

ON FRIENDSHIP
AND FREEDOM

THE CORRESPONDENCE
OF IGNAZIO SILONE AND
MARCEL FLEISCHMANN

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THE CORRESPONDENCE
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MARCEL FLEISCHMANN



Maria Nicolai Paynter

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Life is an ethical adventure.
Love is beautiful.

DARINA SILONE

*To Sofia Maureen
and to my sisters
Nicoletta and Franca*

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Chronology</i>	xiii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xxv
Introduction	3
A Friendship Is Born	4
The Historical Milieu	5
Some Perceptions of Silone	7
On Friendship and Freedom	10
The Silone Archives	13
Contextualizing the Silone-Fleischmann Correspondence	14
Four Remarkable People	20
Ignazio and Darina Silone	20
Marcel Fleischmann and Elsa Schiess	44
Illustrations	55
The Correspondence	66
The Swiss Years: 1934–1944	66
Bridging the Distance: 1945–1976	100
<i>Afterword</i>	205

viii Contents

<i>Notes</i>	211
<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	235
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	247
<i>Index</i>	251

Preface

The genesis of this work is rather fortuitous. Four years ago, when I was no longer focusing my research on Ignazio Silone,¹ I received an unexpected phone call from Gloria Fleischmann, the widow of Werner Jürg, Marcel Fleischmann's only son. In her husband's studio, she had found a folder with the correspondence between Silone and Marcel Fleischmann – Silone's Swiss "Maecenas" – and wanted to safeguard it for the future. We met, and I suggested that she consider contacting Yale University, since it had awarded Silone the degree of Doctor of Letters *Honoris Causa* in 1966; the University of Pavia, where some of his original manuscripts were already held; or the Centro Studi Ignazio Silone, in Silone's native town of Pescina dei Marsi, where scholars could find a wealth of archival material and personal possessions donated by Darina Silone. Mrs Fleischmann opted for this destination. Even as I refrained from influencing her decision, I was happy when she made it because I knew that Silone intended to donate his archives to his native town, and also because, during the years of my research, I had come to appreciate the importance of the Centro Studi as custodian of Silone's legacy. Much progress has been made from the early days when Diocleziano Giardini, who enjoyed Darina Silone's trust, singlehandedly worked as a volunteer, organizing and gathering material, conducting research of his own, and making himself available to visiting scholars, myself included. A milestone was reached in 2000 when Silone's widow donated copies of his archives and other possessions to Pescina.² At present, the Centro Studi, under the regional and local administrations, sponsors high-level events, the most important of which is the yearly edition of the Premio Silone. Local scholars, such as Liliana Biondi and the late Vittoriano Esposito, have for years lent their assistance in keeping the dialogue with all who are interested in Silone both open and professional.³

When I began this project, the first decision I had to make concerned the translation. Should I publish in Italian or English? I opted for the latter in order to reach a broader audience. Ignazio and Darina Silone wrote almost always in French, Fleischmann and Elsa Schiess in German.⁴ I could translate from French and other languages but not from German. For this I secured Aine Zimmerman's professional help.⁵ Once the letters were translated and examined, I faced a dilemma: should I abide by Silone's wish that personal correspondence should not be published or – given the accessibility to the now organized archives – was my concern unwarranted? Opting to go ahead, I was also mindful that, after her husband's death, Darina Silone had sought to gather all the correspondence she could find, even launching an appeal with a letter of 19 July 1979 to the publisher of the *New York Times Review of Books*. And, two years later, she had reached out to Jürg Fleischmann with a similar plea for help.⁶

What is the importance of this correspondence? Scholars who write on the value of epistolary writings argue that they yield an authenticity and immediacy that is not normally found in historical documents. Prominent among them, Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis, speaking at the American Philosophical Society's dinner on 19 April 1963 as the editor of the *Horace Walpole Correspondence*, reminded the audience that as early as 1761 Walpole had noted: "Nothing gives so just an idea of an age as genuine letters; nay, history waits for its last seal from them [...] Familiar letters written by eye witnesses ... that let us more intimately into important events are genuine history; and as far as they go, more satisfactory than formal premeditated narratives."⁷

The validity of this observation is evident when one thinks, for instance, of the importance of Leopardi's letters⁸ for the insight that they offer about the poet and his time, of Gramsci's letters⁹ for encompassing the trajectory of the Italian Communist Party, and of the letters of the members of the Italian Resistance,¹⁰ who wrote to their families before facing the firing squad. No premeditated narrative could provide more vivid testimonials.

