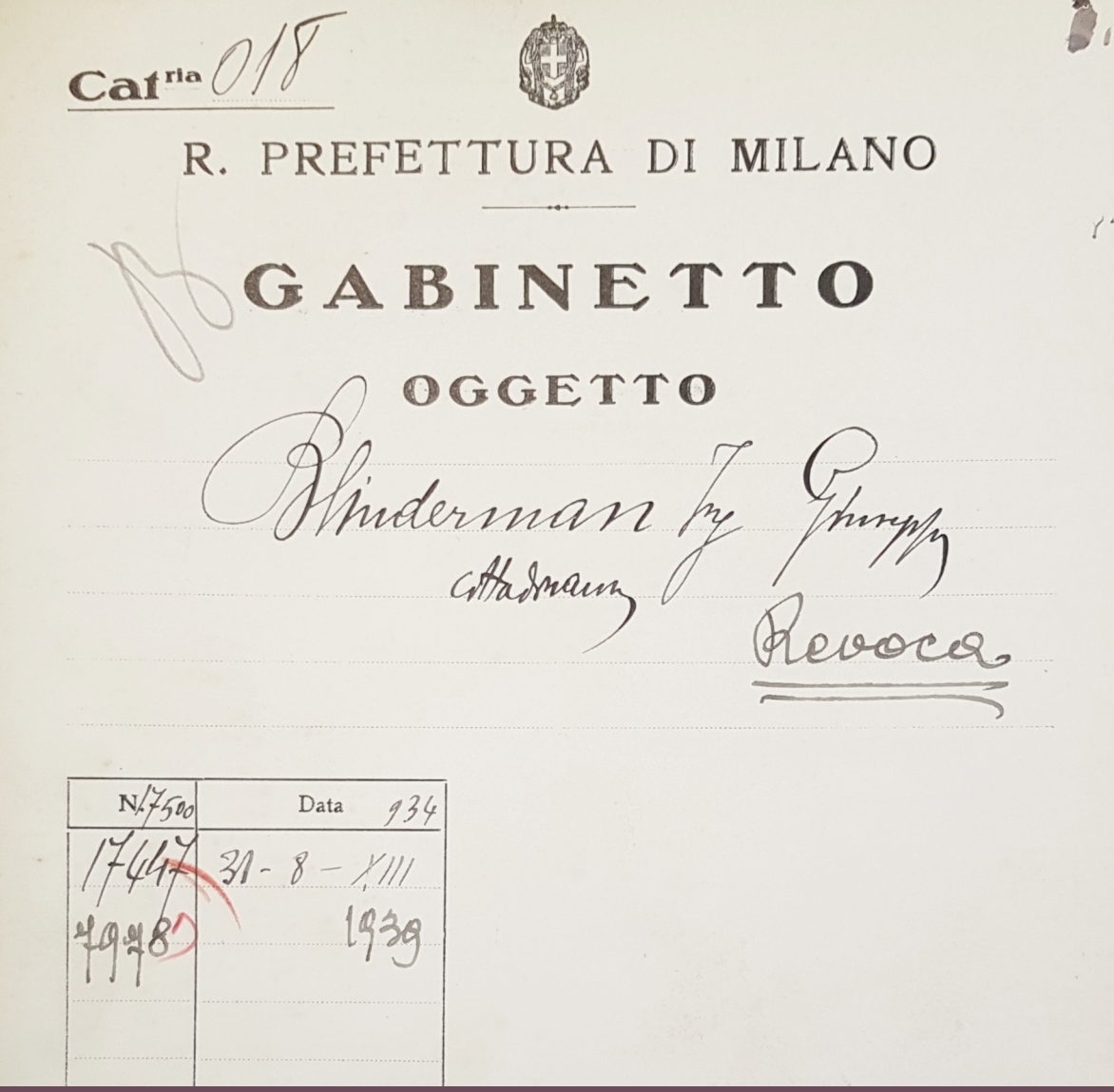

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Table of Contents

The Blinderman case. Naturalisation, denaturalisation and anti-Semitism in Fascist Italy*

Enrica Asquer**

This article presents an analysis of a file concerning the racial assessment and contestation of a denaturalisation proceeding held in the Demorazza collection at the Central State Archive in Rome. The file relates to the naturalisation and subsequent denaturalisation of Giuseppe Blinderman, a 'stateless' individual of Jewish origin (first formerly Russian and then formerly Italian) in Fascist Italy. Focusing on Blinderman's actions and skills in shaping his public identity according to the authorities' criteria, the article aims to reconstruct Fascist denaturalisation policies and assess the relationship between the event triggered by the anti-Semitic denaturalisation measure and the previous naturalisation process. As with most cases of denaturalisation due to anti-Semitic legislation, the latter also occurred under the Fascist regime, but before the turning point of 1936–38. Adopting a bottom-up perspective, the article thus raises questions about the continuities and discontinuities represented by Fascism and, particularly, with regard to Fascist anti-Semitic policies on citizenship, revealing the interplay between 'race' and 'nativeness'.
Key words: race, citizenship, denaturalisation, Fascism

Introduction

In December 1938, the writer and translator Giuseppe (né Osip Abramovič) Blinderman, born in Odessa in 1882 and recognised as belonging to the 'Jewish race', had his Italian citizenship revoked. He had acquired it only a few years earlier, in September 1935. His case is part of the broader framework of denaturalisation proceedings that, from autumn 1938 onwards, affected a specific group of Italian citizens with two characteristics in common:

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belonging to the 'Jewish race' and having recently been naturalised. More precisely, Royal Decree No. 1381 of 7 September, which contained 'Provisions against foreign Jews', indicated the Fascist regime's intention to revoke the granting of citizenship to 'Jewish foreigners' after 1 January 1919. The measure was subsequently incorporated into the 'Provisions for the defence of the Italian race' of 17 November (Royal Decree No. 1728, art. 23), and was applied based on the different and broader category of 'Jew' introduced by the same measures.[1]

Only four years earlier, in September 1934, the prefect of Milan had deemed Blinderman's meticulously crafted — and thoroughly vetted — biographical profile worthy of naturalisation: 'Hence, given that the applicant's interest in adopting the Italian citizenship coincides with the state's interest in granting it, I express my opinion in favour of granting the application.'[2] At the time, Blinderman was an eclectic figure who had travelled widely and made numerous cultural and professional connections. In October 1905, he had left Kiev — where he had moved to study engineering — for Western Europe together with his recent bride, Fanny Rosenberg. His file never mentions why they decided to leave, but the revolution that shook the Tsarist Empire that same year is likely to have played a role. After a brief stay in Florence, the couple travelled to Zurich, where their only daughter — Erna — was born in 1907, and then visited Nancy and Paris in France. During the First World War, Blinderman returned to Italy as a specialised engineer for the Société Anonyme Westinghouse in Paris, where he lent his expertise in the testing of a special type of cannon based on a Belgian model, which was used by the Italian Army from 1917 onwards. He was in Rome when the Bolshevik Revolution broke out. He and his family had been staying for a few years, often visiting the capital's small but lively community of Russian emigrants: aristo-

[1] Based on article 8, the definition of a Jew also included so-called 'mixed' people, namely children of one parent 'of the Jewish race' and one 'Aryan' parent, who fell into the following categories: the non-Jewish parent was of foreign nationality; the mother was Jewish and the father was of unknown origin; the person in question — despite being the child of parents of Italian nationality, of whom only one belonged to the Jewish race — practised the Jewish religion or was registered in an Israeli community, or had given 'manifestations of Judaism in any other way'.

[2] Royal Prefecture of Milan to Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Department Ia, Milan 17 September 1934, in Archivio Centrale dello Stato (hereafter ACS), Ministero dell'Interno (hereafter MI), Direzione Generale per la Demografia e la Razza (hereafter Dgdr), Divisione Razza (hereafter Dr), Personal files, envelope 271, folder 19206 Dcitt, Cens., Blinderman Giuseppe fu Abramo. The document can be found in the naturalisation file (Ministry of the Interior, Department Ia Section IIIa, no. 13378, cittadinanza, Blinderman Giuseppe), which was included in the above-mentioned folder 19206. See also Archivio di Stato di Milano (hereafter Asmi), Prefettura, Gabinetto (II° versamento), category 018-cittadinanza, envelope 42, folder 7978, 1939, Blinderman Ing. Giuseppe cittadinanza-Revoca: the file contains folder 17500, 1934, relating to the naturalisation application, with the relevant draft of the Prefect's letter sent on 17 September 1934.

crats of the former Tsarist Empire, revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries, but also artists and literary figures — all overwhelmed by the radical change of scenery their country of origin had suffered.[3] By 1925, the Blindermans had settled in Milan.

In the lively context of Milan, Blinderman achieved a certain notoriety under the pseudonym Ossip Felyne. In addition to being employed at the Soviet trade delegation, he was known as a publisher and author of novels, short stories and plays, but above all as a translator from Russian.[4] He translated works of famous authors such as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky at a time when Slavic studies were emerging in Italy and the Russian novel was becoming increasingly popular among publishers. Towards the end of the 1920s, he was invited to direct the Volga series ('Volga' also being an acronym, in Italian, for 'original versions of books by great authors') for the Milanese publisher Corbaccio. The series' catalogue contained works by contemporary Russian, Soviet and emigrant authors, thus contributing to the vibrant culture of exile that, especially since the October 1917 revolution, had swept through some of the main European capitals, primarily Paris, Berlin and Prague.[5] However, his mediation was also the result of a strong attachment to Italian language and culture. In 1930, for example, he founded the magazine *Teatro per tutti*, which popularised Italian comedy — an initiative that the regime praised highly.[6] In his own literary activity, he had sought to gain recognition from Italian critics, achieving some success.

For all these reasons, Blinderman decided to apply for Italian citizenship in the summer of 1934, together with his wife and daughter (by then in her thirties), both of whom were active translators. He counted on remaining permanently in what he defined, in his application, as his 'chosen homeland', from which he could never have imagined being brutally rejected only a few years later. He was forced to fight an exhausting battle, involving a lot of paper-

[3] Claudia Scandura, *L'emigrazione russa in Italia 1917-1940*, "Europa orientalis", 1995, n. 14, 2, pp. 341–366. For a comprehensive overview, see. Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad. A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1939*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990.

[4] See the biographical file edited by Giuseppina Giuliano and Sara Mazzucchelli for the website *Russi in Italia*, which is the result of an extensive survey on the Russian presence in Italy in the first half of the twentieth century conducted by an inter-university research group coordinated by the Slavist Antonella D'Amelia, www.russinitalia.it/dettaglio.php?id=150 (last accessed 13 November 2023). For an overview, see Sara Mazzucchelli, *La letteratura russa in Italia tra le due guerre: l'attività di traduttori e mediatori di cultura*, "Europa Orientalis", 2006, n. 25, pp. 37–60; Ead., *L'editoria milanese e le traduzioni dal russo*, in Antonella D'Amelia, Cristiano Diddi (eds.), *Archivio russo-italiano* V: *Russi in Italia*, Europa Orientalis-Dipartimento di Studi linguistici e letterari, Università di Salerno, 2009, pp. 279–290.

[5] M. Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, cit.

[6] "Teatro per tutti. Raccolta di commedie a cura di Osip Felyne", 1930–38, Bietti, Milan. The magazine published plays by popular authors of the time and news about their staging.

work and proof of identity,[7] to be recognised as 'not belonging to the Jewish race' in order to regain citizenship for himself and his wife, who depended on his legal status. As for his daughter, she had been married to an Italian citizen since 1935 and her husband even had strong political and economic connections. Nevertheless, her Italian citizenship, which she had acquired independently, was revoked exactly one month after the wedding. This was despite the fact that the police headquarters and the prefecture had informed the central authorities that she was an Italian citizen by law, given her marriage to an Italian.[8]

Blinderman contested his denaturalisation as best as he could, and it is only thanks to the many years he spent negotiating his citizenship status with the Italian authorities that we have information about this case. In fact, only a very small part of the documents produced by the Citizenship Department, which in August 1939 assumed responsibility for citizenship matters within the General Directorate for Demography and Race (Direzione generale per la demografia e la razza, better known as the Demorazza),[9] has survived. The rest may have been lost forever because of the extensive reorganising of the Demorazza collection following the fall of Fascism in July 1943.[10] By contrast, the Blinderman file — which contains the original naturalisation file — is among the thousands of files concerning individuals that were saved and managed by another section of the Demorazza, the Race Department, which dealt mostly with 'discrimination' practices[11] and racial investigations, aimed at defining doubtful cases from the point of view of 'racial' identity. The file is relevant because it allows us to reconstruct the denaturalisation proceedings before and after the Demorazza was created, for which we would otherwise

[7] I would like to express my gratitude to Alessandro Buono for our ongoing, long-term debate on these issues. See, in particular, *La manutenzione dell'identità. Il riconoscimento degli eredi legittimi nello stato di Milano e nella repubblica di Venezia (secoli XVII e XVIII)*, "Quaderni storici", 2015, n. 1, pp. 231–266; *«Tener persona». Sur l'identité et l'identification dans les sociétés d'Ancien Régime*, "Annales HSS", 2020, n. 1, pp. 75–111. Simona Cerutti has also been a great source of inspiration: *Étrangers. Étude d'une condition d'incertitude dans une société d'Ancien Régime*, Paris, Bayard, 2012.

[8] Royal Police Headquarters of Milan to Hon. Royal Prefecture of Milan, 10 June 1939, and draft letter from the Royal Prefecture of Milan to the Demorazza, sent on 24 June 1939, in Asmi, Prefettura, Gab. (II), category 018-cittadinanza, envelope 42, folder 7095, 1939, Blinderman Erna Iris, Cittadinanza-revoca.

[9] Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione*, Turin, Einaudi, 2007, p. 180n. The transition took place on 21 August 1939.

[10] Lucilla Garofalo, *La Demorazza: storia di un archivio*, "Italia contemporanea", 2013, n. 272, pp. 374–401.

[11] For an analysis of these practices, with a focus on Milan, see Enrica Asquer, *Autobiografie di supplica. Alcune considerazioni sulle richieste di "discriminazione" degli ebrei milanesi, 1938-1943*, "Società e storia", 2016, n. 151, pp. 97–135; *Scrivere alla Demorazza. Le domande di "discriminazione" delle donne di "razza ebraica" e il conflitto sulla cittadinanza nell'Italia del 1938*, "Italia contemporanea", 2018, n. 287, pp. 213–242.

have no systematic archival support. More importantly, it reflects Blinderman's strategy to regain his citizenship status, thus documenting his submission to a racial assessment in order to prove that he and his family did not belong to the Jewish race. Although others have also pursued this course of action,[12] not all files I have examined provide evidence of the same thoroughness or breadth. Clearly, not everyone had Blinderman's tenacity and social resources to resist and challenge the racial measures, at least until December 1941, when he last submitted a request to the Demorazza. After that, we lose track of Blinderman, although we know that he survived the Holocaust and died in 1950.

The exceptionality of Blinderman's case has produced a particularly rich and enlightening dossier. He was one of the first to challenge denaturalisation in 1938. As we will see, his procedural errors are very useful for interpretation today as they reveal the interplay between citizenship and race — a theme that has yet to be fully explored by historians. Another relevant point is that Blinderman's file contains his previous naturalisation documents. In fact, it was precisely the Blinderman case that prompted Mussolini, upon receiving an official query from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to explicitly state in February 1936 the 'non-desirability' of granting Italian citizenship to 'elements of the Jewish religion', especially if they came from Soviet Russia.

Through an in-depth analysis of the Blinderman file, this article thus aims to trace the naturalisation and denaturalisation of a 'stateless' individual of Jewish origin (first formerly Russian and then formerly Italian) in Fascist Italy,[13] focusing on the actions and skills used to shape his public identity according to the authorities' criteria. In doing so, the article aims to assess the relationship between the event triggered by the anti-Semitic denaturalisation measure and the previous naturalisation process. As with most cases of denaturalisation due to anti-Semitic legislation, the latter also occurred under the Fascist regime, but before the turning point of 1936–38. Adopting a bottom-up perspective, the article thus raises questions about the continuities and discontinuities represented by Fascism and, particularly, with regard to Fascist anti-Semitic policies on citizenship, revealing the interplay between 'race' and 'nativeness'.

The analysis of the dossier will show how naturalisation, denaturalisation and the contestation of denaturalisation are all part of the same history: the controversial history of the negotiation of citizenship rights by those who, for

[12] Still others, on the other hand, tried to have their exceptional merits — mostly special services to the nation — recognised, in a similar way to discrimination applications. See, for example, the case of Alberto Grunstein, of which some traces can be found in ACS, MI, Dgdr, Affari diversi, envelope 21, folder 45.

