned by Trombetti of putting a part of the notebooks in the trunk that Gramsci hoped would be sent to Tat'jana was actually implemented and achieved its purpose. Its aim could reasonably have been to intervene on the only level on which Gramsci could exert any influence: to prevent the agent present in the storeroom from raising difficulties and the shipment process from getting from already getting jammed in the initial phase.

Finally, it should be noted how in the testimony published in *Rinascita* in 1946, on two occasions Trombetti referred to eighteen notebooks. Describing Gramsci's study activity, he wrote: 'he was constantly reading and taking notes in notebooks; when he left he had filled eighteen of them with his fine, sharp, characteristic handwriting, if I remember correctly' (Trombetti 1946, p. 233). Later, recalling the moment of preparation for his departure, Trombetti recalled: 'Accompanied by the prison guard in charge of the storeroom, we went to the storeroom and there we prepared his luggage. While, in agreement with me, he kept the guard "chatting", I slipped the 18 handwritten notebooks into the trunk among other stuff' (Trombetti 1946, p. 235). The assertion that in Turi Gramsci had *filled* eighteen notebooks is substantially correct. In fact, of the notebooks believed to have been started in Turi, the eighteen now indicated as 1-11, 13-16 and A-C are actually *compiled* in full. The indication of the number of eighteen notebooks also in relation to the act of *stuffing them into the trunk* cannot, however, be considered correct – it is, however, likely to reflect the overlapping of the first recollection with that of what happened at the time of Gramsci's preparation for departure.

#### 1.6. How many notebooks came out of the Turi prison?

The lists of what was shipped from Turi tell us that twenty written notebooks (sixteen sent to Rome and four to Formia) and

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<sup>48</sup> Trombetti, mentioning a doctor who had come to the Turi prison to visit Gramsci, raised the possibility that he had stolen one of his notebooks (Trombetti 1965 p. 31; cf. section 1.3 above). In fact, it can be assumed that Gramsci would have reported such a loss to Tat'jana, who in turn would have reported it to both Giulia and Sraffa. Since there is no trace of such communications, it can be assumed that Gramsci had no such suspicion (I thank Maria Luisa Righi for drawing my attention to this point).

another twenty-three blank ones (twenty-one sent to Rome and two to Formia) were shipped in the months following Gramsci's departure. This defines a discrepancy between the number of twenty-one notebooks that scholars believe Gramsci may have started in Turi (the notebooks now numbered as 1-17 and A-D) and the number of twenty that results from the two lists. In this regard, following Francioni, we can consider two hypotheses: either that one of the notebooks normally attributed to the Turi years (notebook 16) was begun in Formia,<sup>49</sup> or that the compiler of the list made a mistake in reporting one of the numbers for the written notebooks.<sup>50</sup> To these hypotheses we can add a third one: Gramsci may have placed a notebook (and perhaps some books) in the suitcase he prepared for the journey<sup>51</sup> – and we know that what was in the suitcase cannot be reflected in the lists referring to the shipments.<sup>52</sup> Gramsci might have brought with him the notebook he had been working on in the weeks prior to his departure for Civitavecchia: *notebook 17*<sup>53</sup> (which might also have been used to prove that in Turi he had been authorized to write in his cell). The notebooks that Gramsci may have been particularly interested in having with him within a relatively short time could be the so-called *special notebooks*.<sup>54</sup> In November 1933 there were five of them:<sup>55</sup> *notebooks 10, 11, 12, 13 and 16*. It can therefore be assumed that the notebooks that first arrived in Formia (one with Gramsci and four with railway shipment) were chosen from the group consisting of notebook 17 and the *special notebooks*. The other notebooks started in Turi can be assumed to have been brought to Formia by Tatiana;

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Francioni 2016, pp. 32-3; Gerrata 1967, p. 244, Gramsci 2009, vol. 15 pp. 192-4 and Cospito 2011, p. 904.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Francioni 2016, pp. 33-4. In this regard, it should be remembered that what is now referred to as *notebook D* is in fact a small sketchbook, not a notebook.

<sup>51</sup> In his 1977 testimony, Trombetti pointed out that Gramsci, given his physical condition, "was absolutely unable to carry that suitcase" (Paulesu Quercioli 1977, p. 234).

<sup>52</sup> A precise description of the contents of that suitcase should have been part of the list accompanying the prisoner during his transfer mentioned in section 1.3, but unfortunately it has not been found.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Gramsci 2009 vol. 16, pp. 194-5; and Cospito 2011, p. 903.

<sup>54</sup> Gramsci indicated as *special* those notebooks in which he divided by subject, grouped, reworked and augmented notes already present in other notebooks written in miscellaneous form (cf. Gramsci 1975, pp. XXV, 1748, 1809, 1832; Gramsci 2009, vol. 14, p. 1; Francioni 2016, pp. 31-2 n. 54).

<sup>55</sup> *Four* if one does not intend to attribute notebook 16 to the period of detention in Turi. But in this case, the hypothesis that Gramsci had placed one of his notebooks into his suitcase should be dropped.

in fact, almost all of those notebooks (excluding the four of translations) contain parts written in Formia or parts that Gramsci copied into other notebooks during that stay.<sup>56</sup>

## 2. *From the Formia clinic to the Rome clinic*

On 25 October 1934 Gramsci, still hospitalized in Formia, was admitted to the benefits of conditional release<sup>57</sup> and the following spring asked to be transferred to a clinic in Fiesole. The request was rejected, but after a few months he was allowed to propose a number of clinics in a city and on 24 August he was able to move to the Quisisana clinic in Rome. All we know about how the transfer took place is that Gramsci was escorted by three police officers.<sup>58</sup> In her letter to Sraffa on 26 August, Tatiana wrote: ‘only from Saturday last were we transferred to Rome, to the Quisisana clinic’;<sup>59</sup> perhaps she meant that she had made the trip together with Gramsci. Even less is known about the transfer of personal belongings, including books, notebooks and correspondence. However, we know from a letter from Tat’jana to Giulia dated 5 May 1937 that Gramsci had had all the notebooks with him during the time he spent at the Quisisana clinic:

He managed to keep them with him, writing his works in Aesopic language. It is clear, however, that after his release he would not be able to keep these works with him, so he often told me that I should send all his manuscripts to you, taking them little by little out of the clinic, but already after his release, for fear that I would be caught with the manuscripts first.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, it is known from Tat’jana’s letters that Gramsci himself considered his move to the Soviet Union as the most

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<sup>56</sup> See Gramsci 2009 (introductions to the individual notebooks). With regard to the letters received in previous years, it can be assumed that in Formia Gramsci had with him at least all those Giulia had sent him (perhaps carried in the suitcase). The other letters received in Turi may have been delivered to Tat’jana in the trunk sent to her home (the relevant list also included ‘Corrispondenza parecchia’) and taken by her to the Soviet embassy to be sent to the family.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Naldi 2013.

<sup>58</sup> Communications of the Prefect of Littoria and the Rome Police Headquarters to the Ministry of the Interior of 23, 24 and 25 August 1935 (ACS, CPC, A. Gramsci).

<sup>59</sup> Sraffa 1991, p. 174.

<sup>60</sup> Vacca 2012, p. 324; Lo Piparo 2013, p. 13; Gramsci 2020, p. IX. Tat’jana’s correspondence contains numerous references to the surveillance measures in place around Gramsci at the Quisisana clinic and to the checks on what she could take with her when entering and leaving the clinic (see, for example, her letters to Julija and Evgenija of 25 January and 6 March 1936).

desirable possibility.<sup>61</sup> In his intentions, the notebooks should have preceded him to the place where he hoped to go.

### *3. From Rome to Moscow*

Gramsci died on 27 April 1937 and, after his death, the first mention of his manuscripts and of their preservation is found in a letter from Sraffa to Tat'jana written on the same day:

The only recommendation I have to make to you, indeed to renew, is that you collect all his manuscripts with the utmost care, and take them to a safe place.<sup>62</sup>

Tatiana remained in Rome for another twenty months and reached her family in Moscow only in December 1938.<sup>63</sup> What induced her to postpone her long-promised return was undoubtedly the need to give Gramsci's ashes a worthy home and to see to the transmission of his material inheritance to the family, but without doubt her first concern was to preserve Gramsci's notebooks and send them to Julija.

#### *3.1. The notebooks in the Embassy*

Some information on what was actually done, immediately after Gramsci's death, for the preservation of the notebooks can be gathered from Tat'jana's aforementioned letter to Julija of 5 May 1937:

You don't have to worry about his manuscripts, letters, etc. In reply to your telegram, I had asked the embassy to inform you immediately that everything is all right. I am very sorry that you were worried when you did not receive a reply immediately and I telegraphed again. I am very sorry that you also had unnecessary worries. Everything is in order, but with this mail I am not sending you anything of his work or his letters because I want you to know first that I will send you the manuscripts about which we had talked a lot about over the last few days. He managed to keep them with him, writing his works in Aesopic language. It is clear, however, that after his release he would not be able to keep these works with him, so he often told me that I should send all his manu-

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<sup>61</sup> See letters from Tat'jana to Julija dated 26 March 1934 (Schucht 1991 p. 163), 16 February, 6 March and 15 April 1937 and to Evgenija dated 24 March 1937.

<sup>62</sup> Sraffa 1991, p. 180. If Sraffa *was renewing* his recommendation, we may guess that they had already spoken about the matter on the telephone on the evening of 26 April (see Tat'jana's letter to Julija of 15 June 1937).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. draft letter from Tat'jana to Vladimir Potëmkin dated 12 July 1939 and communication from Georgi Dimitrov to Vladimir Dekanozov dated 22 December 1938 (FG, AAG, Carte Tatiana Schucht, Correspondence; and Daniele and Vacca 2005, pp. 18-19 n. 22).

scripts to you, taking them little by little out of the clinic, but already after his release, for fear that I would be caught with the manuscripts. And so his will is that you receive these manuscripts, and not the Italian section, do you understand my dear? You must receive everything in its entirety and entrust nothing to anyone at least until his friend Piero has expressed his opinion on how these works of Antonio should be ordered and used in their full value.<sup>64</sup>

Julija had just asked for assurances about the preservation of Gramsci's manuscripts and their transfer to Moscow, and she had previously sent Tat'jana a telegram recommending, as Sraffa had done, that they be secured. Tat'jana had asked the staff at the Soviet embassy in Rome to inform her sister that the problem had already been solved, but the message had not been passed on. Julija had sent her second telegram (neither the first nor the second are preserved) and now Tat'jana was replying personally. On 3 May, probably when she sent the second telegram to Tatiana, Julija had also written to the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Potëmkin, asking for an official step to enable the 'recovery of the objects, correspondence and writings left after the death of my husband Antonio Gramsci in Italy'.<sup>65</sup> Of course, although one document testifies how the Soviet Foreign Ministry had fairly quickly given instructions to the embassy in Rome to deal with the issue with the Italian government,<sup>66</sup> the chronological order that emerges from all these communications shows that it is altogether unlikely that the Soviet embassy asked the Italian government to ease the transfer of Gramsci's manuscripts. Furthermore, the extant correspondence leaves little doubt that the notebooks had been taken to the embassy premises, as had already happened with his books and papers in 1926, soon after his arrest.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, that on 5 May the notebooks were already in that building can be considered almost certain, also because Tat'jana suggested to Julija that it was immediately possible to send them by diplomatic mail.<sup>68</sup> In fact, she referred to this when, in her letters to family

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<sup>64</sup> Vacca 2012, p. 324; Lo Piparo 2013, p. 13.

<sup>65</sup> Spriano 1988, p. 32.

<sup>66</sup> Letter from the Soviet Foreign Ministry to Julija Schucht dated 11 May 1937 (Spriano 1988, p. 33).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. letters from Tat'jana to family members dated 2 and 9 December 1926 and 24 February 1927 (Schucht 1991, pp. 22, 23, 29).

<sup>68</sup> That Tat'jana was in a position to immediately send the notebooks to Moscow can also be affirmed on the basis of a sentence in her letter to Sraffa of 12 May 1937 that will be quoted more extensively in section 3.3: 'I thought it best to postpone sending them to get your reply'.

members, she wrote of dispatches by *the mail*. In the four months following Gramsci's death it can be assumed that the diplomatic courier left Rome to Moscow every three weeks and that the deadline for delivery of what was to be sent to Moscow was Tuesday. Tat'jana's letters to family members written between May and August 1937 perfectly respect this cadence and this is also true for the date of 6 July, which Tat'jana indicated as the day she would deliver the notebooks for sending them to her family in Moscow<sup>69</sup>, and for the date of 5 May (which was a Wednesday, but on which Tat'jana wrote with 'a terrible haste'<sup>70</sup>).

### 3.2. *The notebooks at the Banca Commerciale?*

In 1973, Nilde Iotti indicated a place where Gramsci's notebooks had been kept and offered a reconstruction of the manner in which they were sent to Moscow that contrasted with the idea that the Soviet embassy in Rome and diplomatic mail had played a crucial role. Recalling the figure of Raffaele Mattioli, Iotti wrote:

one evening he recalled, with the modesty of one who expounds the simplest and most natural thing in the world, how the prison notebooks, taken by his sister-in-law Tatiana from the room of the Quisisana clinic where Gramsci had expired, had found refuge in the vaults of the Banca Commerciale, to then reach Togliatti, through the hands of Piero Sraffa, at the Communist Party's foreign centre in Paris. Later Togliatti confirmed this to me, adding that Mattioli and Sraffa had also financially helped Antonio Gramsci a great deal during the long period of his hospitalization.<sup>71</sup>

Regarding her testimony, in a private conversation on 23 February 1998 Iotti herself explicitly stated that she believed the substance of her account to be true, but that some inaccuracies might be present, because she had been influenced by what Giorgio Amendola had written in his book *Un'isola*. In that book Amendola referred to *a parcel* that Sraffa, in Cambridge, had delivered to him for Togliatti, but, as he pointed out, that delivery had taken place in 1931 and the parcel did not contain notebooks, but copies of

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<sup>69</sup> Tat'jana's letter to Julija dated 5 July 1937 (Lo Piparo 2013, pp. 105-6).