The body of scholarly work that has been produced in the field and the numerous volumes of collected letters written by artists, scientists, statesmen, and other people of consequence legitimate Walpole's claim and attest to the need and the importance of preserving epistolary writing. This task is now greatly facilitated by the resources of technology. In fact, by simply contacting the Centro Studi Ignazio Silone via the Internet, readers can learn about the wealth of epistolary writings that still remain unexamined.

The correspondence published here for the first time spans the years 1934 to 1976 and is largely of a personal nature. Because of this, it does not yield as much historical information as one might have hoped (especially about the first decade), but, as I argue in the Introduction, even what is not said offers the occasion for pause and reflection, and by the end the reading proves to be most rewarding.

Editorial Note

While my aim is to facilitate future scholarship, I am also writing for the general public. Therefore, rather than abiding by the technical requirements of a strictly critical edition of the correspondence, I offer a more unencumbered presentation of the same.

All the correspondence in this volume, including several writings by Darina Silone and by Fleischmann's companion, Elsa Schiess, is presented in English translation. Unless otherwise indicated, Silone's letters and picture postcards were handwritten in French and signed by him. Most of Fleischmann's letters were typewritten, in German, and bear his handwritten signature. Handwritten initials ES (for Elsa Schiess) are found in many of the letters,¹¹ suggesting that she filed them away for him.

We do not have a cohesive body of the correspondence that the two friends exchanged; with some exceptions, the letters do not constitute an ongoing dialogue, and the postcards merely show the writers' desire to share their experience and stay in touch.¹² The writings are presented chronologically, with author's name and sequential numbers used to simplify the cross-reference process. The writers' initials are used in the footnotes as follows: S, DS, F, and ES, indicating Silone, Darina Silone, Fleischmann, and Elsa Schiess, respectively. A chronology listing people, activities, and events related to the correspondence facilitates a contextual reading.

To achieve greater textual unity, I adopt the same format for all the letters: single spacing, indented paragraphs, addressee and salutation flush left, with all the dates (including the few that appear at the end of the text) at the beginning, written according to British usage (day, month, year). Also, in keeping with current copy-editing practice, words underlined in the originals appear in italics.

All translations seek to faithfully render the quality and tone of the originals; when appropriate, however, corrections that do not alter the meaning are silently made. The persons mentioned in the letters are

identified in the footnotes, with asterisks indicating possibility rather than certainty. Italics are used for book titles and for the *Kleine Pension*, as Fleischmann affectionately called his villa at 53 Germaniastrasse. Undated letters are assigned tentative dates within square brackets, with footnotes explaining the basis for the assumption. All picture postcards are described and the messages are translated. When no date is given, the postmark is used to indicate possible dates.

Throughout the book, passages that are not quoted directly from English editions appear in the original, followed by a translation. All translations from German are by Aine Zimmerman. She began her task by revising some letters previously translated as working copies by Gregory Zwygart and Angineh Djavadghazaryans, and then went on to translate the rest. Unless otherwise noted, all other translations are mine.

Chronology¹

- 1891 *13 January*. Marcel Fleischmann is born in Zurich, Switzerland, the first of four sons of Michael Fleischmann (13 June 1857–6 July 1926) and Helene Fuchs Fleischmann (6 November 1864–11 July 1919). His brothers were Carlo (28 April 1892–24 August 1965); Edgar (19 August 1897–20 February 1923), who died in an accident during an avalanche; and Kurt (26 December 1903–25 March 1974).
- 1896 Gabriella Seidenfeld Triedmann is born. Silone's companion in the antifascist struggle and in life for over a decade following their 1921 meeting, she assumes the battle name of Serena. In June 1933, to secure her right to Swiss residency, she marries Edy Meyer (aka Eduard Mayer, Meier, or Maier), a Swiss citizen nineteen years her senior, divorcing him one year later. In the correspondence, Gabriella's new surname is variously spelled.
- 1897 *24 January*. Elly Maeder, Marcel Fleischmann's future wife, is born.
- 1898 *17 April*. Elsa Schiess, who will become Fleischmann's companion, is born in Herisau, Appenzell, Switzerland.
- 1900 *1 May*. Secondino Tranquilli (Ignazio Silone) is born in Pescina dei Marsi, Abruzzo, Italy, the second of seven children of Paolo Tranquilli (1870–1911) and Marianna Delli Quadri (1872–1915). His siblings were Domenico (1897–1911), who died in an accidental fall; Romolo (1904–32), who died in prison; plus three sisters and one more brother,

