

Tazzioli, Rossana

The story of a Sicilian mathematician in the first half of the 20th century. From searching for a teaching position to an academic career. (Le parcours d'une mathématicienne sicilienne durant la première moitié du XX^e siècle. De la recherche d'un poste d'institutrice à une carrière universitaire.) (French) [Zbl 08073730](#)
[Images Math. 2, 41-54 \(2024\)](#).

This short text introduces the second of twenty-one letters written by the Italian mathematician Pia Nalli (1886–1964) to her compatriot – at once, in certain respects, confidant and mentor – Tullio Levi-Civita (1873–1941), professor of mathematics at the University of Rome. The letter, reproduced in full and accompanied by a French translation, offers a glimpse into the strength of character and combative spirit of a woman who had to contend with formidable challenges throughout her academic training and professional career.

The adversity she encountered – arising not only from the intrinsic difficulties of her discipline but, above all, from social and institutional obstacles linked to her condition as a woman – fostered in Nalli a deep sense of resentment that emerges with unusual frankness in her correspondence with Levi-Civita.

In the historical contextualization and analysis that frame this document, the author, Rossana Tazzioli, emphasizes what Nalli's struggles reveal about the Italian academic milieu at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The second half of the text, for its part, addresses the controversies in which Nalli found herself unwillingly involved against the backdrop of an Italy undergoing an intense period of political turmoil that reverberated within the academic world.

The article concludes with an invitation to readers to help decipher the meaning of a cryptic inscription found at the bottom of Nalli's letter.

Reviewer: [Frédéric Morneau-Guérin \(Québec\)](#)

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