



ANTONIO MELI LUPI DI SORAGNA TARASCONI

Antonio Meli Lupi di Soragna Tarasconi was born in Milan on January 22, 1885, son of **Luigi Lupo** and **Luisa Melzi dei Conti di Cusano**.

He had as his tutor **Don Achille Ratti**, who later became **Pio XI**. Achille Ratti was Doctor of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana from November 1888 and, in that role, served as Antonio's tutor. Antonio learned languages, studied Greek and Latin, and studied Hebrew, taught to him by the Rabbi of Milan. His childhood friends included **Stefano Jacini**, **Alessandro Casati**, and **Tommaso Gallarati-Scotti**.

In 1903 he enrolled in the Faculty of Law at the **Università di Genova**, graduating in 1908. The young Antonio lived in Vigatto in an environment steeped in historical studies: in 1885 his uncle **Raimondo** published a *Bibliografia storica del Ducato*, which deeply influenced him.

At just fifteen, Antonio and the parish priest of Vigatto, **Orazio Salavolti**, co-signed the book *Cenni Storici sugli antichi pievati e castelli del parmense*.

At 21, he undertook an archaeological journey to Egypt under **Prof. Ernesto Schiaparelli**, director of the **Museo Egizio di Torino**, who entrusted him with prestigious assignments: superintendent of the excavations at **Deir-el-Medina** and, in the Valley of the Queens, first director of the restoration of the tomb of the son of **Ramses III**, and later the restoration of the hypogeum of **Nefertari**.

Already from 1905, Antonio belonged to the **Circolo degli Alessandrini**. The provost of the parish of **Sant'Alessandro in Zebedia** was **Don Pietro Gazzola**, one of the inspirers of Italian modernism, who was later removed from the parish because of it.

In 1906, the following met: **Antonio Aiace Alfieri**, **Ernesto Buonaiuti**, **Don Brizio Casciola**, **Alessandro Casati**, **Antonio Fogazzaro**, **Umberto Fracassini**, **Tom Gallarati Scotti**, **Stefano Jacini**, **Antonio Meli Lupi di Soragna**, and **Barone Von Hügel**, to establish *Rinnovamento: Rivista critica di idee e di fatti*, inspired by modernism, aiming to reinvigorate national consciousness in the spirit of Christianity.

Other contributors joined: **Angelo Crespi**, **Guglielmo Ferrero**, **Giuseppe Prezzolini**, **Giovanni Papini**, **Giovanni Amendola**, **Don Romolo Murri**, and **Giovanni Boine**.

Upon the publication of the first issue, the magazine received a recall from the **Congregazione dell'Indice**. In September 1907, the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* was published, condemning modernism. On November 5, **Cardinal Ferrari** prohibited its reading, and on December 23 he imposed major excommunication on the magazine's contributors, despite the intervention of **Mons. Ratti**.

On January 22, 1910, Antonio embarked on another long and adventurous journey to the Far East, traveling from Palestine to India and Tibet.



Upon his return, he began collaborating with **La Voce di Prezzolini**, contributing bibliographical works of a religious nature, and in 1916, during the height of World War I, he published the book *Le profezie di Isaia figlio d'Amoz*.

The attitude of young **Soragna, Jacini, and Casati** toward the war is clearly described by historian **Arturo Carlo Jemolo**:

"Once war was declared, they wanted to be soldiers. They had no hesitation. Those who had not been swept away by interventionist enthusiasm felt an even stronger desire to be soldiers, to show that there was no cowardice behind their hesitation. They were all brave officers, courageous, deserving promotions and medals."

In a letter to his father dated July 17, 1916, Antonio for the first time mentions **Cesare Battisti**, his colleague in the Intelligence Office of the First Army:

"We have lost, dead, or, I fear, as a prisoner, the Honorable Battisti, who was my colleague in the Office. He struck me as a personality with remarkable moral and political qualities; the true type of a resolute and action-oriented man. It is a serious loss for us. His figure will remain characteristic of the Trentino war, especially if Austria, in its custom, makes him a martyr by sending him to the gallows."

On March 6, 1917, he wrote about his relations with **Cadorna**:

"In Udine, on Saturday, I went to S.E. Cadorna for the weekly report, and I think I did well. I am now so well-versed in the subject, especially in all the details concerning the troops and information sources, that I fear no discussion with anyone. (...) Nothing precise is known about America; the impression is that it will end up going to war."

In 1919, the **Ministero degli Esteri**, needing to send an officer to Jerusalem, proposed Antonio di Soragna, who was then assigned to the **Alto Commissariato di Costantinopoli** until 1922.

On August 27, 1923, his father **Luigi Lupo** died in Vigatto.

From November 1923, Antonio was **Capo Ufficio degli Affari Russi** at the **Ministero degli Esteri**.

On January 25, 1925, in Rome, Antonio married **Elsa Fischer**, born September 6, 1895, daughter of **Victor Fischer**, a Danish lawyer, and **Mary Stampe**. Elsa was not only young and beautiful but also energetic and skilled in fencing, boxing, hunting, and horseback riding. In 1916, she helped found the **Associazione Sportiva delle Studentesse**, of which she was president for many years, and promoted fencing among young women in Denmark.