[13] As we will see, the term 'stateless' citizen is problematic because it is the result of bargaining by the very protagonists of the affair analysed in this article.

various and varying reasons over time, found themselves interacting dialectically with the institutions of the nation-state that managed the inclusion and exclusion of these rights. This history sheds light on the controversial relationship between the Jews and the Italian nation-state (but not only), as well as the broader historical dynamics of citizenship in twentieth-century Italy, within which it is necessary to identify both the continuities and the characteristics of the Fascist period. This subject has yet to be thoroughly explored in Italian historiography,[14] which is only now beginning to pay more attention to the history of immigration and the interplay between minorities and citizenship, thanks to influences from the international context[15] and the Italian public debate. The latter is now seemingly forced to overcome its long-standing perception of itself as a country of emigration only, an image that has so far obstructed the recognition of its deep historical roots of exclusion from citizenship and the persecution of minorities. In many ways, these issues lie at the heart of the nation-state.[16]

Finally, from a methodological point of view, the archival investigation of an individual case enables reflection on the concrete implementation of the anti-Semitic policies and, in doing so, highlights the *relationship* between individuals, families (acting despite *ad personam* decrees) and authoritarian institutions. This is based on the premise that no totalitarianism can remove the agency of social actors. If possible, this agency must be sought with even greater patience.

[14] On the legal aspects of citizenship, see Luca Bussotti, *La cittadinanza degli italiani. Analisi storica e critica sociologica di una questione irrisolta*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2002; Luca Einaudi, *Le politiche dell'immigrazione in Italia dall'Unità ad oggi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2007. Another useful study is the summary by Sabina Donati, *A Political History of National Citizenship and Identity in Italy, 1861-1950*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013.

[15] I am referring, in particular, to citizenship studies. For a seminal publication in this area, see Engin F. Isin, Greg M. Nielsen, *Acts of Citizenship*, London, Zed Books, 2008.

[16] Silvana Patriarca, Valeria Deplano, *Introduction. Nation, 'race' and racisms in twentieth-century Italy*, "Modern Italy", 2018, n. 4, pp. 349–353. In this context, important works have been written on the morphology of national discourse in the Risorgimento and in Italian nationalism, as well as on the related historical occurrences of racism in Italy: see, in particular, Alberto Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita*, Turin, Einaudi, 2006; Id., *Sublime madre nostra. La nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al fascismo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2011; Silvana Patriarca, *Italianità. La costruzione del carattere nazionale*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2010; Ead., *Relazioni pericolose: "razza" e nazione nel Risorgimento*, in Adriano Roccucci (ed.), *La costruzione dello stato-nazione in Italia*, Rome, Viella, 2012, pp. 109–119; Gaia Giuliani, Cristina Lombardi Diop, *Bianco e nero. Storia dell'identità razziale degli italiani*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2013.

Denaturalisation and anti-Semitism: the Italian case in the European context

As historical research on the persecution of Jews has amply pointed out,[17] 'Jewish foreigners' fell victim to the earliest and fiercest persecutory measures implemented by the Italian Fascist regime. Alongside the 5 September decree on the purge of public schools, the decree issued on 7 September was the first explicitly anti-Semitic restrictive measure of Mussolini's government. The timing was by no means coincidental. In line with the 'qualitative' logic that justified the government's decision to adopt racist and anti-Semitic measures,[18] citizens 'of the Jewish race' and of 'foreign nationality' were the perfect target, as they could be presented as the most alien element in the body of the nation — the first, therefore, to be hit.[19]

This meant that foreigners were instantly assimilated to those who had obtained Italian citizenship from January 1919 onwards, in the context of the geopolitical reorganisation following the First World War and the collapse of the multinational empires. In Europe and beyond, this reorganisation had produced both policies of denationalisation and the compulsory assimilation of minorities who had recently been included within the new borders of nation-states, as well as a conspicuous accentuation of — mostly forced — mobility as a result of the contradictory rearrangement produced by the Peace Treaties and the ethnicist radicalisation of policies on nationality and citizenship.[20] As Daniela Luigia Caglioti pointed out,[21] precisely these two concepts — which are not immediately compatible — began to converge progressively from the First World War onwards, albeit in different contexts. At the same time, the friendship-enemy logic continued along borders between nationalities conceived as increasingly homogeneous internally. During the Great War, the restriction of civil liberties, denaturalisation and penalisation of the prop-

[17] Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1993–96; Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, pp. 186–191; Id., *La persecuzione degli ebrei stranieri in Italia*, in Michele Battini, Marie-Anne Matard Bonucci (eds.), *Antisemitismi a confronto. Francia e Italia. Ideologie, retoriche, politiche*, Pisa, Plus, 2010, pp. 167–177; for a promising work in progress, see Matteo Stefanori, *Le strade che portano a Roma. Ebrei stranieri nella capitale, 1933-1945*, "Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Biblioteken, 2019, n. 1, pp. 387–427.

[18] Michele Sarfatti, *Mussolini contro gli ebrei. Cronaca dell'elaborazione delle leggi del 1938*, Turin, Zamorani, 2017[2].

[19] Alessandra Minerbi, *Il decreto legge del 7 settembre 1938 sugli ebrei stranieri*, "Rassegna mensile di Israel", 2007, n. 2, pp. 169–186.

[20] Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War Through the Cold War*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2002 (new edition); Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, Oxford, Oxford U.P., 2013.

[21] Daniela Luigia Caglioti, *Subjects, Citizens, and Aliens in a Time of Upheaval: Naturalizing and Denaturalizing in Europe during the First World War*, "The Journal of Modern History", 2017, n. 3, pp. 495–530.

erty rights of 'enemy aliens' (and sometimes of foreigners more generally) were common practices in the belligerent countries, leaving a legacy that affected politics, culture and administrative practices in the subsequent period.[22]

Furthermore, throughout Europe, the inter-war period was characterised by the emergence of a significant influx of exiles of Jewish religion or origin seeking refuge from countries where anti-Semitic policies and sentiment were intensifying. One such country was the German Reich (from 1933 onwards),[23] but it is also a well-known fact that Eastern European Jews — especially those living in the western part of the Tsarist Empire — had been subjected to waves of violent pogroms since the second half of the nineteenth century. In the first decades of the twentieth century, these complex events merged with the revolutionary dynamics that led to the end of the autocracy.[24] More generally, the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution and the ensuing civil war triggered a huge exodus of migrants (mostly to Europe) and an unprecedented refugee crisis in Russian history, which would have important international repercussions.[25]

In various European contexts, these migrants — refugees and non-nationals who were increasingly seen as strangers to the nation's biopolitical body — were struck by measures to revise and withdraw their citizenship, with increasing intensity during the 1930s. The case of Italian Fascism, which has received very little attention regarding its treatment of minorities after the First World War,[26] should be included in this transnational framework, and the

[22] Ead., *Dealing with Enemy Aliens in WWI: Security versus Civil Liberties and Property Rights*, "Italian Journal of Public Law", 2011, n. 2, pp. 180–194; Ead., *Why and How Italy Invented an Enemy Aliens Problem in the First World War*, "War in History", 2014, n. 2, pp. 142–169. See also Ead., *War and Citizenship: Enemy Aliens and National Belonging from the French Revolution to the First World War*, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 2021.

[23] On the influx to Italy, see K. Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, cit.

[24] Jonathan Dekel-Chen, David Gaunt, Natan M. Meir, Israel Bartal (eds.), *Anti-Jewish Violence. Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2010; on the 1905 revolution in Odessa, which may have had an impact on Blinderman's life course, see Robert Weinberg, *The Revolution of 1905 in Odessa: Blood on the Steps*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993.

[25] It is worth mentioning at least Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking. Refugees in Russia during World War I*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999; Catherine Goussef, *L'exil russe. La fabrique du réfugié apatride (1920-1939)*, Paris, CNRS éditions, 2008.

[26] The following studies are a good starting point: Andrea Di Michele, *L'italianizzazione imperfetta. L'amministrazione pubblica dell'Alto Adige tra Italia liberale e fascismo*, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso, 2003; Marta Verginella, *Il confine degli altri. La questione giuliana e la memoria slovena*, Rome, Donzelli, 2008; Annamaria Vinci, *Sentinelle della patria. Il fascismo al confine orientale 1918-1941*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2011; Maura Hametz, *In the Name of Italy. Nation, Family and Patriotism in a Fascist Court*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2012; Roberta Pergher, *Mussolini's Nation-Empire. Sovereignty and Settlement in Italy's Borderlands, 1922-1943*, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 2018. For an in-depth review that revisits the theme of citizenship, see Giulia Albanese, *Italianità fascista. Il regime e la trasformazione dei confini della cittadinanza 1922-1938*, "Italia contemporanea", 2019, n. 290, pp. 95–125. On the treatment of minorities under Fascism, it is worth considering the ongoing

events of 1938 must be understood as part of a historical trajectory of progressive political radicalisation and the adoption of an ethnicist approach to citizenship. In Italy, the latter was already evident in the elaboration of policies towards minorities who had recently been incorporated into the national territory under the Peace Treaties, as well as in the country's colonial experience in East Africa.[27] As Roberta Pergher recalled,[28] it was in the context of tightening control measures and repressing political opposition — culminating in the so-called Leggi fascistissime (Fascist legislation that effectively turned the country into a dictatorship) — that the regime introduced 'changes and additions' to the general law on citizenship (No. 555 of 13 June 1912) in January 1926.[29] These changes enabled the withdrawal of citizenship and, in the worst-case scenario, the confiscation of property from expatriates abroad who were accused of behaving in a way that could 'disturb public order in the Kingdom' or damage 'the interests', the 'good name' or the 'prestige of Italy'. Pergher also observed that similar measures were applied in the same month to 'a particular class of enemies of the state': those who had recently obtained citizenship as a result of the annexations sanctioned by the Peace Treaties. In their case, a simple order by the prefect could determine the cause of 'political unworthiness' and thus provoke denaturalisation.[30]

The fusion of this dynamic with the implementation of anti-Semitic legislation in Italy marks a further step, which also has a particular characteristic. As Claire Zalc's thorough study of the French case reveals,[31] while the anti-Semitic nature of the law passed by the Vichy government in July 1940 — based on the German model[32] and providing for the revision of all naturali-

research by Michele Sarfatti, who has highlighted the obstacles encountered by the Roma and Sinti communities in acquiring citizenship since the early post-war period. See Michele Sarfatti, *Per una storia della normativa antizigana nell'Italia fascista: i testi delle circolari*, "Documenti e commenti", n. 7, url: www.michelesarfatti.it/documenti-e-commenti/una-storia-della-normativa-antizigana-nellitalia-fascista-i-testi-delle-circolari (last accessed 13 November 2023).

[27] Barbara Sorgoni, *Le parole e i corpi. Antropologia, discorso giuridico e politiche sessuali interrazziali nella colonia Eritrea (1890-1941)*, Naples, Liguori, 1998; Olindo De Napoli, *La prova della razza. Cultura giuridica e razzismo negli anni Trenta*, Milan, Mondadori Education, 2009; Nicola Labanca, *Il razzismo istituzionale coloniale: genesi e relazioni con l'antisemitismo fascista*, in Marcello Flores et al. (eds.), *Storia della Shoah in Italia. Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni*, vol. I, *Le premesse, le persecuzioni, lo sterminio*, Turin, Utet, 2010, pp. 192–219.

[28] R. Pergher, *Mussolini's Nation Empire*, cit., p. 182.

[29] Law no. 555 of 13 June 1912 on Italian citizenship (G.U. no. 153 of 30 June 1912); Law no. 108 of 31 January 1926, Modifications and additions to Law no. 555 of 13 June 1912 on citizenship (G.U. no. 28 of 4 February 1926).

[30] Royal Decree No. 16 of 10 January 1926, Revocation, in cases of political indignity, of the concession of Italian citizenship conferred on foreigners following a right of option (G.U. no. 11 of 15 January 1926).

[31] Claire Zalc, *Dénaturalisés. Les retraites de nationalité sous Vichy*, Paris, Seuil, 2016.

[32] The Law on the Revocation of Naturalizations and the Deprivation of German Citizenship of 14 July 1933 allowed for the revocation of all naturalisations granted between 9 November

sations granted under the progressive law of 10 August 1927 — only became apparent in practice, xenophobia and anti-Semitism went hand in hand in Italy since autumn 1938.

It is difficult to establish the quantitative dimension of the process of reviewing the citizenship of Jews living in the Kingdom of Italy. The archival situation described above has posed a significant challenge to research in this area. The revocation decrees that we have access to, thanks to sources of the Department of Public Security,[33] usually only indicate the name of the file holder, which prevents us from calculating how many people, as members of the family of a denaturalised person, were deprived of their citizenship. Only the lists from Trieste are almost complete. They mention 207 people, corresponding to 82 revoked concessions, to which another list of 172 denaturalisations must be added, for which only the file holder is indicated. In total, then, at least 379 people were involved. The other decrees (usually cumulative and relating to ten individuals at a time) list 1,166 names corresponding to the file holders, so we could say that at least 1,545 people were affected by the measures, living primarily in the north-east, Trieste and the Carnaro Province (Fiume), and in the city of Milan. However, the actual number is approximate, also because some revocations were quickly cancelled or formally suspended for five years, while others were subject to interpretative disagreements between various authorities and the interested parties, meaning they could be revoked at a later date.

Losing one's citizenship had significant implications. The new stateless people were forced to leave the borders of the Kingdom of Italy, Libya and the Aegean possessions by 12 March 1939, like the rest of the 'Jewish foreigners', except for those who had married an Italian citizen or had reached the age of 65 by 1 October 1938. In an increasingly violent and anti-Semitic Europe, the expulsion foreshadowed a forced migration with far-reaching consequences.

Moreover, the conditions of foreign Jews worsened from the spring of 1940 onwards, when Italy entered the war. While some of them had managed to migrate, many others were prevented from doing so by bureaucratic obstacles.

1918 and 30 January 1933 that could be considered harmful to national interests. The 26 July 1933 circular that implemented the law specified that assessments could be based on a national or racial criterion. The so-called *Ostjuden*, in particular, were the designated target. Michael G. Esch, *Utilité, degré de civilisation, valeur biologique. Le désirable accroissement de la population allemande (1870-1914)*, in Philippe Rygiel (ed.), *Le bon grain et l'ivraie. La sélection des migrants en Occident, 1880-1939*, Genève, Aux lieux d'être, 2006², pp. 37–76 (I am citing the version available on HAL open science, halshs-01285064). See also Martin Dean, *The Development and Implementation on Nazi Denaturalization and Confiscation Policy up to the Eleventh Decree to the Reich Citizenship Law*, "Holocaust Genocide Studies", 2002, n. 2, pp. 217–242; for another see, see for example Joshua Starr, *Jewish Citizenship in Rumania (1878-1940)*, "Jewish Social Studies", 1941, n. 1, 1941, pp. 57–80.

[33] ACS, MI, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza (hereafter Dgps), Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati (hereafter Dagr), category A16, Stranieri ed ebrei stranieri, envelope 7.

Those who remained in the Kingdom without authorisation risked administrative internment in camps run by the regime or in small communes, which were mainly located in the centre and south of the peninsula. However, it remains extremely difficult to quantify the number of ex-Italian stateless persons affected by this situation.[34]

But what steps did denaturalised individuals take before leaving, going into hiding or being interned? How exactly did denaturalisation work? As we have seen, it is difficult to answer these questions given the current archival situation, which forces us to rely mostly on individual cases. However, we can make a virtue of necessity by focusing on the practical implementation of racial measures and on the resulting dynamic and conflictual relationship between rulers and ruled.

The actions taken by the victims to challenge the racial measures are an important starting point. In the archival collection of the Race Department, we can find traces of measures to repeal the revocation of citizenship and evidence of contestation practices. Examining the database compiled by Lucilla Garofalo,[35] an archivist at the Central State Archive, we can identify approximately seventy dossiers categorised as 'ES' ('Ebrei Stranieri', foreign Jews). They contain applications for 'permanence in the Kingdom' submitted to the Demorazza by foreign or denaturalised Jews who requested an exemption from the measure of forced expulsion, including Giuseppe Blinderman.[36] When we analyse the authority's motivations, as recorded in the successful cases, we immediately see that some applicants avoided deportation precisely because the decision to withdraw their citizenship was revoked, probably as a result of a challenge by the individual concerned. Moreover, as in Blinderman's case, such objections also left traces in the racial assessment files, which were again handled by the Race Department. Starting from the names in the revocation

[34] A useful tool for obtaining even only a rough estimate is the database developed by Anna Pizzuti, *Foreign Jews interned in Italy*, available at www.annapizzuti.it/database/scaricadb.php (last accessed 13 November 2023). A search of the database using the nationality criterion 'stateless ex-Italian' (male and female) reveals a total of 198 internees: 149 men and 49 women. However, it cannot be excluded that the denaturalised persons were simply classified as 'stateless'. Furthermore, it must be considered that some may have regained, or perhaps silently retained, their original citizenship. I thank Michele Sarfatti for these observations.

[35] The database relates to the personal files held in the Race Department, which can effectively be consulted in the archive or whose information can be derived indirectly from other dossiers. It is possible to view the card describing the dossier and its holder, or the biographical records about the individuals involved. Regarding the first case, there are 4,241 racial assessment files (classified as Dcitt); 6,231 discrimination files (1,797 for exceptional merit and 4,434 ordinary files, respectively); five files of applications to retain employment and three to retain teaching; 70 applications for permanence in the Kingdom (classified as ES); 488 applications for mixed marriages (classified as MEIS, MIE, MIES, MIS).

[36] The application was unsuccessful, and the archival reference refers to the racial investigation file, ACS, MI, Dgdr, Dr, Personal files, envelope 271, folder 19206 Dcitt, Blinderman Giuseppe.

decrees, of which we have records, it is therefore possible to examine the racial assessment files on a case-by-case basis, rereading them also in the light of the connection between the racial question and citizenship.

