***Pier Paolo Alfei***

*Member of the Italian Military History Society, Master Degree in History*

[pierpaoloalfei@hotmail.com](mailto:pierpaoloalfei@hotmail.com)

**The Russian contribution to the “Norge” airship expedition (1926). Reflections based upon Italian and Norwegian archive sources**

What the paper sets out to achieve is to analyse for the first time through unpublished archival sources found both in Italy and Norway the crucial role played by the Soviet Union in the First Transpolar Flight Amundsen-Ellsworth-Nobile. A first thesis that is supported consists in the fact that the Soviet cooperation in this expedition was rooted in a previous collaboration with the Norwegians in the Twenties, in spite of the presence of some geopolitical tensions. Following this experience, a new cooperation between Italy, Norway and URSS was created to achieve the expedition, having as key figures Umberto Nobile, Filippo Eredia, Hjalmar Riiser Larsen, Grigorij Zinovieff and Maksim Litvinov. The second part of the paper will focus on two phases: on the one hand, the period of the organization of the airship stop in Leningrad (Gatschina), or January 1926; on the other, the subsequent phase of the airship stop in that city from April 15 to May 5, 1926. In particular, in the the arch of the latter, special emphasis will be given to two moments: firstly, the great ceremony organized at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Leningrad; secondly, the «special meteorological areopagus» during which some military authorities, aviators, technicians and meteorologists of the said three Nations debated various issues concerning the Transpolar Flight of “Norge”. Focusing on the role of the Soviet Union, that was not, as you recall, a official organizer of the Norwegian-U.S.-Italian Expedition, I would stress and invite to reflect on the importance of international cooperation in the success of the First Transpolar Flight. My key to reading may be condensed in the phrase which Nobile expressed during the said ceremony at the Russian Academy of Sciences: «the expedition is a high work of civilization, above all national selfishness».