¹ A more complete chronology was published by Maria Moscardelli on the *Ignazio Silone Web*. I draw some information about Silone from this source.

who were victims of infant mortality: Elvira (1895); Maria (1903); Cairolì (1907–8), and another Maria (1909–10).

- 1915 *13 January.* An earthquake devastates the Marsican area. Only 1,500 of the 5,000 inhabitants of Pescina survive (ISRS, xlv). Silone's mother is among the victims. Romolo Tranquilli is found alive after five days. Secondino and Romolo are entrusted to the care of Maria Vincenza Del Grosso, their maternal grandmother.

December. Travelling from Pescina to San Remo, where he will continue his studies, Silone gets to know Don Luigi Orione (1872–1940), the priest (elevated to sainthood in 2004) who takes him and his brother Romolo under his care. Silone writes about him in *Emergency Exit*. Their correspondence, spanning the years 1916–18, was published by Giovanni Casoli in DOeS.

- 1917 *30 March.* Darina Elizabeth Laracy, Silone's future wife, is born in Dublin, the first of four daughters of Patrick Joseph Laracy (1882–1960) and Mary Cecilia King (1888–1948). Her sisters were Cecily (1923–2009), Moira (1929–2007), and Eithne (1931–).

September. Silone returns to Pescina from Reggio Calabria, where he completed his secondary education. He attends the meetings of the Fucino Farmers' League. His political activism begins.

- 1918 Silone, declared physically unfit to serve in the Italian army engaged in World War I (WWI), tries to cope with the loneliness that he experiences. In May he spearheads a riot to prevent the arrest of soldiers on leave from the war front. The police headquarters are set on fire, and some policemen are hurt. In July he is tried, convicted, and sentenced to pay damages.

11 November. The armistice is signed to end WWI.

- 1919 *August.* Silone is elected secretary of the Roman Socialist Youth. In October he becomes a member of the Central Committee of the Italian Socialist Youth.

In November he travels to Berlin where he admires the abilities of the leaders of the German Communist Youth. He meets Antonio Gramsci.

23 September. Werner Jürg Fleischmann, Marcel's only son, is born in Zurich. He will be known as Jürg.

- 1920 Silone is editor of the socialist weekly *L'Avanguardia*.
- 1921 Silone is editor of *Il Lavoratore* and *Avanti!*
- 21 January*, XVIII Conference of the Psi [the Italian Socialist Party] is held in Leghorn. Silone sides with Amadeo Bordiga (1889–1970) and is among the founding members of the Pcd'I (Italian Communist Party).
- April*. Silone returns to Pescina. During the campaign for the political elections to be held in May he forcefully speaks against the Fascist Party candidates. Fearing unrest, the police ask him to leave the town.
- June*. He travels to Moscow as a member of the Italian delegation attending the Third Congress of the Comintern. He meets Lenin and is impressed by his charisma.
- November*. In Fiume (Riyeka), at a meeting of the Communist Youth, Silone meets Gabriella Seidenfeld Tiedmann. They become companions in life and in political activism, adopting the battle names of Sereno and Serena.
- 1922 *29 October*. Following the March on Rome, King Victor Emmanuel III asks Mussolini to form the new government.
- December*. Silone moves from Trieste to Berlin with Gabriella Seidenfeld.
- 1923 *April*. Willy Münzenberg, the German leader of the International Communist Youth, sends Silone and Gabriella to Spain. Their mission is to help the Spanish communist movement. They are arrested in Madrid. Avoiding extradition to Italy, they move to Barcelona. There, writing for the weekly *La Batalla*, Secondino Tranquilli adopts for the first time the pseudonym "Silone."
- Elsa Schiess joins Marcel Fleischmann's family as housekeeper. In time she becomes Marcel's companion.
- 1924 *1 January*. Silone is arrested in Madrid and is detained in the Carcel Modelo. In February he is extradited to Italy via Marseille. He escapes. Is in Paris (16 February–14 June) as editor of the weekly *La Riscossa*. On 11 November he is arrested and expelled from France but is again in Paris the following day.