Equally important is research at the local level, as this allows us to overcome the archival challenges associated with studying this issue, especially with regard to the documentation of the Ministry of the Interior. Drawing on research I have been conducting for some years on the case of Milan, I will here focus on the sources contained in the archive of the prefecture of Milan. Examining the personal files produced locally shows that the procedures for granting and revoking citizenship were closely connected, with the local prefectures playing a leading role in both cases, as they were responsible for managing the individual files while interacting with central authorities. This is confirmed by the fact that, as in the French case,[37] the files for revoking citizenship at the prefecture of Milan are the same files used for granting citizenship, to which the staff then added the documents relating to denaturalisation. In other words, traces of this process should not only be sought among the 'Jewish files'.

An analysis of the local context and an in-depth examination of the entire Blinderman file clarify another key aspect of denaturalisation proceedings that has not yet been explored. Until at least the end of August 1939, the revocation process was handled not by the Demorazza but by the Ministry of the Interior's Department Ia Section IIIa. The latter had been autonomous with respect to the ministry's general management until 1927, when it was incorporated into the newly created Personnel Office.[38] My analysis of the correspondence between the periphery and the centre reveals that, until the summer of 1939, the prefectures seem to have contacted Department Ia Section IIIa directly in cases of revocation, given its authority over citizenship matters.

Moreover, between 1938 and 1939, this department issued directives concerning foreign Jews and, in particular, requests to prefectures to integrate the information available based on 'the records in its possession' in order to ascertain the 'Jewish race' of foreigners who had been granted citizenship after January 1919. For example, on 25 November 1938, Department Ia Section IIIa sent the prefect of Milan a list of 152 names of 'foreigners who were granted our citizenship and for whom it was not possible to establish, based on the records of this ministry, the race to which they belonged'.[39] The relative correspondence shows that the prefecture's intervention, with relative 'opportune enquiries'

[37] C. Zalc, *Dénaturalisés*, cit.

[38] Although Garofalo confirms that citizenship revocations were implemented by the Citizenship Department, she points out that the Demorazza took over citizenship competences in 1939. L. Garofalo, *La Demorazza*, cit.

[39] Ministry of the Interior, Personnel Office, Department Ia Section III, to HE the Prefect of Milan, Rome 25 November 1938, in Asmi, Prefettura, Gabinetto, Problema razzista, binder 2, folder 14, subfolder 2.

ordered 'urgently', was required 'only' for the names on the list. According to a telegram from April 1939, 'for the other concessionaires race [is] ascertained from attached naturalisation application documents'.[40] Hence, the Milanese case shows that the documents on which the attribution of race — an act resulting in the revocation of citizenship — was based were, above all, previous naturalisation applications. These were supplemented by the information provided by the interested parties themselves when they were subjected to the racist census of August 1938 and the compulsory self-declarations following the entry into force of the 'Provisions for the defence of the Italian race' in November.

In the first phase, then, the initiative of the revocation process was in the hands of Department Ia Section IIIa. Unfortunately, the relevant archival collections, which I was directed to by this research, were transferred to the Central State Archive in 2015. I have only been able to consult a small part of these collections relating to the early 1920s, as they were still being inventoried at the time of writing this article. However, certain clues emerged both in the few remaining documents of the Citizenship Department and in the personal files of the Race Department, including that of Blinderman. These confirm the involvement, between 1939 and 1940, of the Demorazza's internal department in the management of the citizenship issue.

The Blinderman file: naturalisation (1934–36)

Out of 662 grants of Italian citizenship registered in the province of Milan between 1919 and 1939,[41] a total of 142 were revoked by decrees based on the 'Provisions for the defence of the Italian race'.[42] These include the case of Giuseppe Blinderman, born to Abramo Blinderman and Paolina Halperine. The revocation, which also implied the denaturalisation of Blinderman's wife, is dated 15 December 1938. Like the others, it is signed by Victor Emmanuel III and countersigned by Mussolini, who is listed as the proponent in his capacity as prime minister, Secretary of State and interior minister.[43]

As in most cases, it was a cumulative decree, declaring the revocation of the Italian citizenship of a set of listed individuals (usually ten[44]) based on an

[40] Telegram from the Personnel Office to the Prefect of Milan, 10 April 1939, ivi.

[41] Royal Prefecture of Milan to Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Personnel Office, 5 April 1939, in Asmi, Prefettura, Gabinetto, Problema Razzista, binder 2, folder 14, subfolder 2. Citizenships acquired by right and those obtained by exercising the right of option are excluded from the calculation. Six hundred thirty-nine grants were registered in Milan.

[42] I have taken the number from the original copies of the decrees, in ACS, MI, Dgps, Dagr, category A16, Stranieri ed ebrei stranieri, envelope 7.

[43] Ivi. An extract of the decree can be found in Asmi, Prefettura, Gab (II), envelope 42, folder Blinderman.

[44] Other than Blinderman, these included: Flescher Gioacchino (Royal Decree 10.2.1938), born in Buczacz and resident in Rome; Galenbert Samuele (Royal Decree 13.6.1935), born

explicit motivation: 'Considered that the persons listed below belong to the Jewish race, in view of article 23 of Royal Decree 17 November 1938 — A. XVII no. 1728 […] the Italian citizenship granted to the following people is declared to all effects revoked.' This formula is immediately followed by the indication of the general legislative references on the basis of which the concession was made, first and foremost article 4 of the organic law on citizenship (13 June 1912, no. 555) and the relative changes of December 1934,[45] but also specific changes concerning the new provinces annexed following the First World War.[46] The name and personal data of each denaturalised individual are accompanied by the details of the decree granting citizenship. In Blinderman's case, this was the decree of 26 September 1935, registered at the Court of Accounts on the following 21 October. For the other individuals listed, the concessions date between 1935 and 1938; they were therefore governed by the same Royal Decree of 1 December 1934. As in many other cases, we find that concessions revoked at the same time were made with the same articles of law 'in mind', while there do not seem to be any other justifying factors (e.g. place of residence or birth) that could explain why the affected individuals were gathered in the same decree.

The revocation of Blinderman's naturalisation was registered at the Corte dei Conti, the Court of Accounts, three months later, on 17 March 1939. In July, he was informed by the municipal messenger who, as was customary, delivered a copy of the decree to his address on behalf of the mayor of Milan. This was standard procedure, and all records are kept in the municipal citizenship

in Rhodes and resident in Trieste; Philipp Gustavo (Royal Decree 4.6.1936), born in Cologne and resident in Rome; Sadoch Saul (Royal Decree 18.5.1936), born in Constantinople and resident in Trieste; Campos Gabriele Gino (Royal Decree 7.3.1935), born in Alexandria and resident in Milan; Frank Marino (Royal Decree 9.8.1935), born in Munich and resident in Milan; Dana Salomone (Royal Decree 31.10.1935), born in Constantinople and resident in Milan; Papo Giuseppe (7.3.1935), born in Tartar Pasardjik and resident in Trieste; Mosseri Salomone (Royal Decree 6.4.1936), born in Izmir and residing in Milan.

[45] According to article 4 of the Law of 13 June 1912, naturalisation could be granted by royal decree subject to the favourable opinion of the Council of State and under the following conditions 1) to a foreigner who has rendered three years' service to the Italian State, including abroad; 2) to a foreigner who has lived in the Kingdom for at least five years; 3) to a foreigner who has lived in the Kingdom for three years and has rendered notable services to Italy or has married an Italian citizen; 4) after one year of residency, to a person who could have become an Italian citizen by law if they had not failed to make an explicit declaration in due time. Royal Decree No. 1997 of 1 December 1934, which contained changes to Law no. 555 of 13 June 1912 on Italian nationality (G.U. no. 297 of 19 December 1934), converted by Law no. 517 of 4 April 1935 (G.U. no. 107 of 7 May 1935), intervened on article 4, reducing the compulsory time limits provided for in points 3 and 4 (from three years to two and from one year to six months, respectively) and weakening the role of the Council of State, which became merely an object of consultation. Article 6 on the granting of citizenship for 'services of exceptional importance' was also repealed.

[46] Royal Decree No. 43 of 29 January 1922, regarding norms concerning the acquisition of Italian citizenship in the new provinces (G.U. no. 35 of 11 February 1922).

and population registers. As mentioned, the Personnel Office of the Ministry of the Interior, which incorporated the existing Department Ia Section IIIa, was behind the disgraceful decision. In June 1939, it transmitted the news of Blinderman's revoked citizenship to the periphery (i.e. the prefect), enclosing a copy of the decree.[47]

Interestingly, the documents testifying to the above-mentioned procedural steps are contained, in an interrupted sequence, in a record created by the prefecture of Milan in the summer of 1934. This is indeed Blinderman's naturalisation file, lodged with the prefecture and re-examined when his citizenship was revoked. The subject line reads 'Giuseppe Blinderman citizenship'; underneath, in visibly different ink, it says 'Revocation'. The original protocol number, which corresponds to the date on which the file was created, is followed by the number of the revocation file and the year: 1939. A closer look reveals that the four folders relating to the category 'citizenship' in the prefecture of Milan's archives for the year 1939 contain mostly naturalisation files on people declared 'of Jewish race', created in the inter-war period and revoked in the aftermath of the 'Provisions for the defence of the Italian race'.

The file and, in particular, the information reported by the local authorities allows us to trace the migratory and professional path that had led Blinderman to formally request Italian citizenship in July 1934. The process was by no means straightforward. In fact, as I have mentioned, the Blinderman file marks a turning point in the Ministry of the Interior's practice of granting citizenship to 'Jewish' foreigners, especially those from the Soviet Union.

From the very first letter to the ministry, dated 5 July 1934,[48] Blinderman demonstrates extreme formal competence in formulating his requests and, more generally, interacting with institutions. His self-narration begins with his arrival in Italy: 'I came to Italy in May 1915, sent by the Société Anonyme Westinghouse in Paris, in my capacity as Engineer, to carry out a military test at the Westinghouse Company in Vado Ligure.' The reasons for his subsequent stays in the Kingdom — related to his collaboration in national defence efforts — are duly underlined and documented by the letters from the Ministry of Arms and Munitions attached to the application.

In addition to his commendable activity as an engineer, Blinderman boasted his career as a writer. He thus mentions having published 'several books (novels, novellas, comedies) that were very favourably received by the press' in Italy, while some of his comedies had been 'successfully performed by the greatest Italian artists'. He places particular emphasis on the initiative that he had devoted himself to since 1930: the editorial management of *Teatro*

[47] Ministry of the Interior, Personnel Office, to HE the Prefect of Milan, Rome 9 June 1939 in Asmi, Prefettura, Gab. (II), envelope 42, folder Blinderman.

[48] Giuseppe Blinderman to Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Milan 5 July 1934, in ACS, MI, Dgdr, Dr, Personal files, envelope 271, folder 19206, Blinderman Giuseppe.

per tutti, which he had founded 'with the precise aim of making it a propaganda organ for promoting Italian drama'. As proof, he cites the percentage of Italian plays published in the magazine (out of an unspecified total): '71% in 1930; 84% in 1931; 86% in 1932; 95% in 1933 and 100% in 1934.' Blinderman proudly points out that his activities were perfectly aligned with the regime's directives and had been recognised by the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (OND), a Fascist leisure organisation. This is demonstrated by a 1933 circular enclosed with the file, in which the OND praises the magazine as a 'guide for the renewal of the repertoire' in accordance with the regime's provisions. The decision to publish many of his works in Italian and join the Fascist writers' union of Lombardy further reinforces his image of perfect political compliance.

Next, there was the issue of loyalty to the host country and relations with the previous homeland, which are essential for any naturalisation application. The primary objective of a citizenship application is to address the implicit concerns about potential disloyalty and opportunism towards the host nation, which was particularly relevant in the context of Fascist Italy. Thus, Blinderman emphasises that he has lived in Italy continuously for more than 17 years and, in the meantime, has lost all his possessions in his homeland following the Russian Revolution: 'The Russian Revolution, which broke out while I was in Italy, took away all my possessions.' Interestingly, he does not explicitly mention his loss of citizenship, nor does he define himself as 'stateless', as the prefect of Milan did in his report of the following September.[49] He only declares that he had 'regained Russian citizenship' in 1926, after Fascist Italy recognised the Soviet government, but that he had renounced it in a declaration to the police headquarters in Milan, written on 27 June 1934 and attached to his application. In the document, Blinderman indeed clarifies that he has no other citizenship.[50] Whoever examined the file at the ministry marked the acquisition and subsequent renunciation of Soviet citizenship in red, and the matter was further investigated in the following months. The definition of 'stateless' used by the prefect is marked in the same way. This was clearly a critical issue.

In fact, from a strictly legal point of view, if Blinderman implicitly — and understandably — places the new 'Soviet' citizenship in continuity with the 'Russian' one by presenting his act as the 'resumption' of his previous status,[51]

[49] Royal Prefecture of Milan to Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Department Ia, Milan 17 September 1934. Ivi.

[50] The declaration is handwritten and stamped by the Aliens Office of the police headquarters in Milan. After the personal details, Blinderman 'hereby declares that he renounces his citizenship of the U.S.S.R. and has no other citizenship'.

[51] George Ginsburgs, *The Soviet Union and the Problem of Refugees and Displaced Persons 1917-1956*, "The American Journal of International Law", 1957, n. 2, pp. 325–361. In the immediate post-war period and before the birth of the Soviet Union, Soviet citizenship was superimposed on the pre-existing citizenship as a result of the agreements and treaties between

it becomes more difficult for him to replace a formal certificate of release from the original citizenship with a simple self-declaration. At the time, the former document was required by the Italian authorities for naturalisation purposes.[52] The general law of 1912 was indeed structured to reject dual nationality.

Moreover, in terms of argumentative coherence, the issue of reacquiring original citizenship was delicate as it potentially contradicted the image that Blinderman aimed to project: that of an individual who had chosen to reside in Italy 17 years earlier. After a linear process of progressive integration, he had now reached the final act of requesting Italian citizenship.

His appeal ends as follows:

> Now, as I ask for the honour of Italian citizenship for which I have long yearned and to which, I hope, to have earned the right, I am seeking affirmation by law of what has already existed for years, namely my devotion and love for Italy, my chosen Homeland, to which I also intend to devote all my future activity.
> With observance and faith, Giuseppe Blinderman.

This extract clearly shows that the application for naturalisation seems to be an integral part of what I have elsewhere called an 'act of bonding', through which those who aspire to citizenship demonstrate their commitment to the national community to which they ask for — and claim — membership.[53] The weaving of this bond, which often continues with other appeals to the authorities related to the claiming of acquired but never definitive rights, is essentially based on the search in the individual's biographical and migratory trajectory for a genealogical root of the attachment to the new, chosen homeland. This choice is decisive and can certainly be considered proof of will, but it must somehow be 'naturalised', that is, projected into an objectifying past, to avoid appearing uncontemplated and opportunistic. Legal naturalisation thus appears to be the outcome of a process and the confirmation of a reality that, as Blinderman states, 'already exists'. In other words, it is based on a kind of naturalisation

the socialist republics. This meant that it was applied to those who had the previous status of Russian 'subjects'. Hence, before the decree on the great denaturalisation of 15 December 1921, Russian exiles who were outside the country were only de facto stateless, because they were formally citizens but unable or unwilling to enjoy the protection of their original state.

[52] According to Royal Decree No. 949 of 2 August 1912, Regulations for the implementation of Law No. 555 of 13 June 1912 on Italian citizenship (G.U. no. 213 of 9 September 1912), the compulsory documents were the birth certificate, the certificate of family status and the penal certificate of the country of origin. It was 'the faculty of the Ministry to request other documents on a case-by-case basis'. According to a 'list of documents', preprinted and manually completed by the person examining Blinderman's file at Department Ia Section IIIa, the documents that were required (and in this case crossed out) include: the certificate of release; the certificate stating that the applicant did not request to keep his original nationality, even if he acquired a foreign one; and certificates of the loss of nationality.

[53] Enrica Asquer, *Rivendicare l'appartenenza. Suppliche e domande di deroga allo* Statut des Juifs *nella Francia di Vichy*, "Quaderni storici", 2019, n. 1, pp. 225–258.

of the bond, which must be perceived as pre-existing and solid, albeit disinterested, to the point of simulating the certainty and objectivity of nativeness, even when this is not the case. In Italy, nativeness was defined as descent from an Italian father, while naturalisation by royal decree — according to the 1912 law — was based on continuous residence and service to the state.

However, we must also consider the discretionary granting of citizenship. This is how the prefect of Milan asked the police headquarters and the Carabinieri to start investigating the person who had applied for citizenship in a letter dated 1934:

> I ask Your Esteemed Authority to communicate to me Blinderman's full personal details [handwritten on a prefilled typewritten sheet] and to obtain rigorous and meticulous information on his previous conduct during his stay in the Kingdom and on his family, making sure, by those means that you deem most suitable, of the *feelings of Italianness* that he claims to profess and of his *devotion to the Regime*.
> In particular, I would like to know the *reasons* why the applicant aspires to obtain our citizenship, *the profession* exercised, *the religion* professed [handwritten addition], information about his residences since the age of 16, both abroad and in Italy, with an indication of the dates, addresses and relative occupations he has had, whether he has subscribed to the *Dollaro* and the *Littorio* or, if so, to what extent, not forgetting also to indicate whether he owns *property in the Kingdom* or is possibly interested in *industrial or commercial companies*, whether or not subject to a union.[54]

This is followed by the aforementioned clause regarding the necessary concordance between the applicant's interest in requesting citizenship and the state's interest in granting it. The letter concludes that positive assessments must be motivated and every useful element to express a judgement must be obtained, 'bearing in mind that citizenship can be granted to those who feel genuinely inclined out of a *sincere commitment* to our country and not to those who ask for it out of *opportunism or convenience*'.