A few months later, on August 6, 1925, his mother **Luisa Melzi di Cusano** died in Vigatto.

Between 1925 and 1928, Antonio served as Counselor at the Embassies in Bucharest and Vienna. In Bucharest, on December 14, 1925, **Marianna** was born but died six months later from a gastrointestinal infection.

In 1928, he was appointed **Ministro plenipotenziario** in Albania.

On August 2, 1928, his second son **Lupo Luigi** – called **Lupino** was born.

In 1932, he held the prestigious position of Secretary of the Italian Delegation at the **Società delle Nazioni** in Geneva.

In 1935, the Ministry appointed him Italian Minister in Stockholm.



In disagreement with **Ministro Ciano** over a reception at the Embassy in honor of Nobel Prize winner **Enrico Fermi**, and in protest against foreign policy directions, he resigned in 1939.

The forced idleness at Vigatto between 1942 and 1945 turned into a productive return to historical studies.

During a visit to Rome in 1940, the Catholic bishop of Copenhagen, **Theodor Suhr**, recommended that **Marchesa Elsa** take care of **Paolo Lauritzen**, a young Danish priest, and so in the summer of 1943, the Marchesa offered the young Dane the position of tutor for her son Lupino.

Paolo also served as a priest at the parish church, sometimes substituting for the local parish priest **Don Coruzzi**.

At Vigatto, the Marchese also hosted the Milanese Colonel **Renato Ricci**, who took refuge with the Soragna family when his clandestine activities for the Resistance were discovered.

Next to the church lived the partisan **Marco Zanlari**, code name "Aquila." Zanlari recalls: *"We met around my kitchen table, and we all knew he was not just a priest, but that the Marchese covered his underground work."*

The exact nature of Lauritzen's underground work remains unclear, but this is confirmed in a report by **Charles Holland**, a British SOE major who liaised between partisans and Allied forces.

In July 1944, Paolo was informed that the SS were on his trail. The warning came while he was having lunch with the Marchesi. The Dane jumped up and escaped by leaping out of the dining room window. The Marchese immediately removed the tutor's place setting and ordered everyone to deny his presence at lunch. When the Germans arrived, all traces had been erased.

"Paolo il Danese", code name "Dan," joined the **4a Giustizia e Libertà brigade**, later the **3a Julia**, which he eventually commanded.

In February 1945, the German Security Command arrested the Marchese with his family and household staff. After twelve days, they were all released thanks to the intercession of Bishop **Evasio Colli**, but remained under special surveillance.

The **3a Julia** distinguished itself in decisive actions, culminating in the attack on Parma that led to the city's final liberation. At 3:30 am on April 26, the 3a Julia reached **Piazza Garibaldi**. Paolo il Danese and his brigade were the first partisans to enter Parma.

At the end of 1945, Antonio was recalled to service by the **De Gasperi Government** with the rank of Ambassador. In 1946, he became Secretary-General of the Italian Delegation to the **Paris Peace Conference**, and on February 10, 1947, he signed the **Peace Treaty of Italy** with the Allied Powers.

The Allies had punished Italy for fascist aggression, disregarding Italian co-belligerence and the Resistance.

Sara Lorenzini writes in her book:

"Once the signatures were affixed, in the absence of a seal of the new republic, Soragna used the ring bearing the coat of arms of its noble house. (...) In the evening at the Élysée, a banquet was scheduled to celebrate the signing. Naturally, Italy did not participate. While Soragna signed, the country was in mourning. (...) Flags were at half-mast, gates half-closed. A general strike of all



workers was proclaimed for ten minutes at the hour of signing. At 11 o'clock a siren sounded: everything stopped and silence fell. (...) Sforza read on the radio the government note (...) "In this message you will find neither weeping nor reproach; grief like ours is silent; you will find the reasons that will make you understand that the Italian issue remains open and that it is also in your interest that it not be suppressed." (...) Unfortunately, the Italian effort against fascism had not been recognized."

In December 1947, he obtained the long-desired position of Ambassador to the **Holy See**.

On March 21, 1948, **Andreotti** notes: *"Ambasciatore Meli Lupi di Soragna has presented his credentials to the Vatican. The Pope spoke to him about Catholic education."*

On February 1, 1952, the date of his retirement, Antonio closed on the "Vatican Hill" the arc of a life that had seen him excommunicated in his youth for his excessive zeal in faith. He retired to private life, between Rome and Vigatto, dedicating his final years to his studies and his family.

On December 15, 1962, his son **Lupino** married **Maria Luisa Verdecchia**. From this union were born **Alessandro** and **Raimondo**.

Antonio passed away on August 24, 1971, in the peace of beloved Vigatto.

As **Marchesa Maria Luisa di Soragna** recalled:

"If Italy was silent for ten minutes at the moment of the signing, after that humiliating event, Antonio chose silence for the rest of his life."