<sup>70</sup> Letter from Tat'jana to Evgenija dated 5 May 1937.

<sup>71</sup> Iotti 1973 - it may be appropriate to point out that the evening recalled must have preceded Togliatti's death, so it could not have taken place after 1964. The entry in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* dedicated to Raffaele Mattioli considers the statements on such an intervention to be undocumented (Pino 2008).

Gramsci's letters.<sup>72</sup> The unreliability of Iotti's testimony had been pointed out to Iotti herself, privately, by Vincenzo Bianco, who, as we shall see, had played a role precisely in connection with the delivery to the Schucht-Gramsci family of significant parts of what Tatiana had sent from Rome to Moscow. Bianco told her that Gramsci's notebooks had reached Moscow through a diplomatic channel. Iotti accepted this fact unreservedly, but felt it did not invalidate her testimony. She continued to maintain that the notebooks had been kept by Mattioli in the safe of Banca Commerciale and had been taken abroad by Sraffa, but that they could have been transmitted to Moscow via the Soviet embassy in Paris or London.<sup>73</sup> In our opinion, these admissions significantly weaken the reliability of her account. However, it is possible that Mattioli was involved in the preservation of Gramscian documents (more likely transcriptions or photographic reproductions rather than originals) in connection with the preparation of a first edition of his letters, which in 1944 the Italian Communist Party was briefly inclined to have published by the Ricciardi publishing house.<sup>74</sup> This, through an unintentional distortion, may have generated Iotti's testimony. On the other hand, two further testimonies leave no room for inference as to what happened in 1937. Firstly, a mention of a request by Sraffa to receive a photographic copy of the notebooks as soon as Tat'jana, having arrived in Moscow, had them photographed leads one to exclude that it was Sraffa who took the notebooks out of Italy.<sup>75</sup> Secondly, a few days after meeting him in Cambridge, Elsa Fubini reported to Franco Ferri that Sraffa ruled out any role of Mattioli in the preservation of the notebooks: 'On

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<sup>72</sup> *Un'isola* was published in 1980, but it is possible that in 1973 Iotti had already read some anticipations of it, or that she had read the 1967 article in which Amendola had already recounted the same episode (see Amendola 1967, p. 9 and Amendola 1980, pp. 31-4).

<sup>73</sup> Iotti's testimony (reiterated in 1983: cf. Iotti 1983 p. 48) should also be corrected at the point where it seems to suggest that Tat'jana brought the notebooks to Mattioli directly from the Quisisana clinic. In fact, as we shall see in the next sections, the available documents make it clear that at least until mid-June Tat'jana had the notebooks at her disposal and worked on cataloguing them.

<sup>74</sup> Minutes of the PCI secretariat of 11 July 1944 (partially reproduced in Daniele and Vacca, 2005 p. 24 and Lattanzi 2017, p. 121). The Ricciardi publishing house had been owned by Mattioli since 1938. References to Gramscian documents kept by Mattioli, not necessarily identifiable with the notebooks or copies of them, can be found in Caprara 1998 and Caprara 2013, pp. 30-1. (It should be noted, however, how, in these texts, data gathered from a variety of sources are often mixed and distorted.)

<sup>75</sup> The mention is contained in a handwritten note of Tat'jana's after her meeting with Sraffa on 30 June 1937 (cf. section 3.5 and footnote 110).

one point he was peremptory: that the notebooks were never delivered to Mattioli and deposited at the Comit. I asked him the question twice and the answer was identical; on other points he gave me different answers or no answer at all, citing a bad memory'.<sup>76</sup>

### *3.3. Tat'jana's caution*

Tat'jana's letter to Julija of 5 May 1937, already quoted extensively in section 3.1, also contained important indications on the caution with which one must handle the transfer of the manuscripts and their preservation and preparation for publication, and references to Sraffa's possible role. Before sending the notebooks, Tat'jana wanted to warn Julija. The reason for this, besides a general rule of prudence, could have been related to previous experiences of delays and loss of letters from Rome to Moscow even when sent through official channels.<sup>77</sup> But Tat'jana could also have feared that members of the PCd'I would prevent the delivery of the manuscripts to Julija or persuade her to part with them.<sup>78</sup>

The question of Sraffa's role in relation to the preservation and use of Gramsci's notebooks was also posed by Tat'jana in the letter she wrote to him on 12 May 1937. Here Tat'jana stated that she had postponed sending the notebooks to warn Julija in advance and to get an answer from Sraffa on that very point:

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<sup>76</sup> Letter of Fubini to Ferri of 21 July 1974, FG, Fascicolo Gramsci dopo la morte, 1970-77 (cf. de Vivo 2017, pp. 25-6). Spriano's 1967 article, the text of which had been revised by Sraffa, states that the notebooks 'arrived [in Moscow], we believe by the same means as the Soviet diplomatic bag to which Tanja had entrusted Antonio's letters for Julija during the prison years' (Spriano 1967 p. 16).

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, Tat'jana's letters to Julija of 26 September, 15 October and 4 November 1933 (Schucht 1991, pp. 146-52).

<sup>78</sup> It is clear from Evgenija's letter to Tat'jana dated 16 May 1937 that the Schucht family had no such fears: 'Tanička, don't worry about the documents. Here a comrade, Antonio's friend, is now the head of the Italian Communist Party. He will take the same care for every word as we do. Without P[iero]'s instructions he won't do anything. Everything will be preserved for Julija. But Antonio's thought must become the heritage of the proletariat'. Tat'jana replied on 25 May with different indications: 'Of course Julička must receive everything in its entirety, as Antonio wanted, and we will all together do the work of analysing and studying all the material and then pass it on to the comrades. You mustn't think that some Italian, some former comrade friend should take on this work, or rather that we should entrust this work to someone. Julička, you, Ženička [Evgenija – ed. note] and I are fully capable of doing this. On the contrary, first we need to get to know all the material and then process it, and this we have to do. And Ženička is perfectly capable of doing this, without refusing, in case of need, the advice of any of the very important comrades, not simply any of them' (Vacca 2012, pp. 325, 329-30; Lo Piparo, 2013 pp. 13, 47; cf. letter from Togliatti to Sraffa, 20 May 1937, in Spriano 1977 pp. 161-2).

above all I would like you to write to me if you think it useful, indeed absolutely necessary, for you to put Nino's manuscripts in order. There is no doubt that this work must be done by a competent person, not otherwise. On the other hand, Nino's wish was for me to pass everything on to Julija, to entrust everything to her pending his other instructions. I thought it best to postpone sending it to get an answer from you if you would like to take care of putting everything of value, with the help of one of us in the family. Then I wanted Julija to know of my intention to send her all the writings so that she could withdraw them to avoid any loss or intrusion by anyone.<sup>79</sup>

Maybe Sraffa did not know that Gramsci had expressed a desire to send Julija his manuscripts. In fact, as soon as he received the letter of 12 May, Sraffa answered, taking his time:

I will answer your questions in three or four days, after thinking about it.<sup>80</sup>

It was certainly clear to Tat'jana that Sraffa intended to consult the Communist Party's *Centro estero* (Foreign Centre): since 1928, respecting Gramsci's instructions in both transmitting and not transmitting his letters,<sup>81</sup> he had acted as a go-between with the *Centro estero*. He did the same on that occasion by sending Tat'jana's letter to Paris. He was immediately answered by Ambrogio Donini from the *Centro estero*, first with a telegram and then with a letter:

All manuscripts should be sent to Giulia.<sup>82</sup>

For [the manuscripts] I have already answered you by telegram: it is the best decision since where there is Julija, there is [Togliatti].<sup>83</sup>

In the immediately following days, Togliatti (most likely still unaware of the exchange of correspondence between Tat'jana, Sraffa and the *Centro estero*) wrote to Sraffa from Moscow, asking him for enlightenment about Gramsci's manuscripts and the wishes he had expressed in this regard. Togliatti also added a few words about the information in his possession:

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<sup>79</sup> Vacca 2012, p. 325.

<sup>80</sup> Letter from Sraffa to Tat'jana of 15 May 1937 (Sraffa 1991, pp. 181-2). Tat'jana's letter was mainly devoted to explaining the circumstances of Gramsci's death, and Sraffa's brief reply contained a sentence, certainly not circumstantial, that we believe deserves to be quoted: 'I see that courage has not failed you even on this occasion'.

<sup>81</sup> See de Vivo 2017, pp. 38-50; and Naldi 2020.

<sup>82</sup> Telegram from Donini to Sraffa dated 18 May 1937 (Sraffa 1991, p. 183).

<sup>83</sup> Letter from Donini to Sraffa dated 19 May 1937 (Sraffa 1991, p. 183).

As far as I know, the writings from the prison are in a safe place and will gradually be transmitted here.<sup>84</sup>

Since Togliatti showed knowledge of Julija's and Delio's state of prostration, it is possible that the source of his information on the whereabouts of the notebooks and the circumstances of their transmission to Moscow were Julija, Evgenija and the letter Tatiana had written on 5 May. But it is also interesting to note how Togliatti invited Sraffa to be cautious in his communications regarding Gramsci's wishes and the content of the notebooks:

By means of Ar. you can give me an answer in writing or verbally. You can also write to me either to my name – and in this case with caution and discretion – or to an address that Ar. can give you. A certain discretion in the use of mail will always be necessary, however. It would be better than anything if we could meet [...] Is it completely out of the question for you to come here, if not immediately, then at least when all the writings left by Antonio have been collected here and the work is to begin?<sup>85</sup>

On the advisability of keeping Gramsci's manuscripts at the Soviet embassy and sending them to Moscow using diplomatic mail channels we can therefore assume that all those involved agreed. Tat'jana and Togliatti also had rather similar concerns about the possibility of *meddling*. Both showed some apprehension about the work of the Soviet apparatus. But Tat'jana's worries were mainly directed towards Togliatti himself, and the latter, perhaps alerted to what Tat'jana had written on 25 May, is likely to have looked with concern at the Schucht sisters; in fact, on 11 June he asked Manuil'skij that everything be 'done to send this literary legacy of Gramsci here to the Comintern'.<sup>86</sup>

### 3.4. *The topics catalogue*

Tat'jana, meanwhile, not only decided not to send the notebooks to Moscow immediately, but also decided to start cataloguing them.

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<sup>84</sup> Togliatti's letter to Sraffa dated 20 May 1937 (Spriano 1967, p. 15).

<sup>85</sup> Togliatti's letter to Sraffa of 20 May 1937 (Spriano 1967 p. 15); it is not clear who Togliatti was referring to by 'Ar.'

<sup>86</sup> Togliatti's letter to Manuil'skij of 11 June 1937 (Daniele and Vacca 2005, p. 17).

On 25 May, while Sraffa wrote to her to invite her to send everything to Julija,<sup>87</sup> she informed her family of her activities:

Now I can't tell you when [I will leave for Moscow] because all my matters drag on slowly, I am not able to put everything in order quickly, and now I have to put Antonio's books and ours in order, as well as his letters and things. And then his manuscripts. Perhaps I will send them with the next mail,<sup>88</sup> if I can do the necessary work to indicate the contents and other details of all the notebooks with his manuscripts.<sup>89</sup> I spoke about this again today with the Plenipotentiary<sup>90</sup> and he did not object to my proposal to make an inventory of the contents of the writings myself, indeed he even advised me to transcribe all the work in type. I do not know if I can take on this task, because it is a colossal job. You know how small Antonio's handwriting is, and here he apparently wrote on purpose in small letters. In all, Antonio's notebooks are XXX and some have 200 pages. The material is huge.<sup>91</sup>

These sentences show that Tat'jana felt that the preparation of an *inventory* of the notebooks should precede their shipment – most likely it was meant to avoid those *losses* or *intrusions* she had already written about. Moreover, the ambassador's advice to 'transcribe all the work' reveals how no photographic reproduction of the notebooks was in progress or planned at that time. On the other hand, Tat'jana was right in considering a transcription of the notebooks extremely demanding (it would certainly have required her months of continuous application), but the cataloguing too was extremely complex. In all likelihood, she had initially set about her work (which it is reasonable to assume she carried out at the embassy, at her desk, keeping the notebooks in the same room) in a rather simple way and had quickly completed it, sending Evgenija the resulting *inventory* or *list*. Subsequently, after a negative judgement by

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<sup>87</sup> 'I have been thinking about what you tell me about the [manuscripts], and I have come to the conclusion that the best thing is to send everything to Julija, where they will be well looked after. Naturally, you will wait to send them until there is a safe means of transport: and if this does not happen immediately, you will wait for a good opportunity: I will come to see you towards the end of June, and if they are still with you, I will have great pleasure in seeing them: but do not keep them any longer than necessary for this' (letter from Sraffa to Tat'jana of 25 May 1937: Sraffa 1991, p. 182).

<sup>88</sup> The next useful date for sending a parcel to Moscow by diplomatic mail we believe was Tuesday 15 June (see section 3.1 above).

<sup>89</sup> This, as far as we are aware, is the first time that Tatiana refers to the *notebooks*. Previous references can only be found in her correspondence with Gramsci in relation to the notebooks she bought for him while he was in the prison in Turi.