Various elements need to be verified. The reference to devotion to the Fascist regime clearly signals the political radicalisation of citizenship imposed by Fascism, while the reference to religion — added manually on an existing form — announces the shift towards racial policies. I will return to this important aspect, but for now, let us focus on the dualism between sincere feelings of Italianness and opportunism, or convenience. This was indeed the crux of the matter. It was commonly accepted that requests for citizenship could be driven by material interests and opportunistic reasons. But the pretence of the demand for citizenship had to respond to the ideological claim to distinguish contingent interests from enduring passions in the relationship between the individual and

[54] Asmi, draft letter by the Prefect of Milan to the Hon. Police Commissioner and the Hon. Commander of the Internal Division of the Royal Carabinieri, copied and sent from Milan on 11 July 1934, subject Blinderman Giuseppe (O. Felyne), citizenship, in Asmi, Prefettura, Gab. (II), envelope 42, folder Blinderman (italics mine). The other Prefecture files indicate the use of the same preprinted form.

the nation-state, as well as to mobilise a feeling of national 'love' that was pure and solid, and thus proven by a coherent biographical trajectory.

In fact, the authorities evaluate and verify this feeling based on Blinderman's 'previous conduct', that is, his and his family's actions and decisions, which the prefect asks the police and the Carabinieri to investigate. Assessing what falls within the ideological framework of 'sincere' attachment is obviously a complex operation, marked by a wide margin of discretion as well as a good deal of contradiction between general principles and the interpretation of local contexts. A more in-depth analysis of the policies for granting citizenship under Fascism is beyond the scope of this article, but an examination of the naturalisation practices managed by the prefecture of Milan between the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s, which were revoked between 1938 and 1939, shows that the applicant's economic profile — and therefore implicitly their economic 'interest' in becoming an Italian citizen — was mostly assessed positively by local authorities if it was good or very good. Conversely, greater perplexity emerged in cases of modest economic circumstances or situations of non-self-sufficiency. Some more attention was paid to the question of property ownership in the Kingdom if the applicant had previously been affected by the measures restricting the property rights of foreigners during the First World War. Again, a more detailed analysis would be required to understand how the nationalist dynamic of stigmatising the economic penetration of foreigners combines with the visible interest in acquiring economically sound citizens. Here, it is sufficient to note that an application for naturalisation reflected the applicant's conscious attempt to come to terms with both the 'sensitive' elements that could jeopardise access to the community of rights and the fact that the meaning of these issues changed over time.

In this regard, it is important to emphasise that when Blinderman applied for citizenship, the requirement of sincere feelings towards the adopted homeland was not a treatment reserved solely for Jews, who were stereotyped as disloyal to the nation based on their supposed transnational ethnic origin. 'Sincere' Italianness was an ideological construction of the naturalisation process, which had a nineteenth-century structure (later formalised in the 1912 law, which remained in force for a long time), to which new elements and insistences introduced by Fascism were gradually added. These requirements became increasingly harmful to Jews in the second half of the 1930s, as the regime's anti-Semitic policies gained ground. In fact, although Blinderman does not mention his religion or Jewish origins in his application, this information emerges in the reports by the local authorities,[55] probably after they made a

[55] Territorial Legion of the Royal Carabinieri of Milan, Internal Division of Milan to Royal Prefecture of Milan, 6 August 1934; Royal Police Headquarters of Milan to Hon. Royal Prefecture of Milan, 8 September 1934, both in Asmi, Prefettura, Gab. (II), envelope 42, folder Blinderman. Both refer to an 'Israelite religion'.

specific request to him — a sign that things were changing. However, when he was forced to contest the revocation of his citizenship only a few years later, beginning in 1939, the religious issue was the first thing he mentioned, speaking of a baptism in an evangelical ceremony in Paris in 1912.

Returning to the naturalisation file, as I have mentioned, one of the first aspects to be clarified was Blinderman's connection to the Soviet Union. The central authorities pointed out that the release of citizenship was not valid because Blinderman's sworn statement at the police headquarters was insufficient, especially as it emerged that he had applied for and obtained Soviet citizenship in 1926. In other words, he was not stateless, but a citizen of a state recognised by the Italian government. The prefect strongly supported Blinderman in this matter and emphasised that he was an 'excellent element in every respect',[56] claiming that Blinderman's reasons for not producing the official release document were legitimate: the Soviet Union did not grant such documents to people wishing to renounce their citizenship. Furthermore, the applicant produced sworn statements made before a notary public by friends whom he called to testify about the situation in Russia and, several times, about the veracity of his statements. Blinderman frequently used the technique of providing testimonies to compensate for the absence of supporting evidence required by the authorities, both in his naturalisation application and in his subsequent appeal against denaturalisation. Moreover, the witnesses revealed his networks in Italy. The first to be called was Rinaldo Küfferle, another translator and an important figure in the Milanese publishing world, who had turned his attention to Russian literary production.

Incomplete and inconsistent supporting documents weren't the only problem. Department Ia Section IIIa insisted on receiving an explanation as to why Blinderman had again applied for Russian citizenship in 1926. Confronted with this evidently non-linear path, Blinderman explained that he had lost his Russian citizenship 'automatically' because of the Bolshevik Revolution,[57] as had all citizens who were abroad at the time and did not return immediately. He was referring to the policy of mass denaturalisation that, starting with the decree issued on 15 December 1921 by the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, was extended to all the republics of the Soviet Union, widely affecting emigrants who had not immediately reacted to the 'call' from their country of origin.[58] However, Blinderman points out that he had never

[56] Royal Prefecture of Milan to Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Department Ia, 5 November 1934, in ACS, MI, Dgdr, Dr, envelope 271, folder 19206, Blinderman. This document, as well as those mentioned below, can be found in the naturalisation file that was later included in the racial assessment file of 1939–41.

[57] Giuseppe Blinderman to Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Milan 25 October 1934. Ivi.

[58] G. Ginsburgs, *The Soviet Union* cit., p. 329. The decree, issued by the highest bodies of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, provided for the revocation of Soviet citizenship for various categories of individuals: those who had lived abroad continuously for a period of

been a 'refugee'; the loss of citizenship was the result of a kind of automatism. When he subsequently applied for Soviet citizenship, he acted consistently with the international behaviour of the Italian state, his host country, which since 1924 had recognised the Soviet government, proposing to 'establish [with it] close trade relations'.[59] Thus, 'I believed I was doing the right thing by reapplying for Russian citizenship in order to be somehow useful in the literary and cultural exchange, and also in the hope that I would one day be able to recover my lost property.' Property is mentioned here as a legitimate reason for regaining one's original citizenship, but in a way that minimises the extent of choice involved in this decision, with emphasis being put on its inevitability. In fact, Blinderman points out an important issue concerning the Soviet Union: '[B]y asking for Soviet citizenship, I did not opt for a foreign citizenship or a political party, but I simply asked to regain the citizenship of my country of origin.' However, he immediately clarifies that by re-establishing contacts, 'I immediately felt my irreparable detachment from the citizens of present-day Russia, because a long stay in Italy and the Fascist Revolution could not fail to leave deep traces in my spirit and way of thinking'.

Since Russia had become 'a world now completely foreign to me', the Russian passport that Blinderman had formally regained was not intended for return — hence further proof that there was no deep-seated desire to return to his homeland. In his letter accompanying the above-mentioned document, the prefect emphasised this aspect and asked for the application to be granted 'as he had by now nothing in common with the Russian mentality and education'.[60] This is what led Blinderman to ideologically sever this piece of identity in order to become an Italian citizen for all intents and purposes, which happened less than a year later, in September 1935, thanks to the intervention of the Undersecretary of Justice, Cesare Tumedei. The latter also relied on the fact that Blinderman had, in the meantime, become 'a relative of His Excellency Mayer'.[61] In fact, in March 1935, Erna Blinderman had married the engineer Gandolfi, Marcella

five years and had not applied for passports or identification documents from the Soviet authorities by 1 June 1922; those who had left Russia after 7 November 1917 without the Soviet authorities' permission; those who had fought against the Bolsheviks or participated in counter-revolutionary activities; and those who had had the right to opt for Soviet citizenship and had not done so. See also Eric Lohr, *Russian Citizenship. From Empire to Soviet Union*, Cambridge (MA) and London, Harvard University Press, 2012, pp. 145–151.

[59] Not surprisingly, the resumption of regular diplomatic relations between the two countries was sanctioned by the Trade and Navigation Treaty between Italy and the USSR, signed in Rome on 7 February 1924 (Royal Decree No. 342 of 14 March 1924), Execution of the Trade and Navigation Treaty and Customs Convention with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (G.U. no. 68 of 20 March 1924).

[60] Royal Prefecture of Milan to Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Department Ia, Milan 5 November 1934, in ACS, MI, Dgdr, Dr, envelope 271, folder 19206 (folder 13378, naturalisation).

[61] Cesare Tumedei to His Excellency, Hon. Lawyer Guido Guidi Buffarini, Undersecretary of the Interior, Rome 23 July 1935-A/XIII. Ivi.

Mayer's son and a nephew of the influential senator Teodoro Mayer, founder of *Il Piccolo* in Trieste and the president of the investment lender, Istituto Mobiliare Italiano (IMI).[62] Tumedei, for his part, had been vice-president of IMI at Mayer's request, which suggests that he was probably one of the most important people in the network of influences that Blinderman could count on.

There was one last stumbling block, which had initially been avoided but ultimately prevented a positive outcome. As indicated in a summary of the case prepared for the Ministry of the Interior by Department Ia Section IIIa, the preliminary investigation of the Blinderman file had been positively concluded in the summer of 1935. The Department of Public Security had given its consent, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was responsible for activating — through the network of consulates — investigations in the places affected by the candidate's migratory path towards citizenship, had referred to the opinion of the Ministry of the Interior. No information that could be used to argue against naturalisation had come from Paris, Nice, Kiev (where Blinderman had studied), Nancy and Zurich. The only problem was Odessa. The Italian consul in the city was Carlo Barduzzi, a former *federale* in Trento and Trieste, who distinguished himself a few years later for his fervent anti-Semitism and, in particular, for his contribution to the implementation of the initial stages of censorship against writers of Jewish origin within the Anti-Communist Study Centre (April 1937).[63] Barduzzi had expressed a negative opinion on accepting the application, not because of information gathered on the case, but because of his more general opposition to the granting 'of Italian citizenship to Russian Jews'.[64] Nevertheless, Blinderman's file went ahead, as the ministry decided to momentarily postpone the specific case, taking the file to the Council of State for examination and opinion, which became only advisory after 1934. As a last resort, the ministry also accepted a declaration by Blinderman in which he acknowledged that, by obtaining citizenship without renouncing his Russian citizenship, he relinquished his right to invoke the intervention of the Kingdom of Italy's diplomatic and consular authorities in his defence on Soviet territory.[65]

[62] His case is described in an article on Jewish entrepreneurs in early twentieth-century Italy: Ilaria Pavan, *"Ebrei" in affari tra realtà e pregiudizio. Paradigmi storiografici e percorsi di ricerca dall'Unità alle leggi razziali*, "Quaderni storici", 2003, n. 3, pp. 777–821.

[63] From May 1937 to early 1938, Barduzzi directed the 'literature section' of the Anti-Communist Study Centre. Although this was a private association, it was financed by the Ministry of the Interior to strengthen the fight against the Comintern. Barduzzi was the author of the first *Bibliografia ebraica e giudaica in lingua italiana*, Rome, Cremonese, 1939. From January 1939 onwards, he worked in the editorial office of *La difesa della razza*. See Giorgio Fabre, *L'elenco. Censura fascista, editoria e autori ebrei*, Turin, Zamorani, 1998.

[64] Telespresso form from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Private Affairs Service, Office 1, to the Royal Ministry of the Interior, Personnel Office, Rome 6 July 1935, in ACS, MI, Dgdr, Dr, envelope 271, folder 19206 (folder 13378, naturalisation). At the time and until June 1936, the ministry was directed ad interim by Mussolini himself.

[65] The declaration, made before a notary public on 6 September 1935, was sent by the Royal Prefecture of Milan to the Personnel Office, Department Ia, 11 September 1935. Ivi.

However, the issue raised by the consul of Odessa marked a turning point. On hearing the news of Blinderman's naturalisation, Barduzzi again opposed himself — as reported in a telespresso form from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs — to the measures against 'elements of the Israelite confession, especially if they come from Russia, since that government uses them almost exclusively for its subversive propaganda abroad'.[66] Since 'a large proportion of citizenship applications refer to Jews, especially from Eastern Europe', the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested a formal opinion from the Ministry of the Interior, which forwarded the question to the Department of Public Security. The latter replied on 20 February 1936: 'We hereby inform you that His Excellency the Head of Government, having seen the above letter, has expressed the view that it is not appropriate — in principle — to grant Italian citizenship to members of the Jewish religion who have immigrated to Italy, particularly if they come from Russia.'[67] It was emphatically underlined that the Head of Government himself (i.e. Mussolini) had expressed his opinion, indicating what should be the future Italian policy, and therefore the practice of the Ministry of the Interior. The final letter of reply to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the latter 'will henceforth adhere, by and large, to the principle of not granting Italian citizenship to members of the Jewish religion, immigrants to Italy, particularly if they come from Russia'.[68] The Blinderman case therefore marks a turning point, after which the processes of acquiring Italian citizenship became racialised and anti-Semitic.[69]

Between race and citizenship: denaturalisation and contestation (1938–41)

It didn't take long before Blinderman responded to the risk of losing his citizenship, job prospects and social status. His first letter to the Demorazza dates back to 26 February 1939.[70] This was undoubtedly a premature move.

[66] Telespresso form from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Private Affairs Department, Office 1, to the Ministry of the Interior, Personnel Office, Department Ia Section 3, date not visible, but registered on 29 January 1936, signed by Under-Secretary of State Fulvio Suvich. Ivi.

[67] Classified letter from the Ministry of the Interior, Dgps, to the Personnel Office (Department Ia Section III), Rome 20 February 1936. Ivi. The document seems to be signed by Carmine Senise, director of the Dagr of the Dgps.

[68] Classified letter from the Ministry of the Interior, Department Ia Section III, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome 28 February 1936, Subject: Blinderman Giuseppe and others - naturalisation. Ivi.

[69] This turning point had already been identified by Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. I, p. 41 and Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, p. 116. What had not been explored in depth was how the personal case and the conflict that arose over it led to the Massima, which can also be found in ACS, MI, Dgps, Dagr, Massime, C6, envelope 22, folder 4. Further study of the papers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be necessary.

[70] Giuseppe Blinderman to Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Dgdr, Milan 26 February 1939, in ACS, MI, Dgdr, Dr, envelope 271, folder 19206 Dcitt.

Although the revocation decree had formally been issued, it had not yet been registered with the Court of Accounts, as was customary, nor had Blinderman been informed. However, he had undoubtedly taken note of the discriminatory policy towards Jews of foreign nationality announced with the decree of September 1938, and his social network gave him access to relevant information. Hence, he moved well in advance of the inexorable implementation of the bureaucratic mechanism.

In the letter, Blinderman asked the ministry to examine his 'exceptional case' and to 'exempt' him and his wife 'from being considered as belonging to the Jewish race, preserving our Italian citizenship'. His words emphasise the close connection between racial persecution and denaturalisation, a link that is also evident in his defence strategy, which subordinates the request for a racial assessment to the primary objective of preserving citizenship status for himself and his spouse. The tense dialectic he maintains with the institutions, from this moment until at least December 1941, is played out precisely at the intersection between citizenship and race. While Blinderman tends to see the connection between the two dimensions, the Demorazza resists this interpretation, trying to discipline the applicant and urging him to separate the two issues. For the institution, the racial assessment and the challenge to the revocation of citizenship are two separate files, the competence of which lies with two different sections of the administration. But let us take it one step at a time.

The letter reveals Blinderman's argumentative strategy, which essentially hinges on the application for naturalisation and is meant to reaffirm his devotion to the nation and the regime. He thus mentions his military merits, which are closely linked to his arrival in Italy, and refers to his literary activity and recognitions, including an important encouragement prize he received in April 1938 from the Reale Accademia d'Italia, founded by Mussolini and emblematic of his policy of fascistising Italian culture.[71] He also underlines the contextuality between obtaining citizenship and being admitted into the ranks of the National Fascist Party in 1935. But Blinderman adds new elements, which reflect the changed situation in 1938–39. Without giving much explanation or supportive documents, he notes that his mother was Orthodox and that his father — 'of the Jewish race' — 'did not profess the Jewish religion' and left him free to make his own choices. He therefore decided to be baptised with an evangelical rite in 1912, in the Church of the Ascension in Paris. In addition, 'to further strengthen the spiritual ties with our adopted homeland', he and his wife — who had only been married in a civil ceremony — remarried with a Catholic rite in the San Simpliciano church in Milan in March 1938. The letter is accompanied by certificates for both ceremonies.[72]

[71] Gabriele Turi, *Le Accademie nell'Italia fascista*, "Belfagor", 1999, n. 4, pp. 403–424 and Id., *Sorvegliare e premiare. L'Accademia d'Italia 1926-1944*, Rome, Viella, 2016.