- 1925 *16 July.* Silone is rearrested in Paris for non-compliance with the order of expulsion. He spends two months in the Santé prison and is expelled again on 21 September.

Silone returns to Italy and works in the Press and Propaganda unit of the Pcd'I, then directed by Gramsci.

- 1926 Rome, *7 July.* Silone and Gabriella, identified by an ex-communist turned fascist informer, are stopped and released with an injunction to return to Pescina.

27 July. The Prefect of L'Aquila informs higher authorities that Silone has not complied with the injunction and that an order has been issued for his arrest.

Silone continues his undercover political activism in Genoa and other northern locations. He writes articles for *L'Unità*, *Stato Operaio*, and *Battaglie Sindacali* under the pseudonym "Pasquini."

- 1927 Moscow, *May.* Silone is part of the Italian delegation attending the 8th Enlarged Plenum conference of the Comintern. A confrontation with Stalin ensues when he and Palmiro Togliatti ask to see the documents proving the allegations of betrayal against Leon Trotsky. This marks the beginning of the crisis that Silone will later recall in *The God That Failed*.

Following the arrest of Guglielmo Jonna, the head of the Soccorso Rosso (Red Aid), and his disclosure of its operations to the fascist police, Silone and Gabriella escape to Lugano and then to Basel, continuing their undercover work.

- 1928 *13 April.* Romolo Tranquilli is arrested. He is accused of the 12 April massacre at the Milan Fair and of attempted regicide. He declares his innocence, to no avail. In prison he suffers police brutality.

23 April. Silone writes to Romolo asking him to be strong. He tells him that he trusts him, suffers with him, and that all will be done to prove his innocence.

Silone plans to travel to Italy to help his brother. Chief of Police Bocchini informs Mussolini that Guido Bellone, the inspector general of the political division responsible for the control of Secondino Tranquilli, "the well-known Communist subversive," has received a telegram announcing his intention to come to Italy. But Silone cannot carry out his plan because a warrant has been issued for his arrest.

1 September. Silone writes to his grandmother that he will somehow find the money to pay the legal fees for Romolo's defence.

Silone continues to engage in antifascist activities in Paris and Berlin.

- 1929 *Pescina, 2 February.* Silone's grandmother sends a plea for pardon to the King of Italy on behalf of her grandson Romolo Tranquilli.

Ascona, July. Silone's health has been deteriorating. On sick leave from the Communist Party, he is treated at the Curhouse Collinetta.

Silone begins to write *Fontamara*.

- 1930 *Davos, 8 January.* Silone informs Romolo that he is experiencing hardship and must decrease the meagre monthly amounts of money he has been sending him.

Liege, 30 March. Following ongoing disagreements, at the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Silone is ousted.

13 April. In a letter found by Biocca and Canali, Silone writes to Guido Bellone to communicate his decision to end their relationship. The letter, as published by the historians, is handwritten, has no addressee, and is signed "Silvestri."

Zurich, 23 December. Silone, found without a residence permit, is arrested. His Swiss friends intervene to spare him from expulsion. He obtains a residence permit on the condition that he will not engage in political activities.

- 1931 *13 January.* Silone and Fleischmann meet for the first time on the occasion of the latter's fortieth birthday.

Silone meets Aline Valangin (1889–1986), a remarkable intellectual, pianist, and psychoanalyst married to Wladimir Rosembaum, a noted lawyer. An intense romantic relationship develops. Aline, the first reader of *Fontamara*, is instrumental in its publication.

4 July. The PCI sanctions Silone's expulsion.

- 1932 *February.* The Swiss authorities grant Silone the status of political refugee.

June. The first issue of *information* appears. For its importance see *ISiE*.