<sup>90</sup> Boris Štejn, Soviet ambassador in Rome from November 1934 to October 1939.

<sup>91</sup> Letter from Tat'jana to family members of 25 May 1937 (Vacca 2012, p. 330 and Lo Piparo 2013, p. 47).

the ambassador on what was to be a second copy of that same list, she had started to prepare a more detailed cataloguing. All this we know from what she wrote to Evgenija on 15 June:

The list of notebooks I had sent you earlier obviously could serve no purpose. It was just a “mechanical” annotation, as the ambassador said. Now I am doing a meticulous job, but one that is very dear to me at the same time: to indicate page by page the issues that Antonio was studying and was going to deepen and supplement later. So far I have only done this work for two and a half notebooks.<sup>92</sup>

In the three weeks between 25 May and 15 June, we can therefore assume that Tat’jana prepared a very concise catalogue and sent it to Evgenija, that she showed the ambassador a copy of the same catalogue, that she started the complete transcription that the ambassador had suggested a few weeks earlier, and that she interrupted it by starting a more detailed subject catalogue than the one already sent to Evgenija. That Tat’jana had convinced herself of the futility of her own first list was perhaps an exaggeration: its function of enabling a check on the integrity of the material she would send to Moscow remained largely intact. Unfortunately, neither the letter to Evgenija nor that first list have been preserved, but, if it had been described as *mechanical* and if it had been prepared quickly, it is possible that it contained only the main titles that Gramsci had inserted at the beginning of his notebooks and information similar to that which Tat’jana had written on the labels she had stuck on the covers of those same notebooks and which usually indicated whether the notebook was written in full or only in part, the number of pages written and a progressive number in Roman numerals.<sup>93</sup>

On 15 June, Tat’jana also wrote to Julija, announcing the dispatch of the two notebooks she had already catalogued in the new *meticulous* and *detailed* manner:

I am also sending you two notebooks of his writings: those two notebooks of which I am making an inventory as detailed as I can. These days I am still

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<sup>92</sup> Letter from Tat’jana to Evgenija dated 15 June 1937 (Vacca 2012, p. 331; Lo Piparo 2013, p. 48).

<sup>93</sup> Problems concerning the way Tatiana numbered the notebooks and the non-numbering of the notebooks entitled *The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce* and *Niccolò Machiavelli II°*, today referred to as notebooks 10 and 18, will be analysed in sections 4 and 6.

working on the third notebook, but I am not finished. For now, I am not sending what I have written, because after all, when comrade Piero comes from England at the end of the month, I plan to show him this work of mine. I know that not only can he give me valuable advice, but that seeing the content of Antonio's writings will be a great happiness for him.<sup>94</sup>

The descriptions of the *inventory* contained in this letter and in the one to Evgenija with the same date correspond to the contents of the large-format notebook written in Tat'jana's own hand and referred to by her under the double designation of 'Elenco degli argomenti trattati nei quaderni' ('List of the subjects dealt with in the notebooks') and 'Catalogo I'.<sup>95</sup> In it, for the two notebooks to which she had assigned the numbers *XVI* and *XIV*, Tat'jana had copied all the headings that Gramsci himself had given to the individual paragraphs.<sup>96</sup> For a third notebook (*XXVIII*) she had instead begun to copy large parts of the paragraphs (but not all of them and not always in full).<sup>97</sup> However, the work was abruptly interrupted shortly after the middle of that third notebook: at the second line of page 53. The choice to begin with Notebooks *XVI* and *XIV* may have been determined by the fact that Tat'jana had observed that they were referred to by Gramsci himself as 'First Notebook' and 'II' respectively. The decision to continue with Notebook *XXVIII* may reflect the presence on its cover of a 'I' that we can assume to be in Gramsci's hand.<sup>98</sup> This suggests that Tat'jana had decided to superimpose on the criterion she had adopted in numbering the notebooks an attempt to follow their logical-chronological order.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Letter from Tat'jana to Julija dated 15 June 1937 (Vacca 2012, p. 331; Lo Piparo 2013, p. 55). Note that Tat'jana says she wanted to show Sraffa her work, not the notebooks – which we can imagine she would certainly have done if she had had them at home, since that was normally where she met Sraffa. As we shall see, it was precisely to show them to him that she then decided to take three notebooks home.

<sup>95</sup> FG, AAG, Carte Tatiana Schucht, Relazioni, istanze e appunti su Antonio Gramsci (on this notebook there are labels similar to those used by Tatiana for numbering most of Gramsci's notebooks – see section 4 below).

<sup>96</sup> Tatiana had also copied down the list of topics that opened notebook *XVI*.

<sup>97</sup> It is interesting to note that in this *Catalogue I* Tat'jana referred to the notebooks and the numbering she had given them, emphasizing that those numbers appeared *in the list* – evidently the list of which she had sent a copy to Eugenia.

<sup>98</sup> These three entries are reproduced by Tat'jana in *Catalogue I*.

<sup>99</sup> A reflection on which criteria Tatiana had followed in numbering the notebooks will be developed in section 4.1.

The description of this *Catalogue I* deserves to be completed by paying attention to its cover. The label on the front plate, entirely filled out by Tat'jana, reads: 'Catalogue I List of subjects treated in the notebooks'. On the spine, however, there is a label that extends over the front and back plates and which (on the front plate only) bears the following inscription: 'I di TANIA' – while the Roman numeral 'I' can be assumed to have been written by Tat'jana, the other two words can be attributed to Togliatti's hand. On the cover of the same notebook (top right-hand side) appears a '(2)', in pencil, which can also be attributed to Togliatti's hand and an inscription, written with a different pencil and presumably by another hand, which seems to us to be 'xot 12' – its meaning, translated from Russian, is 'also 12'.<sup>100</sup> This annotation could allude to the Arabic numerals that can be recognized on tags of paper visible in some of the photographic copies of the notebooks preserved at the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI) and partially acquired by the Gramsci Foundation in 2016 in a digital series that seems to combine photographs taken at different times. Such digital copies are not available for all the notebooks (nor are they for *Catalogue I*). In those that are available, the tags of paper with Arabic numerals associated with the individual notebooks are not always present. However, the absence, in the digital copies acquired by the Gramsci Foundation, of tags bearing the number 12<sup>101</sup> is compatible with the possibility that *Catalogue I* had also been photographed and that the photographic series had been associated with that very number.<sup>102</sup>

Returning to the label on the front plate, the indication 'Catalogue I' seems to have been added in the space left after writing the other part of the title – which suggests that the synthetic name was inserted to distinguish this first notebook-catalogue from the others that were to follow it to complete the cataloguing of all the notebooks written by Gramsci.

In fact, the existence of another notebook, also in large format, on which Tat'jana had begun to copy Gramsci's *first notebook*, can be

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<sup>100</sup> I owe this information to Dario Massimi. Lo Piparo reads 'scat 12', which he means as a sign that that notebook was kept in a box bearing that number (Lo Piparo 2013, p. 109), but there is no record of such a box.

<sup>101</sup> See Lattanzi 2017, pp. 102-4 and *infra* notes 158 e 118.

<sup>102</sup> Paper tags bearing the numbers 17 and 15 respectively are associated with notebooks *XVI* and *XIV*; the photos of notebook *XXVIII* show no paper tag (cf. Lattanzi 2017, pp. 103-4).

affirmed on the basis of the presence within *Catalogue I* of four sheets, torn from another notebook, which show the word-for-word transcription of notebook *XVI*<sup>103</sup> – but the work is interrupted at the first line of the fifth page of that notebook. In our opinion, these sheets prove that Tat'jana, after showing the ambassador the copy of the short catalogue that she had sent to Evgenija, had followed his advice and begun to transcribe notebook *XVI* in its entirety, but that she then quickly decided to abandon this work and begin cataloguing according to the scheme we find in *Catalogue I*. This leads us to exclude the possibility that the notebook on which the complete transcription of notebook *XVI* was begun could have been conceived as *Catalogue II*. On the contrary, it can be assumed that it should not have entered the series of numbered catalogues.

That the complete transcription work had been interrupted can be deduced from the fact that the second side of the fourth of the torn sheets, the one on which Tatiana had to transcribe the first line of the fifth page of notebook *XVI*, had been left about one-third empty. In that space another hand, presumably at the time the pages were torn out, noted in blue pen: 'Interrupted – the rest of the notebook blank'.<sup>104</sup> As these sheets have so far only received attention in instrumental terms,<sup>105</sup> it may be appropriate to complete their description.

There are four torn sheets preserved in *Catalogue I*, but only three have been used.<sup>106</sup> The first of these is written only on the recto and contains in its entirety, in Tatiana's hand, the list of topics with

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<sup>103</sup> In this case, the identification of the notebook is entrusted to the text alone; there is no reference to its numbering or reference to a list.

<sup>104</sup> We are unable to identify the hand that wrote the sentence, but we can assume that it was inserted, and that the pages were torn out, between the spring of 1945 and the beginning of 1947, after the return of the two catalogues to Italy (see section 6.4 below). The handwriting is certainly not Felice Platone's, but we can also exclude, although not with equal certainty, that it is Togliatti's. The sentence could have been written by one of the other people who, in Rome, under Platone's guidance, were engaged in the preparation of the first edition of Gramsci's notebooks.

<sup>105</sup> The only one who has devoted attention to them is Lo Piparo, who, however, without offering any concrete element in support, insinuated that the hand that tore the sheets would have been moved by a serious manipulative intent: the rest of the notebook would not have been blank and in it Tat'jana would have 'by chance transcribed pages [by Gramsci] that it was better to let sleep' (Lo Piparo 2013, p. 110).

<sup>106</sup> Lo Piparo (2013, p. 109) only counts these three sheets. This, in addition to being trivially inaccurate, shows how he shares the same carelessness towards the archival preservation of blank sheets that one can reasonably assume had moved the hand that Lo Piparo himself accused of wanting to hide precious pages.

which notebook *XVI* opens; it is a sheet slightly heavier than the others and without rulings; it was certainly the first sheet of the notebook. Two other torn sheets, on which Tat'jana had continued copying notebook *XVI*, are written on both sides; they are ruled sheets and show a perforation (which remained unused and intact) that prepared them to be easily separated from the notebook. The fourth sheet is made of tissue paper, is unlined, has no perforation and shows fracture marks that reveal how it was torn together with the other three. In the upper right-hand corner of the tissue paper sheet and in the same corner of the first of the two ruled sheets is stamped a number 1; in the upper right-hand corner of the second ruled sheet is stamped a number 2. The numbering certainly continued on the other ruled sheets, which we can assume had the same perforation. The tissue paper sheets can be assumed to have alternated with the ruled sheets (following them) and that like these they bore a progressive number in the top right-hand corner, but no perforation. The function of these tissue paper sheets may have been to make it easier and neater to prepare and keep a carbon copy of what was written on the ruled sheets. The ruled sheets were evidently intended to be removed; the tissue paper sheets were intended to remain bound in the notebook.<sup>107</sup> The binding of the notebook seems to have been done with three staples; the size of the sheets is 280x220 mm in the case of the tissue paper sheet; 282x227 mm for the other sheets.

### 3.5. *A break in Tat'jana's activity*

As we have seen, on 15 June, Tat'jana described to her sisters the inventory of Gramsci's topics, saying that she had finished it for two notebooks and the first half of a third notebook. Since this is exactly what is observed in *Catalogue I*, it can be concluded that Tat'jana left that work at the point where it had arrived on 15 June. On the other hand, on that same day she asked her sisters to take charge of the completion of that cataloguing, implicitly justifying the identification of that *catalogue* as the first in a series that was, however, not realized. To justify her request, Tat'jana simply wrote that she would not be able to continue that work:

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<sup>107</sup> I owe the clarification of this hypothesis to a conversation with Giuseppe Bertoni, archivist at the Archivio storico of the Municipality of Modena.

The third [notebook] I won't be able to look at it page by page, write down all the issues and transcribe the problem setting for the orientation of the people who will work on this material. I think for the most part Julička can do it with you. This work should give her a lot of joy and satisfaction.<sup>108</sup>

But if we ask ourselves about the reasons for not being able to continue that work, we realize we know nothing about what Tatiana did in the weeks immediately following 15 June. The only information we have comes from what she wrote to Sraffa on 1 July and to Julija on 5 July: on 30 June, she had met Sraffa and shown him three of the notebooks written by Gramsci, taking home for this purpose; on 6 July, she was to deliver (presumably to the embassy staff preparing the diplomatic mail) all the notebooks so that they could be sent to Julija and Evgenija.<sup>109</sup> In order to explain why, three weeks before, Tat'jana was forced to abandon the preparation of the inventory, we may propose certain considerations.

Firstly, she may have had to interrupt that work because the ambassador had decided that a photographic reproduction of the notebooks should be made. However, three facts lead us to exclude this possibility. On the one hand, it does not appear that Tat'jana mentioned this in her letters to family members. On the other hand, we know from her note probably written shortly after 30 June that Sraffa had asked her to arrange for a photographic reproduction of Gramsci's manuscripts after her return to Moscow.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Letter from Tat'jana to Evgenija of 15 June 1937 (Vacca 2012, p. 331, Lo Piparo 2013, p. 48).

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Sraffa 1991, p. 184; Vacca 2012, p. 333; Lo Piparo 2013, pp. 105-6.