[72] There is no certificate attached for the first wedding, which seems to have taken place in Odessa.

Blinderman also provides a detail that has become important at this stage: 'I consider it my duty to declare that I do not possess any real estate, nor any business, nor any capital of any kind. I lost all my possessions in the Bolshevik Revolution and live only from my modest work.' What he had called the 'Russian' Revolution in his application for naturalisation here becomes 'Bolshevik', while the loss of his possessions is presented as evidence that Blinderman has no significant material and financial interests in the adopted homeland, and that he lives in an economically discrete and autonomous condition. At this point, avoiding the stereotype of the Jewish elite dedicated to amassing wealth and assets has clearly become a priority.

The hybrid nature of the application is reflected in the authorities' uncertainty in dealing with it. It was the prefect of Milan who first received and registered Blinderman's application, before sending it to the Demorazza in April 1939.[73] The prefect wrote 'Foreign Jews' in the subject line, but he then called Blinderman an 'Italian citizen' (his citizenship had not yet been formally revoked). The Demorazza formally opened the case and classified it under ES, treating it as an application for 'permanence in the Kingdom'. This type of file was also managed by the Race Department, which was internal to the Demorazza, and it implied the granting of a derogation from the obligation to leave the Kingdom, which was imposed — as I have mentioned — on those foreign or denaturalised Jews who had been residing in Italy since 1 January 1919. We do not know if there is any connection with the fact that, in his February letter, Blinderman referred to another previous application, which he claims to have made after the 'Provisions for the defence of the Italian race' entered into force. In that application, he had argued that he and his family had the right to remain because he had lived in Italy since 1915. The application is not included in the file, but the form completed by the ministry offices confirms that article 24 was not applied to Blinderman; he was, therefore, not expelled.

However, the form also indicates that he requested to 'keep his citizenship'. The situation is clearly more complicated. Of the various entries on the form, only two have been completed: the first, concerning the family situation, indicates his wife's status as a 'foreign Jew' and the presence of only one daughter; the second indicates that the prefect's opinion is favourable. In fact, without worrying too much about protocol, Prefect Giuseppe Marzano had communicated to the Demorazza his *nulla osta* for preserving citizenship, considering the 'Jewish foreigner' of 'regular moral, civil and political conduct', in Italy since 1915 'without interruption', of 'evangelical religion' and with a daughter married to an 'Aryan'.[74]

[73] Royal Prefecture of Milan, Department of Public Security, to Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Dgdr, Section III and for information to the Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Dgps, Dagr, 24 April 1939, in ACS, MI, Dgdr, Dr, Personal files, envelope 271, folder 19206 Dcitt (the document can be found in folder ES 13774, which is included in folder 19206 Dcitt.).

[74] Ibidem.

Months passed with no reply from the Demorazza. Finally, in October 1939, the Race Department replied to the prefect of Milan's letter of several months earlier.[75] The subject of the communication was 'Blinderman Giuseppe racial assessment', and it requested that, 'in relation to the petition tending to obtain the declaration of non-belonging to the Jewish race', Blinderman be urged to produce the birth and baptism certificates of his mother and maternal ancestors, 'duly legalised'. There was no mention of the citizenship issue. For the writing authorities, the procedure had become a racial assessment, and more appropriate documents were needed.

What had happened in the meantime? As we will see, in June 1939, Department Ia Section IIIa of the Ministry of the Interior informed the prefecture of Milan of the revocation of Blinderman's naturalisation. In the file on the granting of citizenship, we find the following phrase behind the title page: 'Sent extract to the Prefect re[revocation] RD 15.12.38, 9.6.39 XVII.' Since Blinderman was no longer an Italian citizen, his request to 'keep' his citizenship had become an application against its revocation. The Demorazza's ES file contains several annotations and erasures on the first page, which may help to understand what had happened. It is likely that, as a result of the type of application formulated by Blinderman, the file — along with the documents of the original naturalisation file, re-examined for the occasion — passed from the Race Department to the Citizenship Department, given that the latter had acquired competence in citizenship matters from the end of August 1939.[76] Another transfer took place in the autumn of 1939, as can be deduced from both the erasures and a small sheet inside the file that reads 'passed to the Race D.Citt. 23.X.39'. Indeed, at the end of October, the entire dossier relating to Blinderman's citizenship was sent back to the Race Department and became a racial assessment file, bearing the initials 'Dcitt'. Another, undated draft reports on the communication between the two departments: 'This office is informed that in the appeal lodged by the Jew Blindermann [*sic*] Giuseppe against the declaration of revocation of his Italian citizenship, the person concerned also asks to be considered as not belonging to the Jewish race.' Blinderman's undisciplined strategy had caused confusion, and now everything had to be put back in order. From that point on, everything revolved around race.

Blinderman reacted quickly. In December, he sent a letter to the Demorazza in which he stressed the importance of the link between the declaration of non-racial affiliation and the reacquisition of his citizenship.[77] Unable to enclose his

[75] Dgdr, Race I, to HE the Prefect of Milan, Rome 31 October 1939. Ivi.

[76] As the Department Ia Section IIIa archival collection cannot yet be consulted, it is difficult to understand the details of the handover phase between the two departments.

[77] Giuseppe Blinderman, aka Ossip Felyne, to Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Milan 30 December 1939. Ivi.

mother's baptism certificate, he called four members of his Roman network to testify, 'all of them Russian or of Russian Aryan origin'. They included Nicola Alexeieff, a 'translator' known for his involvement in the Russian art theatre La Falena, which in the 1920s was based in the tea room and restaurant La Taverna Russa in Rome, and Leonardo Kociemski, a writer, literary critic and translator from Polish and Russian. They confirmed that his mother 'came from an Aryan Orthodox Christian family', and they even added that Paolina Halperine and the lawyer Abramo Blinderman had divorced owing to 'religious disagreements, as the husband was not of the Aryan race' and the mother had, instead, given her son 'the principles of the Christian religion'.[78] The 'Aryan race' thus becomes a retroactive element, to be traced back through family history.

A few months later, in February 1940, the authorities turned their attention to another matter: the fact that Blinderman and his family had been registered with the Jewish community in Milan in the list of 1938. The Demorazza wrote to the local authorities to request verification of this information and confirmation of whether Blinderman's daughter had been baptised. In other words, their Catholic faith had to be proven. Blinderman reported to the prefecture that he had formally deregistered from the community on 20 September 1938, about two weeks after the decree revoking the naturalisations of foreign Jews was issued. More silence followed.

However, 'a serious event' occurred in the summer of 1940, after Italy entered the war and the climate of xenophobia and hostility towards Jews intensified, particularly towards those recognised as foreign nationals.[79] Blinderman and his wife were arrested and detained for eight days because they had been mistaken — according to the writer's interpretation — for 'German Jews'. From 15 June onwards, there had been an order to round up all 'foreign Jews belonging to states with racial policies', as they were considered 'undesirable elements, imbued with hatred towards totalitarian regimes'.[80] Stateless people were also included in this category.

Blinderman described what happened immediately after his release on 28 June 1940, in a heartfelt appeal to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Galeazzo Ciano.[81] Blinderman addressed the 'artist' Ciano, the man who had signed

[78] Elena Ritard Ricord, Sofia Alexeieff, Nicola Alexeieff, Leonardo Kociemski, Sworn statement before Notary Public Enrico Masi, Rome 26 December 1939. Ivi.

[79] Giuseppe Blinderman, aka Ossip Felyne, to HE Count Galeazzo Ciano di Cortellazzo, Forte dei Marmi, 28 June 1940. Ivi.

[80] Telegram from the Head of Police to the Prefects of the Kingdom and the Police Commissioner of Rome, 15 June 1940, in ACS, Massime M4, Mobilitazione civile, envelope 99.

[81] The release of the couple could be explained as a consequence of the subsequent telegram from the Ministry of the Interior, dated 22 June 1940, which specified that the provisions of the circular of 15 June were not applicable to Jews authorised to reside in the peninsula because they had been living in the Kingdom before 1 January 1919, 'even if they have become stateless'. In ACS, MI, Dgps, Dagr, A 16, envelope 8.

some of the best reviews of his works *Il Bivio* (The crossroads), *Per la porta* (Through the door) and *La tramontana* (The north wind). Blinderman uses a decidedly more emotional tone than in his letters to the Demorazza.[82] He mentions the difficult health conditions of himself and his wife, both aged 57, and explicitly mentions 'the physical and moral suffering' inflicted on them during the days of captivity. He describes the full sequence of events that led to him and his wife losing their citizenship and becoming stateless, despite the great recognition he had earned. He ends his letter with the following 'SOS' message:

> Your authoritative interest, which I hope you will grant me; combined with my above-mentioned merits, could have my application to be recognised as an Aryan and to regain Italian citizenship resolved as soon as possible and favourably. I could thus resume my occupations and be preserved, together with my wife, from the potential danger of being arrested again as foreign Jews. If such misfortune were to repeat itself, my wife and I would not resist.

Once again, citizenship is a crucial factor. Ciano's order to forward his plea to the Demorazza is ineffectual, meaning that Blinderman has to start from scratch. In January 1941, he submits a new appeal. This time, he writes the following on the folder that accompanied the packet of documents: 'Petition for racial assessment by Engineer Giuseppe Blinderman.' In the accompanying letter, he refers to the previous petition of February 1939:

> At the time, the undersigned was insufficiently informed of the criteria for the application of the law and believed that he was mainly highlighting his merits and proof of his sincere and profound attachment to the new, Italian Homeland. However, having become more familiar with the provisions of the law and the practice of this Honourable General Directorate, especially in relation to their application to persons of foreign nationality, the undersigned now deems it appropriate — for the purposes of the invoked application of article 8, last paragraph, and article 26 of Royal Decree No. 1728 of 17 November 1938-XVII — to send the following additional documents.[83]

Blinderman thus refined his self-defence strategy by presenting himself and his wife as children of racially mixed marriages who had severed all ties with the Jewish religion and community. According to article 8 of the Royal Decree of 17 November 1938, children of Italian parents, at least one of whom was Jewish, could be declared 'not belonging to the Jewish race' if they had not shown any affiliation with the Jewish religion or community by October 1938.

[82] I have written elsewhere on the overlap between personal pleas and formal petitions: Enrica Asquer, *Entre déférence et revendications des droits. Suppliques et demandes de dérogation à la législation antisémite dans l'Italie fasciste et la France de Vichy*, in Enrica Asquer, Lucia Ceci (eds.), *Scrivere alle autorità. Suppliche, petizioni, appelli, richieste di deroga in età contemporanea*, Rome, Viella, Rome, pp. 71–112.

[83] Giuseppe Blinderman, aka Ossip Felyne, to HE the Minister of the Interior, Rome (Dgdr), Milan 14 January 1941, in ACS, Dgdr, Dr, envelope 271, folder 19206 Dcitt.

However, Blinderman's and his wife's parents were foreigners, and this formed an obstacle, as 'mixed' people with even only one foreign parent were considered Jews. For this reason, Blinderman stresses the fact that both his parents have the *same* foreign nationality (Russian) and suggests that his case be examined in the same way as cases involving children born to people of a different race but who were both Italian (i.e. with a homogeneous nationality). In his appeal of January 1941, the applicant again calls on witnesses to confirm the Russian nationality and citizenship of both his parents. The same strategy is adopted by Fanny, who, perhaps as a last resort, sends her own dossier to the Demorazza.[84]

This strategy was not pulled out of thin air. It was a solution suggested by other cases, of which Blinderman was clearly aware, as the reference to the Demorazza's 'practice' seems to suggest. In fact, other files indicate that, after an initial phase of strict application of the law, in some cases of interest, the Demorazza — perhaps subject to external pressure — had begun to interpret the situation of children of parents of a different race but equal nationality, albeit foreign, in a similar way to the children of mixed Italian couples. Take the case of Manfredo Adler, resident in Tripoli and born in Milan in 1919 to Leonardo and Adele Poppy. In December 1938, Manfredo had initially been declared a member of the Jewish race, as the son of parents of foreign nationality, one of whom — his father, Leonardo Adler — was of Jewish origins, although a fervent Catholic.[85] Following the introduction of the racial laws, Leonardo became stateless, despite having been an Italian citizen since 1937. After a long dispute and as a result of multiple external pressures,[86] Manfredo had been recognised as not belonging to the Jewish race in February 1940. He was defined 'mixed non-Jewish', because he was 'born of parents who were both foreigners of equal nationality, one of whom was Jewish, [and] baptised

[84] Rosenberg Fanny Felia in Blinderman, *Istanza per accertamento razziale*, Milan 14 December 1941 (addressed to Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Dgdr), in ACS, MI, Dgdr, Dr, envelope 271, folder 27742, included in folder 19206 Dcitt, Blinderman Giuseppe.

[85] ACS, MI, Dgdr, Dr, Personla files, envelope 48, folder 3910 Dcitt., Adler Manfredo di Leonardo, Adler dott. Ing. Leonardo fu Roberto, Poppy Adele fu Edmondo, Adler Silvia di Leonardo e di Poppy Adele, Adler Francesco, Tripoli.

[86] In particular, a dispute arose between the Ministry of War and the Libyan government (Political Affairs Department) over Manfredo's application to train as an army officer. Despite the Ministry's objections, the Libyan government strongly supported the possibility of declaring Manfredo as not belonging to the Jewish race. For example, in a letter to the Conscription Office dated 27 August 1939, the Director of Political Affairs Campani stated that Adler, 'being the son of parents of a different race, should not be considered a member of the Jewish race if, on 1 October 1938, he professed a religion other than the Jewish one', freely interpreting article 8, last paragraph, of the Royal Decree of 17 November 1938. Strong pressure also came from the Catholic Church, especially from the Apostolic Vicariate of Tripolitania, which was headed by Monsignor Vittorino Facchinetti. The latter was asked to certify Manfredo's 'excellent religious life' and, even more so, that of his father Leonardo, president of the diocesan men's council of the local section of Azione Cattolica since March 1938.

at birth'.[87] Hence, in exceptional cases, the parents' foreign nationality did not worsen the racial position of 'mixed' people, provided that the parents had the same nationality.

The Blindermans tried this course of action. Over the following months, the ball kept bouncing back and forth between them and the authorities, who repeatedly requested further documentation. In March 1941, Giuseppe and Fanny jointly submitted a 'supplementary appeal', for which they again had to mobilise the Orthodox Church in Rome and a network of witnesses to certify that Giuseppe's mother and Fanny's father, Giacomo Rosenberg, had belonged to the Orthodox religion since birth. Already in the autumn of 1940, Fanny had even obtained recognition of her father's 'Aryan race' thanks to the ruling of a court in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, to which she had applied, calling her mother — who lived there — to testify. Since the Protectorate was under the Third Reich's control, Italy recognised its racial classifications.[88] Moreover, when asked to explain the contradiction between the request for a declaration of non-belonging to the Jewish race and the previous declarations made to the municipal authorities for the August 1938 census and in November of that year, the couple cited their 'ignorance' at the time regarding 'the actual scope' of the laws. In addition, they argued that they were unable to 'collect the evidentiary documentation of their racial situation', fearing the 'serious penalties imposed by law' on those who had made false declarations.[89]

In November 1941,[90] Blinderman finally sent the 'decisive proof' of his racial status: the 'authentic' certificate of his mother's baptism. He ended the letter by expressing the hope that the longed-awaited outcome would be positive for all: '[T]hrough the production of these […] documents, the undersigned hopes that by now his position will be in every respect definitively and certainly clarified; and that, placed in connection with the evidentiary investigations concerning his wife and only daughter, my entire family may finally obtain the sought-after recognition.' The dossier had gradually become a family affair.

The following 9 December, Blinderman allegedly sent a further — and perhaps final — packet of documents to the Demorazza. It contained 14 attachments 'reflecting himself, his wife, his daughter and the latter's family'. These were essentially birth and baptism records relating to Erna's family: her three

[87] Ivi. This is the opinion of the advisory commission provided for in article 26 of the Royal Decree of 17 November 1938, expressed during a meeting on 25 February 1940.

[88] Ruling of the Iglau District Court, Section II, 29 November 1940. The document, along with its sworn translation, is attached to Fanny's 'Racial assessment application', 14 January 1941, in ACS, MI, Dgdr, Dr, envelope 271, folder 27742 Dcitt, included in folder 19206.

[89] Giuseppe Blinderman (aka Ossip Felyne), and Fanny Felia Rosenberg wife of Blinderman (aka Lia Neanova), to HE the Minister of the Interior, Milan 25 March 1941.

[90] Engineer Giuseppe Blinderman (aka Ossip Felyne) to the Ministry of the Interior, Dgdr, Milan 14 November 1941.

children, Franco, Giorgio and Silvana, and her husband, the engineer Gandolfi. Under the scrutiny of the authorities, even Gandolfi had at some point been labelled as having a mixed background.[91] This was the last documented act in Giuseppe Blinderman's racial assessment file, which, like so many others handled by Demorazza, remained unanswered.