27 October. Romolo Tranquilli dies in the Procida prison.

- 1933 *February*. Silone takes up residence at Marcel Fleischmann's Kleine Pension, 53 Germaniastrasse, Zurich.

April. Fontamara's first edition, dedicated to Romolo Tranquilli and Gabriella Seidenfeld, is published in German translation by Nettie Sutro. The original Italian version is published by Nuove Edizioni Italiane.

June. To secure the permit to remain in Switzerland, Gabriella Seidenfeld marries Edy Meyer (aka Eduard Mayer, Meier, or Mayer [1877–1967]).

- 1934 Silone publishes *Die Reise nach Paris (Viaggio a Parigi)*, a collection of short stories translated into German by Nettie Sutro.

Silone publishes *Der Faschismus: Seine Entstehung und seine Entwicklung (Il fascismo. Origini e sviluppo)*, translated into German by Gritta Baerlocher.

Silone meets Nicola Chiaromonte, the Italian intellectual and antifascist activist. In 1956, their common interests and mutual respect lead to the co-founding of the monthly *Tempo Presente*.

October. Gabriella Seidenfeld divorces Edy Meyer.

- 1935 *10 January*. In Italy, the fascist police record that Silone is still abroad and is among those who are to be arrested in given circumstances.

16 January. The chief of the fascist political police reports that Tranquilli does not hide his deep hatred of fascism, blaming it for the death of his brother, whom he sought to help when he tried to lend himself as an informer.

In Lugano, Ascona, and Zurich, Silone remains under police surveillance.

1 July. The Italian Consulate in Berlin notes that the state secret police have ordered the seizure of Silone's *Der Faschismus*. In December, the Italian government orders that the book must not circulate in Italy.

- 1936 *12 January*. The Swiss police record that Silone is still living in Zurich, at 53 Germaniastrasse, and that "his lover Gabriella Seidenfeld" also lives in Zurich.

Silone's *Pane e vino*, translated by Adolf Saager, is published as *Brot und Wein*.

- 30 August. In an open letter, Silone declines the invitation to write for *Das Wort*, saying that he refuses to become a fascist and a red fascist at that.
- 31 October. Silone's residence permit expires.
- 1937 1 September. In an open letter to left-wing newspapers, Silone defends André Gide against Moscow's false accusations that he is an agent of the Gestapo.
- 1938 Silone publishes *La scuola dei dittatori*, in a German translation by Jacob Huber (pseudonym of Jacob Humm) as *Die Schule der Dictatoren*, and in an English translation by Gwenda David and Erich Mosbacher as *The School for Dictators*.
- 1939 20 April. The Italian Interior Ministry asks the prefect of L'Aquila to find some episode in Silone's life to be used to redefine his image abroad where he publishes books that are damaging to the regime.
- 10 September. The Italian fascist police issue a warrant for Silone's arrest and a request for extradition from Switzerland. The Swiss government rejects the request.
- 1941 9 December. Silone and Darina meet at Fleischmann's villa.
- Silone's third novel, *Il seme sotto la neve*, translated into German by W.J. Guggenheim, is published as *Der Samen unterm Schnee*. The book is dedicated "To Darina," and Silone personally gives her a copy thus inscribed: "Alla compagna Darina – *Unum in una fide et spe libertas.*"
- 1942 14 December. Silone is arrested for having engaged in political activism.
- In jail he writes his *Memoriale dal carcere svizzero* (*Memoir from a Swiss Prison*, translated by Stanislao G. Pugliese) and another important writing about freedom that is published for the first time in the Introduction to this volume.
- 30 December. Concern over Silone's health causes the authorities to release him, pending his trial. He is sent to a sanatorium in Davos.
- 1943 January–June. Silone is confined to Davos. The sentence of expulsion (for engaging in political activism) has been commuted to internment.

He then moves to Baden and finally returns to Zurich where he remains until the end of World War II.

8 *September*. Italy announces the armistice with the Allied Army. Marcel expresses his enthusiasm in a letter to Silone.

1944 *July*. As indicated in one of Silone's letters, Jürg Fleischmann marries Jane Cook. The exact date of the marriage is unknown.