<sup>110</sup> See section 3.2 above. We do not know for whom the note was intended; it appears to be a draft of a short report on Gramsci's notebooks, but it does not seem to have been written for the commission of the Communist International, formed only at the beginning of 1939, which was to decide how to preserve his papers. For our purposes, the most interesting part of the note is the following: 'Piero said he had been assigned to work on the manuscripts, in view of this work he asked me to see to it, on my arrival in Moscow, that Gramsci's manuscripts be photographed and that the photographs be sent to him by those who are to oversee this work, and he asked me to do this as quickly as possible' (Vacca 2012, p. 332; the note is kept in FG, AAG, Carte Tatiana Schucht, Relazioni, istanze e appunti su Antonio Gramsci). We do not know whether Sraffa actually received the requested photocopy (there is no trace of it in his papers and correspondence), but it is nevertheless interesting to point out some facts. The *assignment* Tat'jana mentions could be traced back to the exchange of letters between Sraffa and Togliatti shortly after Gramsci's death; Sraffa's request to receive (presumably in Cambridge) photographic copies of the notebooks leads us to exclude his role in their transmission from Italy to the Soviet Union; finally, if after Tat'jana's arrival in Moscow no photographic copies were made, let alone sent to Sraffa, it can be assumed that she and her sisters decided to follow this way also under the influence of their disagreement with Sraffa on how to deal with the questions posed by Gramsci in relation to Grieco's letter of 10 February 1928 (cf. letters from

Finally, we can deduce from a note by Stella Blagoeva dated 27 June 1938 that the notebooks were already in the family's possession at that date and had not yet been photographed.<sup>111</sup>

Secondly, one may wonder whether it might not have been a condition of depression that brought about the pause in Tat'jana's activity. In this sense, we seem to be able to interpret both the words with which she opened her letter to Sraffa of 1 July ('I am very pleased that I have succeeded, in part, in keeping my infinite despair hidden from you. A sense of anguish, almost of terror assails me more and more, and more frequently') and those with which she closed it ('Thinking about all this [Gramsci and his death] always increases my sense of desperation. It always grows instead of lessening and this also ends up by dismaying me, because I understand that, in this way, I am following a bad path that I must, at all costs, abandon, but for now I do not have the strength').<sup>112</sup> However, if it was those crises that prevented her from continuing to catalogue the notebooks, it seems unlikely that she could have described that very activity as a potential source of 'joy and satisfaction' for her sister Julija.<sup>113</sup> But we can consider two further possibilities. On the one hand, Tat'jana might have been so busy with her work as a translator at the Soviet embassy that she had to interrupt all other activities. On the other hand, she might have been scheduled for hospitalization in those days to undergo some medical examinations and might have feared having to undergo surgery immediately after those examinations. In fact, we know from her subsequent letter to Sraffa on 7 July that she would have to undergo an operation and that she could have told him this news some time before, probably on the occasion of their meeting at the end of June: 'I haven't told

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Tat'jana to Sraffa of 16 and 28 September 1937 and from Sraffa to Tat'jana of 18 September 1937, Sraffa 1991, pp. 187-90).

<sup>111</sup> 'Gramsci's materials the family does not give them – photograph or requisition them' (Pons 2004, pp. 84, 86, citing RGASPI fund 519, inventory 1, d. 114, l. 16).

<sup>112</sup> Sraffa 1991, p. 184 (see also the letters from Tat'jana to Sraffa of 1 July 1937 and from Tat'jana to Teresina of 17 September 1937). Carlo's letter to Sraffa of 4 May 1937 also contains words that can be understood in that sense: 'I beg you of one thing: do not forget Tanja who needs to be supported and relieved. I do not hide from you that I leave you worried' (AAG, Carte Piero Sraffa).

<sup>113</sup> Letter from Tat'jana to Evgenija dated 15 June 1937 (Vacca 2012, p. 331; Lo Piparo 2013, p. 48).

you, but I should have an operation'.<sup>114</sup> The latter hypothesis seems to us the most satisfactory.

### *3.6. The shipment of the notebooks*

On 15 June, in addition to Julija,<sup>115</sup> Tat'jana also announced to Evgenija that she had sent notebooks *XVI* and *XIV*:

I do not know if they will send with this mail the first two notebooks for which I have completed the above work. I would very much like them to send them'.<sup>116</sup>

The observation that notebooks *XVI* and *XIV*, unlike all the others,<sup>117</sup> have the labels glued on the cover and not also the labels glued on the spine is compatible with the possibility that in mid-June Tat'jana had actually handed them over to the person who was preparing the diplomatic mail (it can be assumed that Tat'jana decided to add the labels on the spine only after she had handed over notebooks *XVI* and *XIV*).<sup>118</sup> However, her letter to Evgenija also makes it clear that the dispatch depended not only on her but also on that staff or perhaps other authorities. As for their arrival in Moscow, Tat'jana's correspondence from that period does not provide any information: for the weeks between 15 June and 5 July 1937 there is no record of any letter exchanged between Tat'jana and her relatives and no later letter refers to it. On the contrary, since in her letter to Julija of 5 July Tat'jana announced that 'all of Antonio's manuscripts' had been sent to Moscow, it can be assumed that three weeks earlier, when she had handed over those

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<sup>114</sup> See Tat'jana to Sraffa, 7 July 1937 (Sraffa 1991, pp. 185-6; see also Sraffa to Tatiana, 21 April 1935 and 15 May 1937; Sraffa 1991, pp. 172-3 and 181-2). It is possible that Tat'jana ended up leaving Italy without the operation being carried out (cf. letters from Tat'jana to Teresina Gramsci of 17 September 1937, from Sraffa to Tat'jana of 18 September 1937 and draft letter from Tat'jana to Vladimir Potëmkin dated between 1940 and early 1941 - Sraffa 1991, p. 188 and FG, AAG, Carte Tatiana Schucht, Correspondence).

<sup>115</sup> See section 3.4 above.

<sup>116</sup> Letter from Tat'jana to Evgenija dated 15 June 1937 (Vacca 2012, p. 331, Lo Piparo, 2013 p. 48).

<sup>117</sup> Exceptions are notebook *17b*, *10* and *18*.

<sup>118</sup> The hypothesis, which has been formulated by Lo Piparo (2013 pp. 58-60), can be subjected to at least one qualification: the labels placed on the spine of most of the notebooks show no signs of the numbering correction that involved some of the labels placed on the covers (we will examine them in detail in Section 4). From this it can be deduced that the labels on the spine were added by Tat'jana after she had made that correction (see section 4.3 below).

two notebooks, their dispatch had not taken place and that she was aware of it:

I send you, my dear, all of Antonio's manuscripts. I am also sending you the catalogue, which I have just begun, of the problems studied by Antonio, page by page. The comrade who came to see me says that such a list is indispensable, only that one must compile it just as I began to do in the first few pages, whereas he thinks that when I also began to write the content, albeit in a few lines, the work in this way increases considerably, without any use, since first of all one must simply have a list of all the issues studied, page by page. Then we move on to the next stage of the work: the analysis and collation of the materials, their classification, etc. He looked very carefully at the three notebooks I had brought home for this purpose.<sup>119</sup>

These sentences prompt a few comments. Firstly, it can be noted that no information is available as to which notebooks Tat'jana had shown to Sraffa. One can only surmise that the ones that she did not number, together with notebooks XVI and XIV must be excluded and that they were three notebooks with most of the pages compiled. Furthermore, one can speculate that Tat'jana had chosen to bring Sraffa notebooks that were small in size (for ease of transport) and without prison stamps (to reduce the danger of seizure should she be checked by the police). The application of these criteria points to notebooks V, VI and X as the most likely choice. Secondly, it is evident how the distinction between the two ways of preparing the catalogue indicated in the letter corresponds to the content of *Catalogue I* – on the other hand, no information is provided on the preparation of Tatiana's transcription of Gramsci's notebooks.<sup>120</sup> Finally, it is interesting to underline that a sentence in the same letter of 5 July allows us to observe how Tat'jana, although personally witness to the fact that only two thirds of Gramsci's notebooks had been written (or rather: initiated) in prison, adhered to a formula similar to the one that would be adopted at the time of their publication: *Prison Notebooks*: Tat'jana wrote to Julija that she was sending her 'the manuscripts taken from prison'. The prison

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<sup>119</sup> Letter from Tat'jana to Julija of 5 July 1937 (Lo Piparo 2013, pp. 105-6). Incidentally, this sentence seems to reflect the intention of producing an edition of the notebooks on the basis of a thematic order of the topics.

<sup>120</sup> In our opinion, it is likely that Tat'jana sent the notebook where she had started the transcription of notebook XVI to Moscow in the summer of 1938, together with the two notebooks of Gramsci's that she had not numbered and several crates of books (see sections 3.7 and 6.1).

experience, which had left Gramsci in a dramatic physical condition, had also extended its shadow over the years spent in the clinics, where he had in any case been under close surveillance, and had dominated Tat'jana's perception.

The sending of the notebooks and *Catalogue I* is also confirmed by what Tat'jana wrote to Sraffa two days later, Wednesday 7 July:

Yesterday I delivered the notebooks (all of them): and also the catalogue I had started.<sup>121</sup>

Note that '(all of them):' is added in a blank space at the end of the line (deleting a comma that concluded the main sentence). Tat'jana had found it necessary to specify this – perhaps to emphasize that she was also sending the two notebooks she had already attempted to send three weeks earlier, or perhaps because when she had met Sraffa she had been uncertain as to whether it was advisable or possible to send in a single parcel all the notebooks she still had with her.<sup>122</sup>

An indirect confirmation of how, in general, she had dispatched the notebooks fairly quickly can be found in a passage from the above-mentioned draft of a letter to Vladimir Potëmkin dated 12 July 1939. In that draft, neither the shipment of the notebooks nor that of Gramsci's other manuscripts are mentioned among the activities that had justified her stay in Rome in a period that we can assume covered almost the whole of 1938:

My departure was linked to sending Gramsci's things to Moscow, in particular his library, but first and foremost to the arrangement of his tomb in the Non-Catholic Cemetery of Testaccio, in Rome; therefore in the last months of my stay in Rome I was no longer counted among the Embassy employees, I was called on only when necessary.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Sraffa 1991, p. 185.

<sup>122</sup> Lo Piparo formulates a completely implausible hypothesis: after examining the three notebooks Tat'jana had brought him, Sraffa allegedly held them back, making it impossible for Tat'jana to send 'all of them'; she, in her turn, would have used this expression to point out that fact (cf. Lo Piparo, 2013 pp. 87-8 and also pp. 86, 120 and 122). If this had been the case, it can be assumed that Tat'jana would have informed her sisters about it, that they would have protested to the Soviet authorities, and that a trace of this episode would be found in Stella Blagoeva's reports from the spring of 1939 and in the note in which Tat'jana most probably referred to the meeting with Sraffa on 30 June 1937 (cf. section 3.5 above).

<sup>123</sup> FG, AAG, Carte Tatiana Schucht, Correspondence; see also *infra* note 127. Since Tat'jana wrote to Sraffa on 15 July 1938 that she was staying in a hotel and that she considered her departure imminent, it can be assumed that she had already stopped working at the embassy at

If it can therefore be assumed that by 6 July she had handed over all of Gramsci's notebooks (or rather: those which she had numbered) to the embassy staff preparing the diplomatic mail dispatches, the next question, of course, is: when did they arrive at the Schucht-Gramsci family home in Moscow?

### *3.7. The arrival of the notebooks*

The available documents do not contain any reference to the arrival of the notebooks in Moscow, but some testimonies have emerged in this regard over the years. The first is by Felice Platone and dates to 1946. According to Platone, shortly after Gramsci's death,

[the notebooks] were safe in Moscow [...] it was then the summer of 1937 and at that time there were none of Gramsci's Italian comrades in Moscow who could undertake the long and delicate work of preparing the manuscripts for publication [...] In the following years, all energies were absorbed by the war of liberation and Gramsci's notebooks remained in the Soviet Union without being brought to the attention of the public.<sup>124</sup>

The second testimony is by Vincenzo Bianco. It was collected by Paolo Spriano in March 1970 and reported by Spriano himself:

the Notebooks – together with Gramsci's letters, books and effects – were sent by Tanja Schucht to her sister after some time and arrived at their destination later, at least a year later: Vincenzo Bianco (a close personal friend of Antonio and the family) was to collect them, lying in a trunk. Bianco returned from Spain in October 1937 and it was only around June-July 1938, as Italian representative to the Komintern, that he came into possession of Gramsci's papers.<sup>125</sup>

This testimony is compatible with Platone's assertion that the notebooks arrived in the Soviet Union in the summer of 1937, but the idea that they were in a trunk that also contained all of Gramsci's books, his letters and personal effects is not convincing. In all probability, the notebooks were not sent in a trunk, but in a parcel, with normal diplomatic mail, which certainly did not travel by sea,

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that time, but the arrangement of Gramsci's tomb was not completed until the following November (cf. letters from Tat'jana to Teresina Gramsci of 7 and 15 November 1938).

<sup>124</sup> Platone 1946, p. 81.