The seven petitions (and their attachments) sent to the authorities over a period of almost three years reflect Blinderman's progressive, albeit never complete, adaptation to the authorities' invitation that he make his goal of retaining and regaining his lost citizenship less explicit and focus instead on his racial identity. The effects can be seen in the different self-representations and types of documents that Blinderman used to support his case. Initially emphasising his loyalty to the chosen homeland, in his naturalisation application of a few years earlier, he moved to an increasingly competent demonstration of his racial identity. Unlike the naturalisation application, the petitions reveal that religion — his own and that of his ancestors and offspring (including his grandchildren) — is a fundamental element of the process, particularly with regard to profession or conversion to Christianity. As the building block of the nation, or a 'community of descent' in Alberto Banti's words,[92] the family also takes on new significance, but always with an underlying ambivalence between the blood relations and choice. Decisive proof comes in the form of baptism certificates of ancestors and descendants (as confirmation of the parents' choices), as well as certificates of abandonment of any form of connection with the Jewish community.

Conclusion

Constructing and reconstructing one's identity, adding and destroying pieces of it, accentuating or diminishing heritages and ties: this is the continuous operation that Giuseppe Blinderman engages in throughout his seven-year relationship with the Ministry of the Interior, as documented in his racial assessment dossier, into which his naturalisation file has converged. This continuous process of requalification, as well as the commitment, the physical effort and the stress that goes with it, brings together naturalisation, the revocation of citizenship and the contestation of denaturalisation in a single affair. What is at stake remains the same: establishing and maintaining a vital link with the national community that grants individuals their rights. For those entering it from the outside, the acquisition of citizenship is not permanent but remains fragile, exposed to the fluctuations of historical contingency. This unique

[91] Giuseppe Blinderman (aka Ossip Felyne) to the Hon. Ministry of the Interior, Dgdr, Milan 9 December 1941.

[92] A. Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento*, cit.

thread reveals the discontinuities and changes in pace that result from the shift in admission criteria and the dual, relational definition of citizen and foreigner. The incident I have examined takes place entirely in the 1930s, shedding light on the radicalisation and further twist that Italian citizenship undergoes in this decade. Blinderman's naturalisation file from 1934 to 1936 marks the end of a phase. Although citizenship was granted to foreigners by royal decree, as happened during the Liberal period, it was indeed a discretionary procedure in which the authorities had considerable freedom of action. However, certain aspects, such as religion and race — which became a real legal category — were not considered, or at least not as much as happened later. On the other hand, the relationship with one's original nationality had to be categorically severed beforehand, and fluidity was not permitted. Political allegiance was already an important factor.

The last act of Blinderman's naturalisation practice demonstrates that, in the second half of the 1930s, citizenship rights could no longer be obtained if the applicant was of both foreign nationality and Jewish race. As a result of the 'Provisions for the defence of the Italian race', by 1938, Blinderman found himself with a rigid identity and a close connection with Jewishness. We do not know, and may never know, what his real relationship with this identity was.

We do perhaps have one clue. Blinderman started writing novels and prose stories even before he came to Italy. He began to make headlines around 1910, when he published a short story entitled *Prokljatie* (Curse) in a Russian literary magazine.[93] Four years later, a book with the same title came out,[94] but it was seized and the author and publisher were both prosecuted. It is the story of a pogrom, which hits a city struck by riots and demonstrations, taking a Jewish couple and their two children by surprise. One of the siblings is a demonstrator who finds himself caught up in a brawl when the pogrom starts. The other is a girl who barricades herself in her house with her parents and fiancé. The son never returns, while the daughter is raped by three men who break into the house. The pain and humiliation push the couple to leave the country, migrating to Switzerland, where the girl falls in love with a young Russian Jew whom she marries after revealing the violence she had suffered. However, like a curse, the latter does not stop haunting her, and she dies giving birth to the child conceived through the rape.

Blinderman never again spoke of pogroms in his writings. Throughout his life, he repeatedly changed residence and profession, and as he navigated different worlds, he sought to adapt to various contexts, perhaps choosing

[93] *Prokljatie*, in "Novyj žurnal dlja vsech", 1910, n. 23, pp. 19–44. See Laura Pellegrini's MA thesis, *Ossip Felyne in Italia. Analisi della prosa e del teatro di Osip Abramovič Blinderman nella prima metà del Novecento italiano*, University of Pisa, 2016–17, pp. 57–62.

[94] Later translated into Italian. Ossip Felyne, *Maledizione, novelle*, P. Maglione & C. Strini, Rome, 1923.

assimilation in the religious sphere. In terms of nationality, he wanted to build a bridge between cultures through language and writing, focusing on a literary practice marked by intimist and meditative interconnections, which seemed to combine the motifs of great Russian literature with European stylistic suggestions. Such poetics probably allowed him to avoid significant censorship in Italy, at least until the regime's most overtly anti-Semitic turn. In fact, after the recognition and prizes, he not only lost his citizenship, but his name appeared on the list of 'authors whose works are not welcome in Italy', officially drawn up in 1942.[95] Hence, despite all his efforts, the anti-Semitic curse returned to haunt Blinderman in a horrible twist of fate. He would have to fight it once more.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

[95] The document is reproduced in G. Fabre, *L'elenco*, cit., p. 474.

‘The mark of subversion’: an analysis of Italian anti-fascism in inter-war Scotland

Remigio Petrocelli*

This article describes the history of Italian anti-fascism in Scotland between the two world wars. Drawing extensively on unique archival sources such as files of emigrants registered in the Central Political Register, consular reports, British naturalisation records and contemporary press, it highlights the peculiarity of the Italian Scottish case. Unlike other cases examined by historians, this one is characterised by a ‘silent’ anti-fascism. Accordingly, the article analyses the reasons for the absence of overt opposition to the Fascist regime and its local branches in Scotland. The article thus contributes to broadening the horizon and the debate on anti-fascism in Great Britain, which has so far focused on London and prominent anti-fascists and exiles residing in the metropolis. Furthermore, by shedding light on the experiences of ordinary ‘subversives’ in Scotland, it reveals internal community dynamics and the relationship between the centre and the periphery, reflecting the contradictions of the Fascist totalitarian system.
Key words: anti-fascism, Fascism, *fasci* of Scotland, Italian Scottish community, emigration

Historians agree that Italian emigration to Great Britain was driven by social and economic reasons rather than political ones.[1] This trend remained virtually unchanged even during the Fascist dictatorship in Italy. Unlike other European and transoceanic countries, which experienced a significant influx of political exiles, very few anti-fascists travelled across the Channel. This explains why Italian anti-fascism in Great Britain has only recently gained scholarly attention. Alfio Bernabei paved the way for this historiographical strand with his

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[1] Colin Holmes, *John Bull’s Island: Immigration and British Society, 1871–1971*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1988; Terri Colpi, *The Italian Factor: The Italian Community in Great Britain*, Edinburgh, Mainstream Publishing, 1991; Lucio Sponza, *Gli italiani in Gran Bretagna: profilo storico*, “Altreitalie”, January–June 2005, n. 30, pp. 4–22; Patrizia Audenino and Antonio Bechelloni, *L’esilio politico tra Otto e Novecento*, in Paola Corti and Matteo Sanfilippo (eds.), *Storia D’Italia. Annali 24. Migrazioni*, Turin, Einaudi, 2009, pp. 343–369.

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Esuli ed Emigrati nel Regno Unito, 1920-1940 (1997), which reconstructs the dramatic story of Decio Anzani, secretary of the London branch of the Italian League for Human Rights, who was interned in June 1940 and died after the sinking of the *Arandora Star*.[2] Bernabei analysed the anti-fascist unrest in London, placing it in the context of Italian-British relations at the time.[3]

In more recent times, scholars have approached the theme of Italian anti-fascism in Great Britain from new perspectives. For example, some have explored the activities of prominent figures such as Luigi Sturzo, Gaetano Salvemini and Paolo Treves, who emigrated to London at different stages of Mussolini's dictatorship.[4] Others have focused on the diverse group of anarchists and socialists who founded the weekly newspaper *Il Comento* to combat the influence of the London *fascio.* Still others have analysed the theories promoted by Sylvia Pankhurst, as well as her anti-fascist, anti-colonial and pacifist activities in the associative and editorial realm. Together with her partner, Silvio Corio, the former suffragette was the perfect link between British Labourites, exiles and international political circles.[5] Although this research has undoubtedly broadened our knowledge of anti-fascism in Great Britain, the current historiography has developed along a 'vertical axis', as Leonardo Rapone puts it, with very few studies aimed at expanding it 'horizontally'. In other words, the analysis of the efforts of the main anti-fascists to

[2] The ocean liner *Arandora Star* was carrying around fifteen hundred Italian, German and Austrian prisoners of war to Canada when it was hit by a German submarine on 2 July 1940. Some two hundred and fifty of the approximately seven hundred Italian passengers survived. For background information on the event, the policies adopted by the British government against enemy aliens and the memorialisation of the tragedy in Italian-British communities, see, among others: Maria Serena Balestracci, *Arandora Star. Dall'oblio alla memoria-From Oblivion to Memory*, Parma, Monte Università Parma, 2008; Terri Colpi (ed.), *Raising the Arandora Star: History and Afterlife of the Second World War Sinking*, "Modern Italy", 2024, n. 3.

[3] Alfio Bernabei, *Esuli ed emigrati italiani nel Regno Unito, 1920-1940*, Milan, Mursia, 1997.

[4] Giovanna Farrell-Vinay, *The London Exile of Don Luigi Sturzo (1924-1940)*, "The Heythrop Journal", March 2004, n. 2, pp. 158–177; Alice Gussoni, *Gaetano Salvemini a Londra: Un antifascista in esilio (1925-1934)*, Rome, Donzelli, 2020; Andrea Ricciardi, *Paolo Treves: biografia di un socialista dissidente*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2018; Francesca Fiorani, *Paolo Treves: tra esilio e impegno repubblicano (1908-1958)*, Rome, Donzelli, 2020.

[5] Stefania Rampello, *Italian anti-Fascism in London, 1922-1940*, "Modern Italy", 2015, n. 4, pp. 351–363; Neelam Srivastava, *Italian Colonialism and Resistances to Empire, 1930–1970*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 147–193; Anna Rita Gabellone, *Il pensiero e l'attività antifascista tra Italia e Gran Bretagna,* "Itinerari Storici", 2019, n. 33, pp. 201–210; Alfio Bernabei, *1922: Fascism and anti-Fascism in London's Little Italy*, in Tamara Colacicco (ed.), *Fascism and Anti-fascism in Great Britain*, Ospedaletto, Pacini Editore, 2020, pp. 41–66; Anna Rita Gabellone, *The Women International Matteotti Committee during the 1930s*, in Tamara Colacicco (ed.), *Fascism and Anti-fascism in Great Britain*, Ospedaletto, Pacini Editore, 2020, pp. 173–190; Anna Rita Gabellone, *Giacomo Matteotti in Gran Bretagna (1924-1939)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2022.

forge links with certain sectors of the host society and with previously politicised immigrant groups has not addressed the changes brought about by the conflict between Fascism and anti-fascism in the lives of immigrants in Britain. In fact, although 280 individuals residing across the Channel were registered in the so-called Casellario politico centrale (Central Political Register) between 1922 and 1940, only a very small number of files relating to the above-mentioned political elite have been examined.

This article aims to advance our understanding of the lives of anti-fascists in Great Britain by analysing files from the Central Political Register on 'subversives' residing in Scotland, as well as a rich body of both Italian and British sources, including diplomatic correspondence, secret service reports, British naturalisation records and contemporary newspapers and anti-fascist press. An examination of the records of Italian emigrants who settled in Scotland will demonstrate that the Italian Scottish case is unique on the international stage, given the almost complete absence of overt hostility towards Fascism and its local branches, the *fasci*. However, by placing the human and personal stories of 'ordinary' actors back at the heart of the anti-fascist struggle, the article will highlight the wider social, power and control dynamics — typical of all communities and the centre–periphery relationship — that, as mentioned, have been neglected in favour of the major political opponents. Furthermore, it provides a wide range of reasons for the prevalence of 'silent anti-fascism' in Scotland (and partly in Britain), which is linked not only to the particular characteristics of Italian emigration to the island. Hence, this investigation not only approaches the geographical scope of anti-fascism in Great Britain from a new perspective, but it also provides new insights into the political and social history of Italian emigration and the relationship between Fascism, anti-fascism and migration. In doing so, it contributes to the extensive literature that has focused on the many Italian communities abroad, stimulating continuous historiographical reflection.[6]

[6] See, for example: Gianfranco Cresciani, *Fascismo, antifascismo e gli italiani in Australia (1922-1945)*, Rome, Bonacci, 1979; Anne Morelli, *Fascismo e antifascismo nell'emigrazione italiana in Belgio, 1922-1940*, Rome, Bonacci, 1987; Ronald C. Newton, *Ducini, Prominenti, Antifascisti. Italian Fascism and the Italo-Argentine Collectivity, 1922-1945*, "The Americas", 1994, n. 1, pp. 41–66; João Fábio Bertonha, *Sob a sombra de Mussolini. Os italianos de São Paulo e a luta contra o fascismo, 1919-1945*, São Paulo, Annablume, 1999; João Fabio Bertonha, *Fascismo, antifascismo y las comunidades italianas en Brasil, Argentina y Uruguay: una perspectiva comparada*, "Estudios migratórios latinoamericanos", 1999, n. 42, pp. 111–133; Pietro Pinna, *Migranti italiani tra fascismo e antifascismo. La scoperta della politica in due regioni francesi*, Bologna, Clueb, 2012.

Fascism and the Italian community in Scotland

In 1931, as totalitarianism intensified, the Fascist regime entrusted Corrado Gini — founder of the Central Institute of Statistics (later ISTAT) — with the task of conducting a census of Italians abroad. Currently, the only census to have emerged from the Italian diplomatic archives scattered around the world is the one carried out by the consulate in Glasgow in the 1930s, which aimed to identify Italian emigrants who had settled in Scotland. Thanks to this document and Terri Colpi's study, we now have a near-to-accurate picture of the Italian Scottish population in the inter-war period. The community numbered 5,991 individuals, of whom 2,637 were adults (1,396 men and 1,241 women) and 3,354 were children. The majority — about four thousand people — were scattered across Glasgow and the surrounding area, while approximately seven hundred lived in Edinburgh. The rest were mostly located in eastern coastal cities (Aberdeen, Dundee, Fife) and western coastal cities (Ayr, Greenock). Sixty per cent came from the province of Lucca, particularly from the small town of Barga, and from the area between Isernia, Caserta and Valle del Liri, now part of the province of Frosinone.[7] Unlike other ethnic minorities, who were employed mainly in the agricultural and industrial sectors, Italians were self-employed. The vast majority owned one or more family-run businesses in the catering sector (e.g. cafés and restaurants, fish and chip shops, sweet shops) or traded Italian products, and around two hundred people worked as barbers or craftsmen. The intellectual backbone of the Italian Scottish community consisted of a dozen teachers (including two university professors), a doctor, a priest, an architect and a banker.[8]

The demographic, territorial and socio-economic characteristics described above were the result of the growth of the Italian population in the 20 years preceding the First World War. Between 1891 and 1901, the Italian presence increased from 749 to 4,051 individuals. This leap was mainly due to the professional progress of the few dozen immigrants who went from being street vendors and musicians to opening small ice cream parlours and fish and chip shops. The opening of a promising market and the resulting economic stability of the first small entrepreneurs encouraged family reunification and created a demand for new labour, which was usually found among relatives and acquaintances from the home region in Italy.[9] The nature of the immi-

[7] Terri Colpi, *Italians' Count in Scotland: The 1933 Census, Recording History*, London, The St James Press, 2015.

[8] Report on the Italian colony in Scotland by Consul Spanò, July 1932, in Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (hereafter ASMAE), Ambasciata Londra (1861-1950), envelope 794, folder 1.