Baden, 14 *August*. Silone completes *Ed egli si nascose* [*And He Hid Himself*]. The play is published the same year in the Italian original, and in the German translation by Lotte Thiessing as *Und er verbag sich*.

12 *October*. Silone returns to Italy with Darina Elizabeth Laracy.

Rome, 20 *December*. Silone and Darina marry in Campidoglio.

1945 The New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMa) acquires Braque's *Man with a Guitar* and Picasso's *Ma Jolie* from Marcel Fleischmann.

1946 2 *June*. Silone is elected to the Assemblée Costituente (Constituent Assembly).

4 *July*. Silone officially adopts "Ignazio" as his first name.

1947 24 *January*. Silone legally adopts this surname.

1948 Jürg experiences business troubles. His marriage ends.

1949 *November*. The Silones learn that Fleischmann is about to lose the Kleine Pension.

1950 Silone becomes the director of the Associazione Italiana per la Libertà della Cultura (Italian Association for Cultural Freedom).

2 *February*. Jürg Fleischmann marries Gloria Goldberg (1924–). They have two children: Jessica (1952–) and Anthony (1956–).

9 *February*. Having lost the Kleine Pension, Fleischmann and Elsa Schiess move to a modest apartment at 78 Plattenstrasse, Zurich.

Florence, *June*. At a UNESCO conference Darina Silone meets the young Indian poet Keshav Malik.

- Brussels, 3 November. Silone delivers his famous speech “Habeas animan!” at the second Congress for Cultural Freedom.
- 1952 Silone publishes his first post-exile novel, *Una manciata di more (A Handful of Blackberries)*.
- 1956 Silone and Nicola Chiaromonte found the cultural journal *Tempo Presente*. Silone publishes *Il segreto di Luca (The secret of Luca)*.
- 1959 17 April. Fleischmann writes an important letter to Silone about his visit to the Nuremberg cemetery.
- 1960 Silone publishes *La volpe e le camelie (The Fox and the Camellias)*, dedicated to Marcel Fleischmann.
- 1963 13 April. Silone and his wife arrive in New York. They visit Princeton, Yale, and Harvard universities, among others.
25 May. Silone writes to Fleischmann from the George Washington University Hospital, in Washington, D.C., where he is recovering from lung illness.
December. Silone and his wife travel to Israel.
- 1965 Silone receives the Marzotto Prize for *Uscita di sicurezza*.
- 1966 June. Silone receives the Doctor of Letters degree *Honoris causa* from Yale University.
21 November. Having read Silone’s *Emergency Exit*, Fleischmann writes an important letter to his friend.
- 1967 Silone resigns from the Congress for Cultural Freedom.
Nettie Sutro dies. 4 October, Fleischmann writes that more should be done to commemorate her.
- 1968 Silone publishes his second play, *L’avventura di un povero cristiano (The Story of a Humble Christian)*, for which he receives the Super Campiello Prize.
Tempo Presente ceases publication.

- 1969 *19 March.* Silone receives the Jerusalem Prize. In his acceptance speech he urges the Jews – who have suffered more than other peoples – to consider the plight of the Palestinian refugees.
- Silone receives the degree of Doctor *Honoris causa* from the University of Toulouse.
- 1970 Silone is widely celebrated in the media on his seventieth birthday.
- 28 June,* Swiss television broadcasts a documentary about his Zurich years, including his stay at the Kleine Pension.
- 1971 At the initiative of the publisher Stefano De Luca, a group of Silone's friends produce *Dal villaggio all'Europa (omaggio a Silone)*.
- Silone receives the Cino del Duca International Prize.
- 1972 Silone receives the degree of Doctor *Honoris causa* from the University of Warwick.
- Silone receives the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.
- 1 December.* Silone writes to Fleischmann that he intends to bequeath his archive to Pescina.
- 1973 *13 January.* Elsa Schiess dies. It is Fleischmann's eighty-second birthday and the sixty-eighth anniversary of the earthquake that killed Silone's mother.
- The Italian government awards Silone the Penna d'Oro for Literature.
- The French government awards Silone the Légion d'Honneur.
- In Switzerland, Silone receives the Gottfried Keller Literary Prize.
- 1977 Gabriella Seidenfeld dies in Rome. She is buried in the Jewish section of the Cimitero Monumentale del Verano.
- 1978 *22 August.* Silone dies in Geneva, with his wife at his side. His ashes are entombed in Pescina dei Marsi, as he requested in his last will.
- 1982 The Campiello d'oro prize is awarded posthumously to Silone.