<sup>125</sup> Spriano 1970, p. 156.

but by rail. As for the books (or at least most of them), we know instead that the shipment required the use of several crates,<sup>126</sup> that it took place between summer and autumn of 1938 and that Tat'jana also included her own books and others that the Schuchts had left with the Perilli family before moving to Russia and, presumably, other items belonging to her or her family. But it is also important to consider another fact: after the two letters of 5 and 7 July 1937, no further reference to the notebooks appears in Tat'jana's correspondence. If they had not reached the Schucht-Gramsci family in a relatively short time, we can assume that her correspondence, although it is likely that some letters are not preserved, would show some warning signs.<sup>127</sup> On the other hand, a passage from Stella Blagoeva's report on the *Gramsci-Togliatti affair* in the spring of 1939 also suggests that there was no significant delay:

[In] May 1938, the NKVD in the person of Dneprov and his secretary Zarki made an attempt to take away all of Gramsci's manuscripts from the family. But Evgenija Schucht's assertion that she would only hand them over following an order of the VKP(B) Central Committee and the fact that she telephoned Ežov's Secretariat, put a stop to these attempts (Evgenija Schucht's testimony).<sup>128</sup>

Clearly, in May 1938, Julija and Evgenija had been in possession of the notebooks. But if the attempt to take away the manuscripts had been made when they had only just reached the family, if the family had encountered difficulties in getting them delivered once they arrived in Moscow, or if the delivery had been delayed by almost a year, one can expect that Stella Blagoeva's report – which was essentially based on information provided by the Schucht sisters – would have underlined this.

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<sup>126</sup> See *infra* note 120. Note that Giuliano, in his own testimony, speaks of a single trunk, but also of a “ceremony” of arrival of all the material, which suggests the presence of more than one piece of luggage (Schucht 1991, p. XIX). He placed the arrival of the trunk to the Schucht-Gramsci family between late 1938 and early 1939, specifying that ‘the material’ had been picked up by Bianco ‘at the port of Leningrad’ (Schucht 1991, pp. XV-XVI, XIX).

<sup>127</sup> For the six months between July and December 1937, only ten letters from Tat'jana to her family members and one addressed to her are preserved. Francesco Giasi interprets these documents by stating that, although it is not known ‘when the notebooks were handed over to Julija’, it can be considered certain that ‘they arrived in Moscow in the manner agreed by Tanja with the Soviet embassy in Rome’ and that ‘it is clear from Tanja's correspondence with Julija and Evgenija that her concerns and subsequent dispatches concerned the letters and the remaining part of Gramsci's legacy’ (Gramsci 2020, pp. XIII-XIV).

<sup>128</sup> See Pons 2004, pp. 99-100; cf. Canali 2013, p. 247 and Fabre 2015, p. 512.

We can therefore assume that Platone's statement that the notebooks had arrived in Moscow in the summer of 1937 was substantially accurate and can be supplemented by specifying that the family came into possession of them immediately. We may suppose that the family had informed Tat'jana that the notebooks had arrived, but that Julija and Delio's hospitalization and illness had then directed both their and Tat'jana's attention to other matters.<sup>129</sup> The trunk that had been lying around for some time and that Vincenzo Bianco would deliver to the Schucht-Gramsci family in the summer of 1938 probably did not contain the notebooks, but other material – perhaps the plaster casts of Gramsci's face and hand that Tatiana had prepared immediately after his death, which she had sent around mid-August 1937 and which a month later still had not reached their destination.<sup>130</sup> The words that Tatiana wrote on that occasion tell us a great deal about both how the shipments were made from the Soviet embassy in Rome and the reaction she would have had if she had not received positive news about the arrival of the notebooks in Moscow:

And here is another question of primary importance. I have not received confirmation that you have received Antonio's plaster mask, together with the plaster cast of his hand and four framed photographs, which worries me greatly. The parcel was packed a few days before the mail arrived: and the comrade who did everything confirmed to me that it was sent. I gave him your home address and telephone number, but evidently the parcel was sent to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, and from there they should have informed you that they had received this parcel. I am very sorry that I did not receive even a distant hint from you that the mask had arrived. Is it possible that after the arrival of a heavy parcel in Moscow, sent by diplomatic mail from the embassy, and not from one of our offices, nothing was communicated to you, and who knows, in this case, where and to whom this parcel ended up. I will not rest easy until I know that everything is OK.<sup>131</sup>

But Bianco may also have played a role in retrieving what we believe were packages of copies of Gramsci's letters that Tat'jana

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<sup>129</sup> See Tat'jana's letters to Julija dated 17 August, 4 and 25 September 1937, to Evgenija dated 25 September 1937 and to Delio dated 26 October 1937.

<sup>130</sup> See Tat'jana's letter to Evgenija dated 17 August 1937 (see also Tat'jana's letters to her family dated 23 July and 4 September 1937). A letter from Togliatti to Dimitrov dated 25 April 1941 states that the mask and the plaster handprint were 'still in the possession of the family who would like them to be taken over by the Lenin Museum and displayed there' (Lo Piparo 2013, p. 145; see also Schucht 1991, p. xix and Francioni 1992b, p. 721 note 25).

<sup>131</sup> Letter from Tat'jana to Evgenija dated 25 September 1937.

had prepared over the years for safekeeping, which he had sent to the family in Moscow in early 1938 and which only (and perhaps only partially) reached their destination during the summer of that year.<sup>132</sup> He also, in all probability, arranged for the numerous crates of books and other objects that Tat'jana had sent – presumably by American Express courier – to the Schucht-Gramsci family (either to their home or to another more suitable place for storage) in the summer of 1938.<sup>133</sup> In those crates we can assume that were also placed the notebook (of which only four sheets remain today) in which Tat'jana had begun to copy notebook XVI<sup>134</sup> and the two of Gramsci notebooks that she had not numbered (the one entitled *The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce* and the one entitled *Niccolò Machiavelli II°*, today indicated with the numbers 10 and 18).<sup>135</sup>

In summary, it is likely that the thirty-one notebooks numbered by Tat'jana reached the Schucht-Gramsci family by the summer of 1937. As shown in Section 3.4, the list presumably referring to the thirty-one notebooks which Tat'jana can be assumed to have had in front of her at her desk at the embassy (not preserved today) had already reached the family in June and perhaps also the two notebooks which she wanted to send first.<sup>136</sup> Probably in July, also

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. letters from Tat'jana to Julija of 25 January 1938, from Evgenija to Tat'jana of 8 June 1938 and from Tat'jana to her family members of 16 July 1938 (the latter letter contains expressions similar to those just considered in connection with the non-delivery of the plaster casts). Evgenija's letter to Tat'jana of 8 June 1938 seems to refer to notebooks sent from Rome that had not reached Moscow, but this is undoubtedly a reference to copies of Gramsci's letters to Tat'jana (only in some cases may it have been the originals of those letters); in fact Tat'jana replied without referring to *notebooks*, but to parcels or *packets* of letters (letter from Tat'jana to family members of 16 July 1938 – cf. Lo Piparo 2013, pp. 118-19; Gramsci 2020, pp. XIII-XIV).

<sup>133</sup> Cf. letters from Tat'jana to Sraffa of 24 June 1938, to her mother of 25 January 1938, to her family of 7 May 1938 and to Evgenija of 4 September 1937.

<sup>134</sup> Since Tat'jana had written to Julia in her letter of 5 July 1937 that she had sent her all the notebooks and the catalogue of topics she had started, it can be assumed that the notebook in which she had started to copy the XVI notebook word for word was sent at a later date – and since she makes no mention of it, we can assume that it was included in one of the crates sent to Moscow in the summer of 1938.

<sup>135</sup> This theme will be explored further in sections 4.2 and 4.3 and further taken up in section 6. That Tat'jana had not numbered two notebooks was explicitly stated by Valentino Gerratana: firstly without specifying which they were, then specifying it (cf. Gerratana 1967, pp. 243-4 and Gramsci 1975 pp. XXXI, XXXV n. 1, 2404, 2418). That the notebook dedicated to Benedetto Croce bore no label with the numbering prepared by Tat'jana had already been noted by Platone in his note dated 8 October 1945 and in his 1946 article (FG, Fascicolo Descrizione dei quaderni, Platone and Platone 1946, p. 81). The latter notebook now bears a label that was certainly affixed by Gerratana and on which Gerratana himself wrote the number XXXIII *in his own hand* (cf. Lo Piparo 2013, pp. 67-77, 157-70 and also Canfora 2012, p. 226 n. 30).

<sup>136</sup> See section 3.6 above.

the other twenty-nine notebooks numbered by Tat'jana (or the thirty-one notebooks all together) and the catalogue she had started and named *Catalogue I* were delivered to the family in Moscow. In the summer of 1938, or at any rate by the following winter, it is conceivable that the family received the two notebooks that Tat'jana had not numbered (today catalogued as 10 and 18), the two blank notebooks catalogued as 17 *bis* and 17 *ter*, the second copy of the synthetic list, the notebook (of which only four pages are preserved today) on which Tat'jana had begun to transcribe word for word in Notebook XVI and perhaps other notebooks that had remained blank.

Given this highly articulated succession of dispatches and arrivals, it can be assumed that the attempt (of which, as we have seen, we know from the report of 19 March 1939) to take possession of Gramsci's manuscripts made by the NKVD in May 1938 had interrupted a period of disinterest or inattention in the material in the possession of the Schucht-Gramsci family. On the other hand, the reference in Stella Blagoeva's above-mentioned note dated 27 June 1938 ('Gramsci's materials the family does not give them – photograph or requisition them') could allude to a request for the handing over of the notebooks and other manuscripts made to the family by representatives of the Communist International shortly after the NKVD's intervention and reflect a general reawakening of interest. It was in this context that Bianco's work may have developed, aimed at recovering the copies of letters and the parcel containing the original plaster casts and at the delivery of the numerous crates sent by Tat'jana in the summer of 1938. The preparation of photographic copies of the notebooks and their transcription, on the other hand, seems likely to have begun only after the creation by the Communist International, in early 1939, of a 'Commission for Comrade Gramsci's Literary Heritage' – not in the summer of 1937, as stated by Platone.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Platone 1946, p. 81. A handwritten note by Togliatti dated 2 July 1939 informs us that by that date all the notebooks had already been photographed and that seventeen had also been copied (cf. Lattanzi 2017, p. 85 and Gramsci 2020, p. XIX; cf. also *supra* note 120). However, as Togliatti does not indicate the total number of notebooks, we cannot take it for granted that the photographed notebooks also included the two that Tatiana had not numbered and, in particular, that the *Niccolò Machiavelli II°* notebook, which in 1946 was kept separately from the others – see section 4 below).

As already hypothesized by Lattanzi, the different deliveries of material sent from Rome may have led some witnesses to place the arrival of the notebooks in Moscow at a different time from when it actually took place.<sup>138</sup> But this hypothesis can be clarified by emphasizing two elements. Firstly, the notebooks themselves arrived in Moscow spread over two or three consignments. Secondly, only some of the shipments (the arrival of the plaster casts and that of the large shipment of crates containing mainly books, but in which it is possible that there were also handwritten documents and some notebooks) can be considered to have given rise to the sort of public event mentioned by Giuliano Gramsci<sup>139</sup> – others (in particular the arrival in Moscow of the masks and the bronze hand and that of the thirty-one notebooks numbered by Tat’jana), in our opinion, did not resonate outside the Schucht-Gramsci family.

### *3.8. 12 months of inattention?*

What reasons could have determined, after Gramsci’s death, a period of apparent inattention to his notebooks, and in general to his manuscripts, lasting almost a year and the subsequent reawakening of interest? There were at least three actors involved: the Soviet authorities; the leaders of the PCd’I; the Schucht-Gramsci family.

With regard to the family, we have already mentioned the difficulties related to the health conditions of some of its members. However, it is also possible that the Schucht sisters had already reached the conviction that they had to be wary of some of the representatives of both the PCd’I and the Soviet institutions with which they were in closest contact and that it was for this reason too that, after receiving the notebooks, at least while waiting for Tat’jana’s return, they simply kept them. As far as the PCd’I is concerned, one may recall what Felice Platone wrote in April 1946: the leaders best equipped to work on Gramsci’s manuscripts were far from Moscow (Togliatti, in particular, was in Spain from July 1937) and the months between the spring of 1937 and the summer of 1938 and even the following year, until the collapse of the Spanish Republic in the spring of 1939, were extremely demanding and dramatic for those in the front line supporting the republican front. However, it is more than plausible that the lack of commit-

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<sup>138</sup> Lattanzi 2017, pp. 73, 83.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Schucht 1991, p. XIX.

ment to politically valorizing Gramsci's literary legacy also depended on the political difficulties in which the ruling group of the Communist Party found itself and the fear that this legacy could prove dangerous. The Soviet Union was in the midst of the *great terror* and Angelo Tasca, shortly after Gramsci's death, had published parts of one of his articles and parts of his correspondence of January 1924 and October 1926 that could easily be interpreted as evidence of a detachment from Stalin's party line (if not even as his closeness to Trotsky) and as strong criticism of Togliatti.<sup>140</sup> All this could have led the leaders of the PCd'I – both in Paris and Moscow – to a very circumspect attitude towards his unpublished texts. In fact, not even Gramsci's known writings had been republished and in September 1938 a meeting of the PCd'I secretariat even considered officially disassociating itself from Gramsci's letter of October 1926.

However, it is significant that Togliatti, who had travelled to Moscow from Spain at the end of August and beginning of September 1938, intervened and blocked the dissociation proposal that would have effectively condemned Gramsci and all his writings.<sup>141</sup> Turning to the Soviet authorities, the hypothesis we put forward is that, by avoiding making any official decision on the matter, the sending of the notebooks to the family and the subsequent inattention to them had been tacitly approved. This assumption is based on two constataions. On the one hand, Manuil'skij, faced with Togliatti's request on 11 June 1937 that Gramsci's manuscripts be handed over to the offices of the Communist International, then to the PCd'I, seems to have taken no action. On the other hand, the Soviet ambassador in Rome, Boris Štejn, does not seem to have initiated any official contact in connection with the shipment of the notebooks to Moscow, nor does he seem to have treated them as being of particular interest (had he not done so, he would hardly have advised Tat'jana to copy them). It is therefore possible that the dispatch of the notebooks to the Schucht-Gramsci family took place under a sort of stamp of tacit indifference and approval affixed by Manuil'skij and by the ambassador in Rome and perhaps by authorities above them. All this may have contributed to the fact that the

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<sup>140</sup> Tasca 1937. This publication, like the following one by Tasca himself in 1938, is recorded in the document prepared by Stella Blagoeva in the spring of 1939 (Canali 2013, p. 247; and Fabre 2015, p. 512).