[9] Nicoletta Franchi, *La Via della Scozia: L'emigrazione barghigiana e lucchese a Glasgow tra Ottocento e Novecento*, Lucca, Fondazione Paolo Cresci per la storia dell'emigrazione italiana, 2012, p. 47.

grants' employment, who worked up to 18 hours a day, combined with factors such as parochialism and individualism, urban dispersion and the lack of religious and diplomatic figures of reference who could strengthen the community, led Italians to neglect the associative and cultural commitment promoted by a minority. For the same reasons, they did not assimilate into the host society.[10]

In the first half of the 1920s, Fascism began to fill this social, cultural and political void. Two months after the March on Rome, Carlo Tronchetti, the director of a small Italian import and distribution company, co-founded the Glasgow *fascio* alongside Giuseppe and Luigi Renucci (from Barga), who owned the company he managed. Despite being disliked by many Italian traders for his unorthodox business practices, which included sabotaging competitors through threats and gossip, Tronchetti dominated the diplomatic and community scene for a decade. In fact, he promoted the foundation of all the other *fasci* in Scotland: Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Greenock and Stirling, although the latter two existed only nominally. He also held various consular posts — most notably as regent of the consulate in Glasgow (1924–29) — and party positions until his expulsion in 1932 due to a conviction for illicit trafficking of alcohol.[11]

Tronchetti launched activities that began to dismantle the barrier of parochialism and associative apathy that characterised Italian immigrants in Scotland. Thus, in 1924, the 'father of the Scottish *fasci*' established the first weekly recreation centre in Glasgow, completing an educational project that had been discussed within the community since the early twentieth century. Considered by the regime to be an essential vehicle for maintaining Italian identity and forming a Fascist consciousness among the younger generations of Italians abroad, the initiative was consolidated thanks to the contribution of some women and the financial efforts of the community. In the 1930s, around three hundred boys and girls attended the Italian school in Glasgow every year. At the same time, weekly schools were also set up in Motherwell, Greenock and Edinburgh, with dozens of pupils of Italian origin enrolled.[12] Another activity conceived by Tronchetti, which the Fascist regime took advantage of, was the intercolonial gathering. From 1926 to 1938, various local *fasci* held this event every year on 15 August (in conjunction with the Feast of the Assumption) in an easily accessible Scottish park, making it one of the most eagerly awaited events for Italians: on average, between 2,000 and 3,000 people from across Scotland took part. By combining sport, religion and politics (with the secre-

[10] Tom M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A Modern History*, London, Penguin, 2012, pp. 512–518; Remigio Petrocelli, *«Un anno che resterà memorabile»: l'esperienza de «La Scozia» e la comunità italiana*, "Altreitalie", January–June 2024, n. 68, pp. 5–23.

[11] Remigio Petrocelli, *Importing Fascism: The Italian Community's Fascist Experience in Interwar Scotland*, New York, Routledge, 2025, pp. 39–40.

[12] Remigio Petrocelli, *'Citadels of spiritual resistance': the Italian schools in Scotland, 1924-1940*, "Modern Italy", 2022, n. 3, pp. 225–238.

taries of the *fasci* and the consul reminding the audience of the 'new Italy' that had emerged and of the achievements of Fascism), the gathering became a symbol of how Fascism and Mussolini had revived traditions and strengthened community and national ties.[13] Given its ideological and propaganda potential, it was no coincidence that the initiative was replicated by other *fasci* in Great Britain.[14]

As Italy increasingly shifted towards totalitarianism from the end of the 1920s onwards, Tronchetti's weekly schools and intercolonial gatherings were just some of the strategies employed by the regime, as part of its widespread welfare, recreation, propaganda and political network. Piero Parini was appointed secretary of the Fasci all'estero, a key instrument in the fascistisation of Italian communities abroad. By subordinating this organisation to state action (and subsequently incorporating it into the General Directorate of Italians Abroad), he not only aligned it with the 'normalisation' policy ordered by Mussolini and Dino Grandi, which was facilitated by the *ventottisti* diplomats, but also conferred uniformity and incisiveness on Fascist action abroad.[15] In reality, no 'normalisation' intervention was necessary in Scotland, as there were no radical Fascists who opposed consular authority or damaged the image of Fascism.

Nevertheless, the change initiated in Rome brought clear directives and intensified Fascist propaganda and mobilisation, strengthening the regime's appeal among emigrants. By the end of the 1930s, about half of the Italians in Glasgow and almost all of those in Edinburgh were registered with the local *fascio* or with related organisations, such as the women's *fascio*, the *dopolavoro* club or Fascist youth groups.[16] Fascism thus managed to penetrate the classic family and working microcosm of Italians in Scotland, thanks not only to the above-mentioned activities, but also to the many initiatives exported from Rome to the communities abroad. The most important and popular of these were the screening of films and documentaries sent by the General Directorate for Propaganda, the visits of Fascist emissaries and the organisation of 'pilgrimages' and summer camps in Italy for emigrants and their families. These activities continuously promoted the cult of Mussolini and Italy's new-found international prestige and progress in various economic, urban, social and political fields — of which Italians abroad were also considered, or

[13] *Italian invasion of Stirling — Scottish Fascisti hold gathering in King's Park*, "The Bridge of Allan Gazette", 24 August 1929.

[14] Colin Hughes, *Lime, Lemon & Sarsaparilla: The Italian Community in South Wales 1881-1945*, Bridgend, Seren, 1991, p. 66.

[15] Emilio Gentile, *La politica estera del partito fascista. Ideologia e organizzazione dei fasci italiani all'estero (1920-1930)*, "Storia Contemporanea", 1995, n. 6, pp. 897–956, here pp. 939–953.

[16] *Guida Generale degli italiani in Gran Bretagna*, London, Ercoli & Sons, 1939, pp. 435–436, 445. The *dopolavoro* was a Fascist federation for leisure pursuits.

called upon to be, champions.[17] As Matteo Pretelli pointed out, this rhetoric aimed to foster national pride by overturning stereotypes of Italy as a 'good-for-nothing' country and of Italians as belonging to an 'inferior race', and by demonstrating that Fascist Italy cared for its children abroad, making them feel part of it.[18] This manipulation and Fascist effort found particularly favourable conditions in Scotland, even monopolising the public life of a large section of the community and influencing the private lives of many, especially those who felt a tangible connection with the 'new Italy'.

The Italian 'subversives' of Scotland

Another reason why the *fasci* and the Casa d'Italia opened in Glasgow in May 1935 — following a subscription among Italian Scots launched by Consul Ferruccio Luppis — and came to dominate the local political and social scene was the unchallenged freedom of action they enjoyed. In various European and transatlantic contexts, anti-fascist agitation denounced the anti-democratic nature of Fascism and the violence perpetrated by the blackshirts, opposing the actions of the Fascist groups that had emerged outside Italy's borders physically, in the press and in associations.[19] In London, the handful of anarchists and socialists who rallied to support Errico Malatesta in the early twentieth century, including prominent figures such as Francesco Galasso, Silvio Corio, Pietro Gualducci and Emidio Recchioni,[20] opposed the *fascio* from the first signs of its Fascist ambition to monopolise existing institutions. Camillo Pellizzi, founder of the London Fascist branch in 1921, repeatedly promoted a structural reform of local Italian institutions — such as the Dante Alighieri Society and the Italian Hospital — in the Italian weekly *La Cronaca*, with the aim of improving their coordination and management. Unsurprisingly, Pellizzi

[17] Claudia Baldoli, *Le Navi. Fascismo e vacanze in una colonia estiva per i figli degli italiani all'estero*, "Memoria e Ricerca", July–December 2000, n. 6, pp. 163–176; Benedetta Garzarelli, *«Parleremo al mondo intero». La propaganda del fascismo all'estero*, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso, 2004; Matteo Pretelli, *Il fascismo e gli italiani all'estero*, Bologna, Clueb, 2010; Matteo Pretelli, *Mussolini's Mobilities: Transnational Movements between Fascist Italy and Italian Communities Abroad,* "Journal of Migration History", 2015, n. 1, pp. 100–120.

[18] Matteo Pretelli, *La risposta del fascismo agli stereotipi degli italiani all'estero*, "Altreitalie", January–June 2004, n. 28, pp. 48–65.

[19] In addition to the historiography cited in note 6, see also: Angelo Principe, *The Italo-Canadian Anti-Fascist Press in Toronto, 1922–40*, "Polyphony", 1985, n. 2, pp. 43–51; Gianfranco Cresciani, *Refractory Migrants. Fascist Surveillance on Italians in Australia, 1922–1943*, "Altreitalie", January–June 2004, n. 28, pp. 6–47; Carmela Maltone, *Exil et identité. Les antifascistes italiens dans le Sud-Ouest 1924-1940*, Pessac, Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2006.

[20] Pietro Di Paola, *The Knights Errant of Anarchy: London and the Italian Anarchist Diaspora (1880-1917)*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2013.

pointed to 'our *Fascio* of Combat' as the 'driving force' that should govern and control these efforts.[21] To counter the dictatorial climate that threatened the Italian community in London and to inform it about Fascist violence in Italy, the above-mentioned group of Italians founded *Il Comento* in July 1922. For about two years, the weekly magazine acted as an arena for verbal battles.[22]

However, there was no open conflict in Scotland, despite the presence of 16 'subversives' registered in the Central Political Register (see Table 1).

Table 1 - List of Italians residing in Scotland, as documented in the Central Political Register

Name (Year of birth)	*Profession*	*'Political colour' (Arrival in Scotland)*	*Place of birth*	*City of residence (suburb)*
Annovazzi Alfredo (1873)	Shopkeeper	Socialist (1898)	Casaleggio	Glasgow
Basile Vincenzo (1877)	Shopkeeper	Unknown (1890s)	Venafro	Glasgow (Rutherglen)
Buonaccorsi Guido (1904)	Baker	Communist	Glasgow	Glasgow (Rutherglen)
Cammelli Ovidio (1889)	Shopkeeper	Communist (1900s)	Pistoia	Glasgow
Cardillo Benedetto (1873)	Unknown	Anarchist (1890s)	Unknown	Glasgow
Ceragioli Emilio (1878)	Barber	Anarchist (1908)	Laterina	Glasgow
Coia Agostino (1886)	Shopkeeper	Anarchist (1903)	Filignano	Glasgow (Bellshill)
Cova Cesare (1855)	Tailor	Anarchist (1920s)	Mantua	Glasgow
Gagliardi Pietro (1895)	Barber	Anti-fascist (1910s)	SS. Cosma e Damiano	Glasgow (Bellshill)
Giglio David (1874)	Shopkeeper	Socialist (1890s)	Ivrea	Glasgow — Balloch
Jaconelli Ernesto (1893)	Shopkeeper	Socialist (1908)	Saint Petersburg	Glasgow
Janniello Giuseppe (1883)	Barber	Anarchist (1900)	SS. Cosma e Damiano	Glasgow — Caserta
Lungo Attilio (1890)	Barber	Anarchist (1910)	SS. Cosma e Damiano	Glasgow (Bellshill)
Pacitti Michele (1885)	Shopkeeper	Unknown (1911)	Filignano	Glasgow (Mossend)
Pacitti Vincenzo (1899)	Railway worker	Communist	Glasgow	Glasgow
Renucci Giovanni (1878)	Shopkeeper	Anti-fascist (1900)	Barga	Glasgow

[21] *La coordinazione delle società*, "La Cronaca", 13 January 1923.
[22] S. Rampello, *Italian anti-Fascism in London*, cit., p. 352.

Some general considerations can be derived from Table 1, beginning with the issue of gender, given the complete absence of women on the list. This is perhaps unsurprising if we consider the strong patriarchal nature of the Italian Scottish community, as evidenced by several women. They were usually devoted to the home, weekly mass and, when necessary, the family business.[23] In the 1920s and 1930s, the *fasci* were also one of the very few social spaces available to women and girls (alongside churches and schools), although the latter were still subject to considerable parental control, particularly regarding intimate matters.[24]

Table 1 also offers an insight into the subjects' professional and migratory characteristics, which are again unsurprising if we consider the structure of the Italian enclave in Scotland. As we will see, these characteristics are useful for understanding some of the main reasons for the lack of anti-fascist mobilisation. No Italians worked in politicised working-class environments (i.e. mining, shipbuilding and steel industries), where it would have been easy to establish connections with local and transnational radical circles. Furthermore, the vast majority of the 'subversives' listed in the Central Political Register were economic emigrants who had moved to Scotland before the First World War, with the exception of Cesare Cova and Vincenzo Pacitti. The former settled in Glasgow in the early 1920s after arriving in London in 1893 and joining the group of anarchists led by Malatesta.[25] Pacitti, on the other hand, was born in Glasgow in 1899. However, in 1913, his family became entangled in a scandal, which was followed by a tragedy. In Falkirk, where the Pacittis ran a restaurant, rumours circulated about Vincenzo's mother having an affair with a certain Joseph Ventura, a former business partner of her husband, Antonio, who shot and killed Ventura.[26] After a brief stay in a psychiatric hospital, Antonio was deported to Italy with the rest of his family. Pacitti returned to Falkirk in 1928.

Moving on to a detailed examination of the personal files, the 16 individuals were divided into four groups, based not on their 'political colour' — to be taken with a pinch of salt, as the authorities could attribute a political belief that differed from the person's actual ideological inclinations — but on the common traits that emerged from the various files. As a result, the following groups can be identified: dissidents from the liberal period, non-anti-fascists, subscribers to the anarchist press and devoted anti-fascists.

[23] Teresa Arcari Capocci, *Alle Serre di Picinisco. Memorie di emigrazione, guerra, liberazione*, Sora, Centro di studi sorani «Vincenzo Patriarca», 2006, pp. 26–39; Mary Contini, *Dear Olivia: An Italian journey of love and courage*, Edinburgh, Canongate, 2008, p. 156; Anne Pia, *Language of My Choosing. The candid life-memoir of an Italian Scot*, Edinburgh, Luath Press Limited, 2018, p. 28.

[24] R. Petrocelli, *Importing Fascism*, cit., pp. 61–62.

[25] www.bfscollezionidigitali.org/entita/13942-cova-cesare (last accessed 31 October 2024).

[26] *The Grahamstone shooting outrage*, "The Falkirk Herald", 10 May 1913.

Dissidents from the liberal period

Alfredo Annovazzi, Cesare Cova and David Giglio were registered and included in the Central Political Register before the rise of Fascism. However, it seems that Cova was the only one involved in 'subversive' activities. Born in Mantua, the tailor moved to London in 1893 after spending about ten years in Paris. There, he had moved in anarchist circles, which led him to join the radical Italian cell in England, composed of Malatesta, Recchioni and other anarchists. At the outbreak of the First World War, the group split into interventionists and neutralists. Cova sided with the latter, playing an active role in spreading anti-war propaganda in the British capital.[27] As a result of this activity, Cova was forced to leave Britain, which caused him considerable trouble. This was probably also because the 1917 Italian-British military agreement provided for cooperation in mobilising Italian and British immigrants.[28] After a period of exile in the United States, he settled in Glasgow in the early 1920s, but the Italian authorities did not detect any anti-fascist activity — perhaps because at that point he was almost 70 years old.[29]

While it is easy to draw a rough picture of Cova's life, the same cannot be said for Annovazzi and Giglio. Their files do not mention the reasons for their inclusion in the Central Political Register, nor do they indicate any membership of political groups or relevant actions carried out in Italy, either during the liberal period or under Fascism. Instead, reports sent by the consulate in Glasgow in response to requests from the General Directorate of Public Security (Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza, DGPS) for updates to the files in the 1930s reveal that Giglio and, in particular, Annovazzi had by then fully assimilated into Scottish society. In fact, Annovazzi — described as a 'person with little patriotic feeling' — never returned to Italy after emigrating; he married a Scottish woman in 1908 and obtained British citizenship in 1931, and his son even fought in the British Army during the Second World War.[30] Despite the socialist ideas that Giglio and Annovazzi may have had at some stage in their lives, their assimilation led to a detachment from Italy and the Italian political situation.

[27] P. Di Paola, *The Knights Errant of Anarchy*, cit., p. 199.

[28] Anglo-Italian military agreement, in The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Home Office 45/10783/281476.

[29] Archivio Centrale dello Stato (hereafter ACS), Casellario Politico Centrale (hereafter CPC), envelope 1519, folder Cova Cesare.

[30] ACS, CPC, envelope 145, folder Annovazzi Alfredo; ACS, CPC, envelope 2413, folder Giglio Davide.

The non-anti-fascists

The members of the second group — Guido Buonaccorsi, Ernesto Jaconelli, Giovanni Renucci, Vincenzo Basile, Pietro Gagliardi and Giuseppe Janniello — were included in the Central Political Register for reasons unrelated to political factors and 'subversive' actions or ideas. Their experiences varied, from the accusations levelled against them to the investigations into their activities, which in some cases continued after 10 June 1940. Jaconelli and Basile were the only ones to emerge unscathed from the background checks that were triggered by anonymous reports from their hometowns in Italy. Basile was accused in 1927 of receiving 'subversive newspapers written in English' at his Italian home in Venafro. Once it was established that these newspapers simply contained news about the Scottish suburb where Basile lived and that, according to the consul, he 'had never mingled with indigenous subversive elements and had never expressed defeatist ideas', his name was removed from the Central Political Register within a few months.[31] The same happened to Jaconelli, who was denounced by an anonymous fellow villager from Filignano, who described him as a socialist sympathiser. However, when the DGPS asked the consul in Glasgow, Ludovico Gavotti, for 'political and moral' information about Jaconelli, he reported several things that cleared the alleged socialist of all charges: he enjoyed 'excellent political and moral conduct', he was a member of the Glasgow *fascio* and, finally, he was one of the first to complete the census forms for Italians demanded by the regime.[32]

As Mimmo Franzinelli observed, denouncing someone to discredit them was a common practice in Fascist Italy, adopted not only by party officials interested in climbing the ladder of power or eliminating political opponents, but also by 'ordinary' Italians: family members, fellow citizens, shopkeepers and so on. They did so to gain economic, sentimental or commercial advantages or out of a desire for personal revenge.[33] It is unclear why Basile and Jaconelli, who had lived in Scotland for many years, had to pay the price for this harmful custom, but they were not the only ones to suffer this fate. Guido Buonaccorsi and Giovanni Renucci found themselves in an even more difficult situation. Despite being the 'father of the Scottish *fasci*', Tronchetti himself used anti-fascism against them. The reasons behind his false accusations can be deduced from archival sources.