- 1984 *6 August.* Fleischmann dies in Zurich. He is buried in the family tomb at the Friedhof Manegg.
- 2000 *1 May.* Darina Silone donates the Silone archives and other possessions to the town of Pescina dei Marsi, Centro Studi Ignazio Silone.
- 2003 *25 July.* Darina Silone dies in Rome. At her request, her ashes are brought back to Ireland to be scattered at sea.

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Abbreviations

ALIS	Stanislao G. Pugliese, <i>Bitter Spring. A Life of Ignazio Silone</i>
CCF	Congress for Cultural Freedom
<i>Colloqui</i>	Michele Dorigatti and Maffino Maghenzani, <i>Darina Laracy Silone. Colloqui</i>
DOeS	Giovanni Casoli, <i>L'incontro di due uomini liberi: Don Orione e Silone</i>
ISiE	Deborah Holmes, <i>Ignazio Silone in Exile. Writing and Antifascism in Switzerland 1929–1944</i>
ISBTV	Maria Nicolai Paynter, <i>Ignazio Silone: Beyond the Tragic Vision</i>
ISRS	Bruno Falchetto, ed., <i>Ignazio Silone. Romanzi e Saggi</i> , vols I–II
LdE	Luce d'Eramo, <i>L'opera di Ignazio Silone. Saggio critico e guida bibliografica</i>
LdEIS	Yukari Saito, ed., <i>Luce d'Eramo IGNAZIO SILONE</i>
LDV	Dario Biocca, <i>La doppia vita di un italiano</i>
MSP	Stanislao G. Pugliese, trans., <i>Memoir from a Swiss Prison</i>
NZZ	<i>Neue Züricher Zeitung</i>
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OVRA	Opera Vigilanza Repressione Antifascista
PcdI	Partito comunista d'Italia
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano
Psi	Partito socialista italiano
PVSL	Maria Nicolai Paynter, <i>Perché verità sia libera. Memorie, confessioni, riflessioni e itinerario poetico di David Maria Turollo</i>

- SCP Dario Biocca and Mauro Canali, *L'informatore: Silone i comunisti e la polizia*
- SL Aldo Forbice, ed., *Silone, la libertà. Un intellettuale scomodo contro tutti i totalitarismi*
- SPCI Giulia Paola Di Nicola and Attilio Danese, *Silone, percorsi di una coscienza inquieta*
- StAM Antonio Gasbarrini and Annibale Gentile, eds, *Silone tra l'Abruzzo e il mondo*

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Introduction

This work aims to provide the reader with new, original material that, when coupled with what is already widely known about Ignazio Silone, can help broaden our understanding of the man as a human being. The correspondence that is published here for the first time is a significant source that needs to be explored, particularly after the revisionism that has resulted in a second “caso Silone.”¹ Equally important is the introduction of Marcel Fleischmann – a remarkable man, thus far hardly known, and now revealed through the expression of his and Silone’s conceptions of friendship and freedom. At their sides were two remarkable women: Darina Silone and Elsa Schiess. Darina is already well known for her intellectual stature and as Silone’s wife, but will be even better known through her letters. Elsa is introduced here for the first time. As they get to know her, readers will discover a woman of generous spirit and a very poetic soul with an immense capacity for love and understanding.

I begin this introduction with a recollection of the first meeting of Secondino Tranquilli and Marcel Fleischmann in order to provide new readers with essential background information needed to help them understand the “four remarkable people” in the biographical section that follows. To facilitate an informed reading of the correspondence contained in the second part of the book, I provide a brief recollection of the historical milieu that prevailed in Switzerland, followed by a note on the importance of Silone as a literary figure and a thinker, and on his and Fleischmann’s thoughts on friendship and freedom. Finally, pondering the Silone archives, I note the scant scholarship that has thus far been dedicated to the correspondence, and anticipate that the present study will open the door to others interested in exploring this very promising field.