<sup>141</sup> See Spriano, 1970 pp. 256-58 and Spriano 1977, pp. 118-21. See also Spriano 1970, pp. 232-45; Dundovich 1998, pp. 65-126; Vacca 1999, pp. 101-2; and Gramsci 2020, pp. XVI-XVIII.

notebooks reached the family without hindrance or delay, perhaps sent directly to their address or collected by them following a telephone call, as we can gather from what Tat'jana wrote in the aforementioned case of the plaster casts. As far as the end of this period is concerned, one cannot fail to notice how the intervention of the NKVD, as far as is known, followed very shortly after the full publication, in April 1938, again by Tasca, of Gramsci's letter of October 1926 on the struggles within the Soviet Communist Party<sup>142</sup> – one can therefore assume that the Communist International had moved in that wake. On the other hand, it is also significant that in the spring of 1937 the Communist International sent Giuseppe Berti to Paris as its own inspector to the PCd'I and that in April 1938 a number of leaders of the PCd'I were summoned to Moscow for an examination of their work and an interrogation during which Ruggero Grieco defended himself against Tat'jana's accusations concerning the sending of his letter to Gramsci of 10 February 1928<sup>143</sup> – the period of apparent indifference or inattention to Gramsci's notebooks seems to coincide with this sort of phase of suspension of judgement, or of preparation for a judgement, towards the leadership of the PCd'I. Finally, it can be noted that the spring of 1938 saw first an apparent loss, then – following a request for research – the delivery to the Schucht family of what we can assume were packets of copies of Gramsci's letters to Tat'jana made by the latter over the years for her own reference and sent by her to family members by diplomatic post in January 1938. Also in connection with this episode, it appears that the NKVD attempted to appropriate the documents.<sup>144</sup>

The writer is not in a position to subject these hypotheses to the scrutiny of deeper critical evaluation, but it seems difficult to justify the contradictory nature of the alternative reconstruction according to which the notebooks, after being sent in the summer of 1937 and held for almost a year by Soviet authorities, were handed over

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<sup>142</sup> Tasca 1938.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Pons 2004, p. 87; Biscione 2011, p. 20.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. letters from Tat'jana to Julija dated 25 January 1938, from Evgenija to Tat'jana dated 8 June 1938 and from Tat'jana to family members dated 16 July 1938 and a sentence in Stella Blagoeva's handwritten document dated 19 March 1939 entitled *Material on the Gramsci-T. case* which reads: 'Dneprov tried to hold back all the letters from G. to Tat'jana sent from Rome. After stubborn insistence, he handed over some of them, but he held them back for a year altogether' (Canali 2014, p. 247 - in reality, they were probably held back for about five months, between the end of January and the beginning of June).

to the family and immediately afterwards claimed by both the NKVD and the Communist International.

#### *4. The numbering of notebooks*

To conclude the reconstruction of the transfer of the notebooks from Rome to Moscow, it is useful to return to the numbering and cataloguing carried out by Tat'jana before sending them. In this sense, it will be crucial to consider the fact that two of Gramsci's notebooks were not numbered and the possibility that the circumstances that led to this justify the already mentioned hypothesis that these two notebooks were sent to Moscow somewhat later than the others.

##### *4.1. A hypothesis on the numbering criterion*

First, we can ask on the basis of what criterion Tat'jana numbered Gramsci's notebooks. Unfortunately, there is no document in which this choice is justified, but it is clear that she did not devise her own numbering by trying to reconstruct the chronological order of their composition or to establish thematic groupings. Instead, she seems to have applied a rather bland criterion of homogeneity in the size and workmanship of the notebooks. In fact, the numbering adopted by Tat'jana distinguishes the notebooks into two main groups according to their format: numbers *I* to *XXVIII* are assigned to small-format notebooks (whose size is, on average, about 150x200 mm); numbers *XXIX* and *XXX* are assigned to two large-format notebooks (about 200x300 mm); number *XXXI* is assigned to a drawing album-cum-sketchbook (230x158 mm). Within the small-format group, one can recognize some subgroups of notebooks characterized by similarities in size and workmanship, but their formation does not seem to follow a precise rule.

Observation of the labels on the covers of the notebooks also offers grounds for interest.<sup>145</sup> It can be assumed that, at least up to notebook *XXII*, those labels were written in two stages: the Roman numeral would have been written first and the description of the notebook would have been added at a later stage. Indeed, one has the impression that the indications concerning the number of pages

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<sup>145</sup> That it was Tat'jana who placed these labels on the notebooks is not directly documented, but can be deduced from the presence of labels covering previously removed identical ones and by the fact that they both bear her handwriting.

and whether the notebook was completed or not, and the occasional information relating to content or composition were inserted using the space left empty after writing the Roman numeral. Whether the same procedure was followed for the labels placed on notebooks *XXIII-XXXI* is not so clear. These labels, although of different types, are all larger than the others, and although the use of spaces is always tidier than in the case of the smaller labels and the Roman numeral always follows the short description, it is not obvious whether this is to be attributed to having written the number after the description or to the availability of a larger space.<sup>146</sup> Similar labels were also pasted on the cover of the notebook on which Tat'jana began the preparation of a catalogue of the topics contained in Gramsci's notebooks and on the notebooks now referred to as *17 bis* and *17 ter*, stamped at the Turi prison but left blank. In addition, with the exception of notebook *17 ter* and notebooks *XIV* and *XVI*, on the spine of all the notebooks (in the position where, in the case of a book binding, there is a gusset) there is another label that from the spine also extends to the upper and lower plates.

On the latter labels Tat'jana wrote the same number in Arabic numerals as she had written in Roman numerals on the cover (but the two notebooks that remained blank are not numbered in any way). We can assume that Tat'jana always wrote the number in Arabic numerals twice: usually on the portion of the label that extended on the upper plate and on the portion that extended on the lower plate; sometimes, however, it appears on the portions of the label that were on the front plate and on the spine. The latter portion has in some cases become detached and is missing, and with it, if it contained a number, that number as well. Between the blank pages of *Catalogue I*, a fragment of the label that Tat'jana had placed on the spine of the notebook she numbered *IX* was found. That fragment bears the number 9 and corresponds to a portion of the label that is missing from the notebook; the other two portions have remained stuck: one on the upper plate, with the number 9, and one on the lower plate, without any number.

Observations on the composition of the labels placed on the covers of notebooks *I-XXII* and on how Tat'jana, despite being

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<sup>146</sup> The labels on the covers of notebooks *XXIII-XXVIII* are made by cutting a blank sheet of paper; for notebooks *XXIX-XXXI*, pre-printed labels were used, as for notebooks *I-XXII*.

aware that Gramsci himself had indicated one of his own notebooks as 'First Notebook' and others as 'I' and 'II', did not follow any of those indications lead us to believe that behind the numbering she affixed there lies a very strong logical criterion – not a superficial choice. In our view, by taking the notebooks from the Quisisana clinic and transferring them to the embassy, Tat'jana wanted to preserve the order they had in the place where Gramsci had kept them. Therefore, she numbered them to reproduce that order.

#### 4.2. *Which notebooks did Tat'jana have?*

Let us now turn to the analysis of how Tat'jana concretely articulated her work of numbering and cataloguing. As we have seen, it can be assumed that between the end of May and the beginning of June 1937 she had prepared a fairly concise list containing information similar to that which we find on the labels she had pasted on the covers and perhaps also the titles that Gramsci had inserted at the beginning of some of the notebooks. Obviously, given that the purpose for which she had prepared that list was to allow her sisters to check that in the dispatch from Rome to Moscow no notebook was lost or mutilated, it can be assumed that before preparing it she had numbered all the notebooks she had at that time. If Tat'jana did not number the two notebooks entitled *The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce* and *Niccolò Machiavelli II°*, which bear neither labels nor numbers in her own hand, we can therefore assume that they were not at her immediate disposal. This in turn can be explained by assuming that they had been placed among Gramsci's books, objects and documents and that this had happened because they had been so separated from the others by Gramsci himself or, unintentionally, by Tat'jana or Carlo while emptying his room. Those objects, and in particular the books, can also be assumed to have been immediately deposited at the Soviet embassy (as had been done in 1926 with the books Gramsci had in his home prior to his arrest),<sup>147</sup> but it is reasonable to assume that Tat'jana did not have complete freedom of access to all the embassy rooms. On the other hand, further confirmation of the hypothesis that Tat'jana would not have had two notebooks in her immediate possession can be found in the analysis of the examinations carried out on some of the labels on the notebooks discussed in the next section.

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<sup>147</sup> See above section 3.1 and footnote 67.

#### 4.3. *Removed Labels*

The hypothesis that Tat'jana did not number two notebooks because they were not immediately available to her deserves further consideration in light of the results of the experts' reports (*Relazioni Scientifiche*) that the *Istituto centrale per il restauro e la conservazione del patrimonio archivistico e librario* carried out in May 2013 on the labels that a special commission appointed by the Fondazione Gramsci had found to have been superimposed on others – the labels on the covers of notebooks XXIX, XXX and XXXI and the label on the spine of notebook XXI.<sup>148</sup> In the case of notebook XXI, expert examination revealed that the label on the spine covers another one with the same number as the label that is visible today and that both numbers appear to be in Tat'jana's hand. In the case of the other three notebooks, the examinations revealed that the labels originally stuck on the covers were partially removed and covered with new labels (those visible today) numbered by Tat'jana XXIX, XXX and XXXI. The partially removed and covered labels had a higher numbering than the new labels: their numbers – also in Tat'jana's hand – had been XXXII,<sup>149</sup> XXXI and XXXIII respectively. Since we must exclude the possibility that the initial *jump* of two numbers reveals the existence of two notebooks that were taken away after Tat'jana had completed her own numbering and never recovered,<sup>150</sup> we can assume that Tat'jana had initially left the numbers XXIX and XXX free with the intention of placing in that position two notebooks that were not in her possession at that time. More precisely, as there is no evidence that Tat'jana ever reported any subtraction, we believe we can explain the initial *jump*

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<sup>148</sup> Cf. Various authors 2013. The presence of traces of covered or removed labels had already been pointed out by Francioni in Gramsci 2009, vol. 14 p. 113. The issue was taken up by Lo Piparo in his 2012 pamphlet and again in Francioni 2012 and in Lo Piparo 2013.

<sup>149</sup> The label below the one that today reads 'Incomplete XXIX' contained the following wording: 'Incomplete p. 1 to 26 XXXII'. In reality, the pages used in notebook XXIX are not twenty-six, but twenty-four, but similar discrepancies between what Tat'jana wrote on the labels and the actual contents of the notebooks can be recognized in many cases (consider, for example, notebook IV, in which forty-three pages are written, while Tat'jana counts forty-four, and notebook XVII, in which Tat'jana omits to count the first page, on which Gramsci had written a title, but counts pages 7-10, which are actually blank).

<sup>150</sup> That such an assumption is entirely unrealistic follows from the fact that, as we have already argued (see supra note 144), Tat'jana appears never to have reported either such a subtraction or a discrepancy between the list sent at the beginning of June and the notebooks delivered for mailing at the beginning of July. On the other hand, any such hypothesis has to reckon with the fact that we now have three notebooks more than the number (thirty) that Tat'jana herself had communicated to her family on 25 May 1937 (see section 6.1 below).

of two numbers by assuming that in the course of cataloguing she had memory of two notebooks that she did not see with the others at that time had emerged. In particular, Tat'jana might have thought that Gramsci had used four large notebooks, i.e. two more than she had in front of her on her work table.<sup>151</sup> Convinced that she could find them among the books and objects belonging to Gramsci, she might have vacated numbers *XXIX* and *XXX* to assign them to the missing notebooks, which she presumed to be able to quickly retrieve and place next to the other large-format ones.<sup>152</sup> Following this hypothesis, we can assume that Tat'jana then changed her mind and decided to revise the previous numbering and proceed to a definitive numbering that also employed the two numbers left unused. Perhaps she had searched for those notebooks and had not been able to find them and had convinced herself that her recollection was wrong; or, if she had not had a chance to search them thoroughly, she might have decided that leaving two numbers free would have generated an unnecessary ambiguity.<sup>153</sup>

All of this, including the adjustment of the numbering to the number of notebooks she had in her immediate possession, i.e. the superimposition of the labels *XXIX*, *XXX* and *XXXI* over the previous ones, can be assumed to have been carried out by Tat'jana between the end of May and the beginning of June, when she was preparing the summary list we know about from her letter to Evgenija of 15 June 1937.

Assuming that the correction of the numbering took place at that time and that the list referred to thirty-one notebooks, the possibility remains that in the following weeks Tat'jana found notebooks *10* and *18* and handed them in with the others at the beginning of July to be sent to Moscow. However, two circumstances make this hypothesis unconvincing. On the one hand, Tat'jana's letter to Julija of 5 July contains no explanation of the sending of two unnumbered notebooks, which presumably were not mentioned in the list. On

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<sup>151</sup> Note that the drawing album was placed at the margin of the division into two main groups even when it was numbered *XXXIII*.

<sup>152</sup> Evidently that memory had not yet emerged when she had informed her sister that there were thirty notebooks (see section 6.1 below).

<sup>153</sup> Doubts about the validity of the recollection of four large format notebooks used by Gramsci may also have been heightened by the presence of notebooks of that type that remained blank (it is possible that the large format notebooks used by Tat'jana to begin the transcription of notebook *XVI* and the compilation of *Catalogue I* were notebooks purchased for Gramsci and remained blank until the time of his death).

the other hand, a letter from Julija and Evgenija to Stalin dated 5 December 1940 mentions thirty notebooks.<sup>154</sup> If between June and July 1937 Tat'jana had sent thirty-two notebooks and a sketchbook, all with Gramsci's writings from the years of his imprisonment, why should Julija and Evgenija have told Stalin that there were thirty notebooks in the family's possession? In our opinion, Tat'jana found notebooks 10 and 18 while she was preparing Gramsci's books for shipment, i.e. in the summer of 1938, and with those books she could have sent them to Moscow – but at that point numbering them was pointless: the two notebooks would have arrived in Moscow when she could personally justify their provenance. If in December 1940 Julija and Evgenija mentioned thirty notebooks it could have been because the two unnumbered notebooks had remained unnoticed in a crate of books and had not been reunited with the others in the Schucht-Gramsci family home (this will be discussed in section 6.1).

##### 5. *From the Soviet Union to Italy*

As we have seen, as far as is known, after Togliatti's request for information to Sraffa in May 1937, the attention for the notebooks outside the Schucht-Gramsci family, who had been keeping them in their home probably since the summer of 1937, only manifested itself in May 1938, when the NKVD is reported to have tried, unsuccessfully, to bring them under their control. Almost a year later, in early 1939, the Communist International formed a commission to define the management of Gramsci's literary estate. In August 1939 it was decided that the preservation of the archival material, including the notebooks, would pass from the family to the Communist International's archive, but a report of that same commission shows that on 21 December 1940 the notebooks (although, as we shall see, most probably excluding the two that Tat'jana had not numbered) were still in the custody of the family.<sup>155</sup> Perhaps the transfer to the archive of the Communist International did not take place until the spring of 1941, when all the notebooks, including the two that Tatiana had not numbered, had been gathered together at the Schucht-Gramsci family home.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> See *infra* section 6.1.

<sup>155</sup> Daniele and Vacca 2005, pp. 64-70.

<sup>156</sup> See section 6.1 below.

A letter from Togliatti to Dimitrov dated 25 April 1941 attests that on that date Gramsci's letters were still with the family - and the same can be assumed to have been true of the notebooks.<sup>157</sup> An annotation made by Dimitrov on that same letter indicates the opportunity to transfer the original documents to the archives of the Communist International,<sup>158</sup> and this can be assumed to have taken place before the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941.<sup>159</sup> After that attack, probably in September and October 1941, the material stored in the archives of the Communist International was transferred to the city of Ufa and from there it is very likely that in the late summer or autumn of 1943, at Togliatti's request, Gramsci's letters and the notebooks themselves were brought back to Moscow.<sup>160</sup>

A few months later, Togliatti left the Soviet Union and arrived in Naples on 27 March 1944 – from there, on 29 April, he demanded that the notebooks be sent to him as soon as possible.<sup>161</sup> But, according to a communication from the Soviet Foreign Minister to the Central Committee of the PCI of 20 April 1945, this happened only on 3 March 1945.<sup>162</sup> Two or three other shipments of archival material of Gramscian interest took place even later: in December 1946 and January 1947.<sup>163</sup> One of these, made in December 1946, most likely included the notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II*<sup>o</sup>.<sup>164</sup> The two uncompleted catalogues begun by Tat'jana, as we shall see in the next section, were probably sent to Italy as early as March 1945; the

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<sup>157</sup> See Daniele and Vacca 2005, p. 22.

<sup>158</sup> See Daniele and Vacca 2005, p. 22.

<sup>159</sup> This deduction is based on statements contained in a draft letter from Julija to Dimitrov (FIG, AAG, *Carte Giulia Schucht, undated correspondence*) and in Julija's letter to Stalin dated 5 December 1946 (RGASPI, fund 17, inventory 128, fasc. 1016); see Daniele and Vacca 2005, pp. 79-80 and Lattanzi 2017, p. 99.

<sup>160</sup> Letter from Togliatti to Dimitrov of 20 August 1943 (Daniele and Vacca, 2005 pp. 70-1).

<sup>161</sup> Letter from Togliatti to PCd'I leaders in Moscow (Togliatti 2014a, p. 10).

<sup>162</sup> Daniele and Vacca 2005, p. 73 (see also Francioni 1992b, p. 721 n. 25). The letter had been written to draw attention to the fact that 'some problems had arisen regarding the way in which the Italian Communist Party came into possession [of Gramsci's notebooks]' and to inform that to overcome them it had been proposed 'to indicate, at the time of publication, that the notebooks were kept by Ercoli'. The reasons for this embarrassment we believe can be traced back to disagreements between the Schucht-Gramsci family and the leadership of the Italian Communist Party and to the pressure the family had resisted before agreeing to part with the notebooks.

<sup>163</sup> The available documentation is not conclusive, but suggests that there were three shipments (cf. Daniele and Vacca 2005, pp. 82-92).

<sup>164</sup> Two lists of what was sent from Moscow to Rome on that occasion are reproduced in Daniele and Vacca 2005, pp. 82-6 (see also Lo Piparo 2013, p. 83 and *infra* note 174).

two blank notebooks were donated by Giuliano to the Fondazione Gramsci in 1981.<sup>165</sup> Today, all notebooks are kept at the Fondazione Gramsci.

*6. How many notebooks are there?*

To conclude the reconstruction of the movements, cataloguing and preservation of the notebooks written by Gramsci, we shall examine the statements on their number made by some of the figures who played a prominent role in those contexts or in relation to their publication.

*6.1. Thirty*

The first of these statements is found in Tat'jana's letter to her family dated 25 May 1937: 'In all, Antonio's notebooks are XXX'.

Considering that Tat'jana numbered and labelled thirty-one notebooks, the statement seems paradoxical. However, we can explain it by recalling that it is likely that she began the work of numbering and cataloguing a few days after 25 May, i.e. after she had written that there were thirty notebooks, and it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that that early statement excluded the sketchbook to which she later assigned the number *XXXI* and which indeed is a sketchbook and is decidedly different in shape and size from the other notebooks and contains only the initial part of a fairy tale that Gramsci had translated into one of his notebooks and started to copy onto this sketchbook with the intention of giving it as gift to his grandchildren in Sardinia. On the other hand, while the numbering and cataloguing of the notebooks carried out by Tat'jana between the end of May and the beginning of June 1937 was intended to allow Julija and Evgenija to check that nothing had been lost in the consignment that would soon take the notebooks from Rome to Moscow, the previous statement on the number thirty was linked to the possibility of transcribing the notebooks - in this context, the sketchbook, precisely because of what we have observed about its contents, could have been excluded from the count. These considerations, joined with the assumption that Tat'jana only had in front of her the notebooks and the sketchbook that she numbered from *I* to *XXXI* and not also the notebook *The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce* and the notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II°*,

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<sup>165</sup> See supra note 41.

can justify the statement that ‘Antonio’s notebooks are XXX’. That same number, probably following a communication from Julija or Evgenija based on what Tat’jana had written on 25 May, was later reported by Togliatti in his letter to Manuil’skij on 11 June 1937.<sup>166</sup>

At first glance, it is difficult to accept that the number thirty also appears in Julija and Evgenija’s letter to Stalin dated 5 December 1940, where we read of ‘30 notebooks, currently in our possession’.<sup>167</sup> In fact, by that date, the notebooks *The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce* and *Niccolò Machiavelli II°* had also arrived in Moscow. However, the statement can be explained by assuming that, when the letter was written, the family continued to exclude from the count the album to which Tat’jana had assigned the number XXXI and that they were not materially *in possession of* the two notebooks that Tat’jana had not numbered. These two notebooks it is reasonable to assume had arrived in Moscow in the crates in which Tat’jana had packed Gramsci’s books and other items belonging to him or to his family members and left in Rome after their departure for Russia. But the difficulty of storing such material in the Schucht-Gramsci family flat and the health problems of several family members (Tat’jana herself is likely to have been ill between mid-1939 and mid-1940 and to have spent some time in a sanatorium in Kislovodsk, more than a thousand kilometres from Moscow)<sup>168</sup> may have meant that those two notebooks remained in storage – virtually unnoticed – with the books until the end of December 1940, when the commission set up by the Communist International in February 1939 to sort and decide the destination of Gramsci’s books and of his manuscripts finally settled both questions.<sup>169</sup>

It is certainly astonishing that the number thirty should be found twice again in 1946, in statements produced in Italy, when thirty-two notebooks had already been available for several months to those responsible for their preservation and future publication. This happened in a caption with which *L’Unità* on 3 January 1946 commented on the exhibition of some notebooks on the occasion of the PCI’s Fifth Congress<sup>170</sup> and in a sentence in a typescript

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<sup>166</sup> Daniele and Vacca 2005, p. 17.

<sup>167</sup> Gramsci Jr 2010, p. 164.

<sup>168</sup> See undated draft of letter from Tat’jana to Vladimir Potëmkin (FG, AAG, Carte Tatiana Schucht).

<sup>169</sup> See Daniele and Vacca 2005, pp. 64-70.

<sup>170</sup> Lattanzi 2017, p. 127 n. 357.

probably related to the work of the PCI commission that was to follow their publication.<sup>171</sup> The most plausible explanation for these two episodes may be that notebook XXXI was excluded from the count,<sup>172</sup> that the notebook numbered III by Tatiana and the one dedicated to the philosophy of Benedetto Croce, which also showed a 'III' on the cover (but not by Tatiana's hand) were considered as a single notebook<sup>173</sup> and that the notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II*<sup>o</sup>, which we believe had been separated from the others when all of Gramsci's notebooks had already been delivered to the archives of the Communist International, was sent to Italy only in December 1946.<sup>174</sup>

### 6.2. *Thirty-two*

A different number of notebooks is indicated from 1945 onwards: the number thirty-two. It appears both in the draft of a letter to Dimitrov written by Julija presumably towards the end of the Second World War in which reference is made to notebooks handed over by the family to representatives of the Communist International<sup>175</sup> and in a detailed description of the notebooks prepared by Felice Platone probably between October 1945 and

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<sup>171</sup> The sentence in question reads: 'I reiterate the proposal [...] that a diplomatic edition of thirty notebooks be made [...]' (FG, Fascicolo Descrizione dei quaderni, Platone). According to Gerratana, the typescript, dated 12 March 1946 but unsigned, can be attributed to Fabrizio Onofri (Gerratana 1989, p. 68).

<sup>172</sup> As we shall see in section 6.2, a typescript document certainly dated after 1946, entitled 'Elenco dei quaderni originali di Antonio Gramsci' shows how Platone, at least in some cases, kept notebook XXXI out of the tally of notebooks (FG, Fascicolo Descrizione dei quaderni, Platone).

<sup>173</sup> In the various documents conserved by Fondazione Gramsci within the file entitled 'Descrizione dei quaderni, Platone', in the article published in *Rinascita* in April 1946 and also in the index of the first edition of the notebooks, the notebook *La filosofia di Benedetto Croce* and the one that Tatiana had numbered III are indicated in a variety of ways derived from the possibility of combining the figures 3, III and 3 bis and adding a further marker in brackets (see note below 185).

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Daniele and Vacca 2005, pp. 82-6 (see also *supra* note 163). Note how Platone, in the article dedicated to illustrating the contents of Gramsci's notebooks published in *Rinascita* in April 1946, made no mention of it and how he emphasized instead that the only notebook that Tat'jana had not numbered was the one dedicated to Croce (cf. Platone 1946, p. 81).

<sup>175</sup> 'Gramsci's letters and works (32 notebooks) had been delivered before [the German attack on the Soviet Union]' (Gramsci jr 2010, p. 79). On the same delivery, see also Julija's letter to Stalin of 5 December 1946, where, however, the number of notebooks is not specified (Daniele and Vacca 2005, pp. 79-80).

April 1946 whose substance can be recognized in his article of April 1946, where the number thirty-two also appears.<sup>176</sup>

As far as Platone is concerned, it is clear that he was considering the thirty-one notebooks numbered by Tat'jana and the notebook dedicated to the philosophy of Benedetto Croce, which Tat'jana had not numbered, but which in that document she indicated first as *3 bis* then as *III*.<sup>177</sup> It is equally clear that in April 1946 Platone still did not have the notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II°*, which can be assumed to have been separated from the others in the Soviet Union, in one of the stages of its archiving, and sent to Italy after the others, at the end of 1946.

In the case of the draft of Julija's letter to Dimitrov we can instead assume that, as already mentioned in section 6.1, the Schucht-Gramsci family, between the end of 1940 and the beginning of 1941, i.e. after the conclusion of the work of the Communist International's commission, also came into possession of the two notebooks not numbered by Tat'jana and which arrived in Moscow with Gramsci's books, albeit with the undertaking to hand over all the notebooks to the Communist International's archive shortly afterwards, but continued to exclude notebook *XXXI* from the count.

In both cases, we must emphasize how, although the reasons why the notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II°* was separated from the others and the precise moment when this happened remain unexplained, the number thirty-two is perfectly justified. Not equally justified, however, is the fact that Platone used it in 1948 in the preface to the first edition of the notebooks.<sup>178</sup> As we shall see, at that date he already had the second of the notebooks that Tat'jana had not numbered, the notebook that today is indicated with the number *18* and that in the index of the volume *Notes on Machiavelli*, published in 1949, appeared as notebook *IV bis*.<sup>179</sup> This reference to thirty-two notebooks can be explained by considering that at that time Platone had at his disposal the thirty-three

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<sup>176</sup> Handwritten document entitled 'Description of notebooks' (FG, Fascicolo Descrizione dei quaderni, Platone) and Platone 1946, p. 81.

<sup>177</sup> The notebook that Tat'jana had numbered *III* was indicated as *3*.

<sup>178</sup> Gramsci 1948, p. XIII.

<sup>179</sup> Gramsci 1949c, pp. XVIII, XI. The denomination *IV bis* was certainly chosen because an 'N 4' is written on its cover (the hand that wrote it is unknown) and because another notebook had already been numbered as *IV* by Tat'jana.

notebooks known today, but assuming that he did not include in the calculation the sketchbook to which Tatiana had assigned the number XXXI and which is today indicated with the letter *D*. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that in the already mentioned ‘Elenco dei quaderni originali di Antonio Gramsci’,<sup>180</sup> undated but certainly written after 1946, at the end of a list that indicated the thirty-two notebooks today classified with the letters *A* to *C* and the numbers 1 to 29 (i.e., including also the notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II*°), Platone listed separately: ‘Catalogue of subjects / Sketchbook / Manuscript on the Southern Question’.<sup>181</sup>

The same number thirty-two reappears, according to what we can read in a letter from the deputy director of the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History to Luciano Canfora dated 18 December 2012, as the number of notebooks delivered to an unidentified exponent of the Italian Communist Party in Moscow on 21 February 1945.<sup>182</sup> Here again, the explanation we have already proposed in relation to the document entitled ‘Descrizione dei quaderni’ can be applied: the number thirty-two included the thirty-one notebooks numbered by Tat’jana (including the sketchbook numbered XXXI) and the notebook *La filosofia di Benedetto Croce*; it did not include the notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II*°, which was sent to Italy in December 1946.

Finally, the number of thirty-two notebooks was mentioned in a round table entitled ‘Dibattito per una antologia di Gramsci’ organized by *L’Europa letteraria* in 1962 in view of the publication of the collection *2000 pagine di Gramsci*, edited by Niccolò Gallo and Giansiro Ferrata. In that discussion Giacomo De Benedetti asked: ‘do the notebooks still remain 32 or have they increased in number?’. Evidently, he was referring to Platone’s 1946 article and the subsequent thematic edition of the notebooks, and it is very likely that it was clear to him that a thirty-third notebook, referred

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<sup>180</sup> FG, Fascicolo Descrizione dei quaderni, Platone. In the upper right-hand corner of this sheet is a number ‘32’, written in pencil. We do not believe that the hand that traced it is the same hand that traced the ‘(34)’ on the cover of the notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II*° that will be discussed in section 6.3. Instead, it is likely to be the same hand that wrote ‘(2)’ in the upper right-hand corner on the cover of *Catalogue I* and that it is Togliatti’s hand.

<sup>181</sup> An alternative explanation could be the following: Platone reduced the number of notebooks from thirty-three to thirty-two by treating the one dedicated to Croce, on the cover of which we recognize a ‘III’ (certainly not by Tatiana’s hand and probably not by Gramsci either) and the one numbered *III* by Tatiana as a single notebook.

<sup>182</sup> Lo Piparo 2013, p. 93.

to as *IV bis* and not mentioned in the 1946 article, had also been used in that edition. Gallo, who certainly had in mind also that notebook, confirmed the number thirty-two, but also revealed that that number was not obvious:

There are thirty-two of them, if one includes the catalogue-index, which also contains notes and special notes, and if one excludes the two notebooks compiled only at the beginning, which bear the same numbering as notebooks 3 and 4 and must therefore be considered mere additions or appendices.<sup>183</sup>

In order to analyse this explanation, it is necessary to distinguish its two parts. The second part, based on the criterion of ‘the same numbering’ and referring to two notebooks ‘compiled only at the beginning’ and to be considered ‘mere additions or appendices’ to others, can be understood as follows. The notebook *The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce*, not numbered by Tat’jana, but on the cover of which one can recognize the ‘III’ already mentioned, was considered as the main body to which the notebook that Tat’jana had numbered III, dedicated to *Lorianism* and written for only eighteen pages, was added as an appendix. The notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II°*, written for only three pages, not numbered by Tat’jana, but on whose cover a large ‘N-4’ by an unidentified hand appears, was considered as an appendix to the notebook that Tat’jana had numbered IV (a miscellaneous notebook that also includes some notes on Machiavelli). In this case, the hypothesis would correspond to Platone’s choice to indicate the notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II°* as ‘IV bis’. But that also in the other case Gallo followed Platone is evident from the fact that in the index of the first edition the notebook *La filosofia di Benedetto Croce* was indicated as ‘III’<sup>184</sup> and the notebook dedicated to *Lorianism*, which had been numbered III by Tat’jana, was indicated as ‘III [8]’<sup>185</sup>. In short, the two mergers

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<sup>183</sup> ‘Dibattito per una antologia di Gramsci’, 1962, pp. 15-16.

<sup>184</sup> Gramsci 1948, pp. VII-XI.

<sup>185</sup> Gramsci 1949a, pp. XI-XII. In the first edition of the notebooks a similar numbering was used only in the cases of notebook III and notebook II (the latter was referred to as ‘II [5]’ or ‘II [V]’ – cf. Gramsci 1949b, p. X, Gramsci 1949c, pp. VII-IX, XII, XV; Gramsci 1950 pp. VII-IX, XI and Gramsci 1951 pp. VII-XIII, XV, but in Gramsci 1948, p. XXI; Gramsci 1949a, pp. XIII, X and Gramsci 1949b, pp. VII-X the same notebook had been referred to simply as ‘II’). Even if the presence of these numbers enclosed in square brackets was not explained (just as the use of the numbering *IV bis*), their meaning can be at least partially reconstructed on the basis of what Platone wrote in the note of 8 October 1945 contained in the already cited document entitled ‘Quadro del lavoro fatto sui quaderni di Gramsci’. Those specifications enclosed in

referred to by Gallo reduce the number of notebooks to thirty-one and are formally compatible with the familiar figure of thirty-three notebooks of which only thirty-one were numbered by Tat'jana.<sup>186</sup>

The first part of the explanation offered by Gallo, the one centred on the inclusion in the count of a 'catalogue-index, which also includes notes and particular notes', thus brings the total number to thirty-two. But to confirm the number of thirty-three notebooks known to us, it is necessary for that *catalogue-index* to correspond to an additional notebook. Such a notebook can be identified in *Catalogue I* prepared by Tat'jana, which, as we have seen, Platone had already included in one of his own lists of Gramsci's notebooks as 'Catalogo degli argomenti'.<sup>187</sup> In essence, according to our hypothesis, Gallo, having to take into account the notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II°* (to the appearance of which Platone had not adjusted his own count of notebooks), but not wishing to detach himself from Platone in indicating the total number of thirty-two notebooks, introduced into the count both the two mergers and the *Catalogo I* prepared by Tatiana.<sup>188</sup>

### 6.3. *Thirty-four*

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brackets, like the others that appear in the same document alongside other progressive numbers defined by Tatiana, were derived from an 'internal tag' found in some of the notebooks. Such an 'internal tag' we can identify with the tags of paper bearing an Arabic number visible in some of the digital reproductions of the photographic copies of Gramsci's notebooks acquired by the Fondazione Gramsci in 2016 in a digital series already discussed in section 3.4 (such tags may have represented a further numbering of the notebooks carried out in Russia, by Togliatti or others who had happened to preserve and study them, or even just photograph them).

<sup>186</sup> This formal compatibility, which is what interests us at the moment, cannot conceal an intrinsically contradictory character that emerges both in relation to the content of the notebooks and in relation to the philological basis of the use of numbering as an aggregation criterion. It can also be noted that an argument similar to the one outlined by Gallo was invoked by Gerratana in order to explain Tat'jana's failure to number two notebooks: Tat'jana would have seen that those two notebooks were already numbered 'III' and '~~N-4~~' (Gramsci 1975, pp. XXXI and XXXV n. 1). However, Gerratana did not prove either that Tat'jana, at the time she proceeded with the numbering, actually had those two notebooks at her disposal or that the numbers III and ~~N-4~~ were already present on their covers. Nor did he explain why, when confronted with numbers III and ~~N-4~~, Tat'jana had not integrated those notebooks directly into her own numbering as notebooks III and IV. (cf. supra note **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**)

<sup>187</sup> Cf. 'Elenco dei quaderni originali di Antonio Gramsci' (FG, Fascicolo Descrizione dei quaderni, Platone).

<sup>188</sup> The point is discussed in greater detail, paying special attention to a critical analysis of how Lo Piparo interpreted it, in Naldi 2023b.

The number of thirty-four notebooks appears in the already mentioned communication sent on 20 April 1945 by the Soviet Foreign Ministry to the Central Committee of the PCI referring to the ‘workbooks of Antonio Gramsci’ delivered to Togliatti on 3 March of that year. Certainly the *Niccolò Machiavelli II°* notebook, which can be considered to have arrived in Italy in December 1946, could not have entered that number, nor the two blank notebooks now numbered *17 bis* and *17 ter*, which were donated to the Gramsci Foundation in 1981. It is therefore evident how, before attempting to justify the number thirty-four that appears in that letter, the *Niccolò Machiavelli II°* notebook must be subtracted from the thirty-three notebooks known to us. To the remaining thirty-two, however, we believe we can add Tat’jana’s two catalogues, only one of which is preserved today (together with four sheets torn from the other). The same explanation can justify the reference to thirty-four notebooks found in the speech given by Togliatti in Naples on 29 April 1945.<sup>189</sup> It may come as a surprise that Togliatti did not distinguish between the notebooks written by Gramsci and those written by Tat’jana, but this is not the only inaccuracy in the description of the notebooks in that speech – it is reasonable to assume that on that occasion Togliatti had based his remembrances on memories from previous years and that he had not had time to re-examine them in those days. Finally, it is worth noting how a small ‘(34)’ apparently written in biro pen appears in the top right-hand corner on the cover of the *Niccolò Machiavelli II°* notebook. It is not clear who wrote it (certainly the hand is neither Gramsci’s nor Tat’jana’s), but its presence is compatible with the possibility that whoever wrote it had in front of him the thirty-one notebooks numbered by Tat’jana, the notebook dedicated to Croce and *Catalogo I*, so that the notebook *Niccolò Machiavelli II°* – the last to return to Italy – could be thirty-fourth.<sup>190</sup>

#### 6.4. *Thirty-three*

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<sup>189</sup> The typescript of the speech given by Togliatti on that occasion, entitled ‘Antonio Gramsci nella politica italiana’, reads: ‘He has left us a precious literary heritage, the result of his work, of his studies: 34 large notebooks, like this one – here is one – covered with minute, precise, equal handwriting; each sheet with the prison stamp and the governor’s signature’ (Togliatti 2014b, p. 1018, <https://patrimonio.archivio.senato.it/inventario/scheda/palmiro-togliatti/IT-AFS-069-000341/aprile-1945#lg=1&slide=63>).

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Gramsci 2009 vol. 14, p. 229.

The number of thirty-three notebooks appeared for the first time in 1967, in the essay 'Punti di riferimento per un'edizione critica dei *Quaderni del carcere*', where Gerratana briefly discussed both the indication of thirty-two notebooks provided by Platone<sup>191</sup> and the numbering affixed by Tat'jana and the cataloguing she herself initiated.<sup>192</sup> The same number thirty-three is the basis of the edition published in 1975 by Gerratana himself.

### 7. *Conclusions*

Our investigation into the moving, cataloguing and preservation of Gramsci's notebooks has been started with the shipment of a part of them from the Turi prison to the Formia clinic where Gramsci had been hospitalized and of another part of them to Tat'jana Schucht's home address. Generally speaking, the reconstruction of the facts relating to the time span between November 1933 and the second half of the 1940s, when all the notebooks written by Gramsci returned to Italy, revealed knots of considerable complexity. In particular, three crucial questions emerged that (as no documents were available to shed direct light on them) had to be tackled by formulating hypotheses and carrying out cross-checks: the identification of the procedures relating to the possibility of handing over manuscripts produced by a prisoner to a person outside the prison; the reasons why Tat'jana did not number two of the thirty-three notebooks; the ways in which those same notebooks were sent to the Soviet Union and kept there and, after the end of the world war, sent back to Italy.

A result of considerable interest that we have been able to achieve is that the thirty-three autograph notebooks preserved by the Gramsci Foundation can be considered the real basis of the different statements about the number of the *Prison Notebooks* – which on various occasions have been indicated as thirty, thirty-two and thirty-four. In particular, we have been able to attribute the variability of these assertions to three specific elements: Tat'jana's failure to number two of the thirty-three notebooks, which may have been separated from the others either by Gramsci or shortly after his death; the anomaly represented by the presence among the notebooks of a sketchbook; and the existence, in addition to the

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<sup>191</sup> Gerratana 1967, p. 243.

<sup>192</sup> Gerratana 1967, pp. 243-4.

notebooks written by Gramsci, of two catalogues prepared by Tat'jana.

With regard to the hypotheses that some authors (notably Lo Piparo) have put forward suggesting that one or more notebooks written by Gramsci had been removed, we have observed how these hypotheses are incompatible with the absence of any indication of that by Tat'jana or her sisters and unnecessary to explain the two-number gap revealed by the examination of the labels Tat'jana placed on the notebooks themselves.

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