Buonaccorsi was already a member of the Coreglia Antelminelli *fascio* in 1923, and then a member of the Glasgow *fascio* when he returned to Scotland. He was employed in the small business run by Tronchetti until, at the end of

[31] ACS, CPC, envelope 324, folder Basile Vincenzo.

[32] ACS, CPC, envelope 2609, folder Jaconelli Ernesto.

[33] Mimmo Franzinelli, *Delatori. Spie e confidenti anonimi: l'arma segreta del regime fascista*, Milan, Mondadori, 2001.

1931, he was 'abruptly dismissed' during a period of illness. The dismissal caused a long period of 'misery for him and his family', leaving Buonaccorsi deeply disappointed with Tronchetti, and it is likely that he insulted him publicly. The Fascist leader did not take long to react. In May 1932, Tronchetti informed the administrative office of the Fasci all'estero that he had expelled Buonaccorsi for unworthiness. He included a letter emphasising the baker's 'unbalanced character' and 'disorderly life', stating that he had 'allowed himself to be led astray and lured by elements belonging to local communist circles'. Furthermore, Tronchetti warned of the 'dangerousness' of his former employee, who was capable of 'reckless actions'.[34] Nevertheless, reports requested from the consular authorities in the following years revealed no affiliation of the alleged communist with local political circles or 'dangerous' activities. On the contrary, when Tronchetti was stripped of all his positions and powers, Buonaccorsi rejoined the *fascio* and became a member of the *dopolavoro* club, as he was unable to obtain a party card owing to his previous expulsion. His son, described by the consul as a 'brave avant-gardist', was enrolled in the *fascio* school and the Fascist youth organisation GIL in 1939. Even after Tronchetti's falsehoods were exposed, the police did not remove Buonaccorsi's name from the list of 'subversives' — despite his renewed Fascist spirit.

While Tronchetti used communism as an excuse to punish Buonaccorsi for his 'lese-majesty', he used anonymous letters — a family tradition, as we have seen — to accuse Giovanni Renucci of anti-fascism. In addition to being a cousin of the Renucci family, who owned the company for which Tronchetti worked, Giovanni was also a business competitor with a solid import and sales business for Italian products. His trouble began in August 1932, when he went to the consulate to renew his passport for a trip to Barga. According to a memorandum written the following year by Consul Gavotti to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tronchetti was also at the consulate that same day and had apparently understood that it was time to eliminate the 'enemy for commercial interests'. In fact, after Renucci's visit to the consulate, the following anonymous letter was sent to the then Consul Pietro Spanò:

> You have issued a passport to a nasty subversive who spat in the face of the Duce and has been spewing against fascism for years This certain Giovanni Renucci who has boasted that he can go to Italy without anyone being able to do anything to him if this disgrace occurs, we will write to Mussolini that you and Cavagliere Tronchetti are in league with the enemies of Italy.[35]

[34] Telespresso form and letter from Tronchetti to the General Directorate for Public Security, 24 June 1932, in ACS, CPC, envelope 894, folder Buonaccorsi Guido.

[35] Telespresso form from Consul Gavotti to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 July 1933, in ACS, CPC, envelope 4278, folder Renucci Giovanni Celestino (original punctuation maintained).

Alarmed and unaware of community dynamics, Spanò forwarded the letter to the Ministry of the Interior, thus setting in motion the investigation against Renucci. Tronchetti was secretary of the Glasgow *fascio* at the time, and he was one of the first to be interrogated by the DGPS about his fellow countryman. Unsurprisingly, he did not shy away from providing details about Renucci's 'political and moral' conduct:

> Renucci has been campaigning against Fascism for years, particularly against the local Fascist organisation. He denigrates Italy and his wife also shows, and has always shown, a particular hatred for all the work of the Fascist organisation. During his campaigns, he has always boasted that no one could stop him because he would never return to Italy. It is not clear why he has suddenly decided to return, unless he is hiding some subversive purpose. If this individual is allowed to return, he will certainly intensify his campaign of denigration and subversion, supporting his assertions by saying that he has seen things with his own eyes. I am sure that You will take the measures deemed useful and necessary with the necessary severity, because it is unfair and harmful that these more or less disguised enemies should conduct their anti-fascist campaign abroad, come to Italy to breathe the purified air of Fascism and then return abroad to spew the most absurd calumnies. […] Two comrades from the early days of this Fascio, currently residing in Barga, may also attest to Renucci's anti-fascism: Rigali Amedeo [for whom Tronchetti acted as best man] and Renucci Luigi [competitor of his cousin Giovanni and Tronchetti's boss].[36]

Tronchetti may not have wanted to send a dangerous anti-fascist to prison, but he took advantage of the opportunity to add insult to injury and ruin his commercial competitor's position, knowing very well that once Renucci crossed the Italian border, he would face searches, surveillance and possible arrest. This would have allowed Tronchetti's company to take over Renucci's market share. However, the plan failed. Renucci decided to cancel his trip to Italy after being warned by a family member in Barga about the police investigation. Subsequent correspondence between the police and the consulate confirmed that Tronchetti had made false accusations for personal gain, and he was recognised as 'the main cause of disagreement and unrest' within the Glasgow *fascio* — a situation due perhaps also to his character and the estrangement from his political creation.[37] In light of this and Gavotti's observations, who noted that Renucci 'cannot in any way be accused of anti-fascism and is universally esteemed',[38] the state authorities should have removed his

[36] Telespresso form from Tronchetti to the Ministry of the Interior, 13 September 1932, loc. cit. note 35.

[37] It was Consul Luppis who described Tronchetti in this way after yet another anonymous letter accusing Giovanni Guidi and Lorenzo Rocchicchioli (relatives of Giovanni Renucci) of anti-fascism reached the consulate. Unlike Spanò, Luppis did some preliminary investigations and discovered that Luigi Renucci had sent the letter, pushed by Tronchetti. Report by Luppis to the General Secretariat of the Fasci all'estero, 28 November 1934, in ASMAE, Ambasciata Londra (1861-1950), envelope 841, folder 2.

[38] Telespresso form from Consul Gavotti to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 July 1933, loc. cit. note 35.

name from the Central Political Register. Unfortunately for the small businessman, this did not happen, probably because of simple negligence on the part of the prefecture of Lucca. Unlike in the cases of Basile and Jaconelli, where the prefecture of Campobasso acted swiftly to verify the false accusations and remove them from the register, the inefficiency of the police in Lucca seriously affected the lives of Renucci and Buonaccorsi, preventing them from returning to Italy in the 1930s.

The remaining cases of non-anti-fascists, Pietro Gagliardi and Giuseppe Janniello, demonstrate that simply being related to someone branded as 'subversive' was enough to attract the attention of the zealous Fascist police machinery. In September 1931, Gagliardi was planning a trip to Italy with his cousin Attilio Lungo, who had been reported as an anarchist by the DGPS in 1927 for reasons that will become clear later. The Italian police wanted to find out who Gagliardi was and what the two intended to do once they arrived in Italy and thus began investigating him. However, they found nothing 'of political significance', except for his refusal to enlist in the army in 1915. The regime punished Gagliardi retroactively by adding him to the Central Political Register and the border register in November 1931, under a law targeting emigrants who did not report to their consulates after Italy's entry into the First World War. This law prevented many from returning home or participating in the 'pilgrimages' to Italy organised by the *fasci*.[39] In 1935, Gagliardi tried to resolve the situation by applying to join the legion of volunteers heading for Abyssinia at the consulate in Glasgow, although it is unclear whether he did so for ideological or patriotic reasons or simply to be removed from the two registers. His request was denied, but he managed to regularise his military status the following year by serving in Italy.[40]

Janniello was Lungo's other cousin (on his wife's side). He was reported in March 1931 by the Ministry of the Interior as a subscriber to *Lotta Anarchica*, which the police believed he received in Glasgow.[41] After requesting further information from the consulate in Glasgow, the authorities found out that Janniello had returned with his family to Italy in 1928, to the province of Caserta. Although the subscription was in his name, the newspaper was probably sent to his old Scottish home on behalf of someone else (perhaps Lungo). However, the consulate, in the person of Tronchetti, reported that Janniello 'is in correspondence with Italian anti-fascist elements and mainly with the anarchist Lungo Attilio residing in Bellshill'.[42] Following this news, Janniello was

[39] Parini to Minister of War Pietro Gazzera, 22 March 1930, in ASMAE, Gabinetto del Ministro e della Segreteria Generale 1923-1943, envelope 818.

[40] ACS, CPC, envelope 2223, folder Gagliardi Pietro.

[41] Note for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7 March 1931, in ACS, CPC, envelope 2617, folder Janniello Giuseppe.

[42] Letter from Tronchetti to the General Secretariat of the Fasci all'estero, 5 December 1931, loc. cit. note 41.

placed under close surveillance and subjected to several searches and interrogations, but none of this produced any results.

The thorough investigations that took place between 1931 and 1932 had a strong impact on Janniello, who decided to appeal directly to the Minister of the Interior (i.e. Mussolini) to testify to the patriotism that ran in his family's veins, in the hope of being removed from the Central Political Register. He thus wrote a long letter in which he explained that three of his brothers had served their country against the Austrians: two left as volunteers from Glasgow, one of whom fell in battle and another followed D'Annunzio to Fiume. He also observed that his children were 'trained' according to principles of 'loyalty and love for the motherland and blind obedience to its laws and its representatives'.[43] Janniello thus employed a common practice described by Richard Bosworth: exploiting family members and their experiences to manipulate political decision-makers, defend himself against accusations or turn the situation around.[44] However, he did not explain why he had not returned to Italy to fight alongside his brothers, or why he had never joined the Glasgow *fascio.* At the end of his letter, he only stated that his was 'all faith; a love for his homeland; a heartfelt and genuine adherence to the Fascist Idea, since its inception'. These omissions may have resulted in his request being ignored and surveillance continuing, with the police noting his involvement in local Fascist circles and his 'good public reputation'. When Italy entered the Second World War, the prefect of Naples urged the police to continue their surveillance of Janniello because he was considered a potential British 'fifth column', given the 28 years he had spent in Glasgow.[45]

Subscribers to the anarchist press

The name of the group derives from the fact that its members — Benedetto Cardillo, Ovidio Cammelli, Emilio Ceragioli, Agostino Coia, Attilio Lungo and Michele Pacitti — subscribed to various 'subversive' publications, including *Pensiero e Volontà*, *La Lotta Umana* and *Lotta Anarchica*. The first newspaper was published in Italy between 1924 and 1926 under the direction of Malatesta, while the other two were part of a range of periodicals produced by radical circles based in Paris.

Although the subtitle of *Lotta Anarchica* called for armed struggle ('For armed insurrection against Fascism'), the Italian subscribers in Scotland —

[43] Letter from Janniello to Mussolini, 26 February 1932, loc. cit. note 41.

[44] Richard J. B. Bosworth, *Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy*, "Contemporary European History", 2005, n. 1, pp. 23–43, here p. 41.

[45] Communication from the Prefect of Naples to the Ministry of the Interior, 13 November 1942, loc. cit. note 41.

except Lungo — were not involved in any openly anti-fascist activity. For the most part, their daily lives revolved around work and family. Their political ideas were not always well-defined or they were kept private, only being discussed within a very small circle of acquaintances. Ovidio Cammelli, for example, was not well known among his compatriots in Glasgow, and was described as a 'minor player, mild-mannered and incapable of violence'.[46] With regard to Michele Pacitti, Consul GianBattista Serra reported that he was 'very taken up with his business affairs and certainly not hostile to the regime', while Benedetto Cardillo died before the authorities could ascertain his 'dangerousness', although it is difficult to believe that he could have carried out significant political actions against the regime in the Italian Scottish context described above.[47] Emilio Ceragioli, who was included in the Central Political Register during the liberal era, was described as a 'frequent visitor to anarchists' in Italy, where he exercised 'considerable influence' over the workers of Terni. However, he had given up his activism after emigrating to Glasgow in 1908. The usual perseverance of the authorities in keeping personal files up to date confirmed his political disengagement in the 1920s and 1930s, with the only blemish being his subscription to *Pensiero e Volontà*.[48] The social and political apathy of the community had clearly diluted Ceragioli's capacity for action, but without changing his convictions; he was among the first to subscribe to the newspaper directed by Malatesta in May 1924, together with Pacitti and Lungo.[49]

Lungo is undoubtedly the most intriguing member of the Italian 'subversives' in Scotland. Not only was he the only one to publicly oppose the regime (if only to some extent and for a short period), but his personal history — as emerges from Italian and British archival sources — is also interesting. Originally from Santi Cosma e Damiano, the barber settled in Bellshill, a few kilometres from Glasgow, in 1910, after spending about six years with his sister in Cardiff.[50] We do not know when or how his political convictions took shape, but Bellshill was a hub for Lithuanian communist and socialist militants at the time,[51] and it is likely that this political fervour inspired Lungo to develop an interest in 'materialistic conceptions of history and the basis of

[46] Telespresso form from the ambassador in London to the Ministry of the Interior, 30 March 1931, in ACS, CPC, envelope 972, folder Cammelli Ovidio.

[47] Telespresso form from Consul Serra to the Ministry of the Interior, 9 June 1938, in ASMAE, Ambasciata Londra (1861-1950), envelope 1015, folder 1; ACS, CPC, envelope 1073, folder Cardillo Benedetto.

[48] ACS, CPC, envelope 1245, folder Ceragioli Emilio.

[49] *Abbonamenti*, "Pensiero e Volontà", 1 May 1924.

[50] British citizenship application by Lungo, 28 December 1948, in TNA, Home Office 405/33815.

[51] Murdoch Rodgers, *Political Developments in the Lithuanian Community in Scotland, c. 1890-1923*, "Immigrants & Minorities", 1983, n. 2, pp. 140–156.

economics', fuelling his curiosity by reading Marx and other theorists.[52] He became a staunch supporter of *Pensiero e Volontà*, to which he may have been introduced by the long-time anarchist Ceragioli, and he managed to subscribe a small group of local friends and relatives to the newspaper, including Cammelli, Coia and another cousin, Silvestro Tipaldi. Furthermore, in April 1925, Lungo organised a small fundraising campaign to support Malatesta when the newspaper began to suffer increasingly heavy Fascist censorship. The Bellshill unit collected about 255 lire: Coia contributed ten shillings, Lungo and Ceragioli five each.[53] Other contributors (and subscribers) included Lungo's cousin Tipaldi and three people who, surprisingly, were never investigated or included in the Central Political Register. While the police showed great obstinacy in verifying the 'moral and political' conduct of suspects and those under investigation, digging deeply into their lives and cross-checking information with different authorities, they had serious shortcomings (at least in the Scottish case) that spared Tipaldi and a few others various woes.

Lungo began to express anti-fascist opinions in public and in the Scottish press, perhaps galvanised by his ability to attract a small following or inspired by the anarchist press (after the suppression of *Pensiero e Volontà* in 1926, he received the other two aforementioned newspapers, as did Ceragioli, Coia, Cammelli and Cardillo). Although archival and contemporary press sources do not directly document Lungo's actions or statements, his son and Tronchetti seem to confirm his editorial commitment. The former sent a letter to the British Alien Department, seeking his father's release from the internment camp on the Isle of Man in 1940, in which he wrote that Lungo 'was foolish enough to express his opinion against them [the Fascists] in the course of a correspondence in the Glasgow Evening papers'.[54] The latter, in a 1927 note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, justified the refusal to issue a passport to Lungo on the grounds of his anarchist ideas, which were 'markedly opposed to the regime', and his 'collaboration with the local press in writing articles against Italy'. This communication led to Lungo's inclusion in the Central Political Register and the border register.[55] In response to this affront, Lungo applied for British citizenship in 1930, but his application was rejected. The Scottish police were well aware of his 'revolutionary tendencies' and that 'till recently he was a frequent visitor at the Communist Rooms', providing assistance during the city elections.[56]

Unable to obtain British citizenship, Lungo again requested the renewal of his Italian passport for the aforementioned trip with his cousin Pietro Gagliardi

[52] Minutes of the British Committee's interrogation of Lungo, 18 October 1940, loc. cit. note 50.

[53] *Oblazioni*, "Pensiero e Volontà", 1 April 1925.

[54] Letter from Leo Lungo to the Home Office (Aliens Department), 19 July 1940, loc. cit. note 50.

[55] Telespresso form from Tronchetti to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19 August 1927, in ACS, CPC, envelope 2881, folder Lungo Attilio.

[56] Report by the Airdrie Procurator Fiscal, 24 December 1930, loc. cit. note 50.

in September 1931. This time, the consulate provided him with the document so that he would take the bait and the Italian police could arrest him upon his entry in Italy. Lungo sensed the danger and cancelled his trip. Concerned about being ostracised from his homeland for an extended period, he renounced his ideological positions several years later, reinventing himself as an admirer of Mussolini. In January 1937, the former anarchist expressed to Consul Serra 'his loyalty to Fascism and the Duce', obtaining 'liberation from the label of subversive' also thanks to the fact that — as the diplomat noted — removal from the Central Political Register could have allowed Lungo's children to enter 'the orbit of our militant youth'.[57] Contrary to the consul's hopes, Attilio was the only member of the Lungo family to gravitate towards the *fascio*, joining the *dopolavoro* club rather than the *fascio* itself, which suggests that his change of heart was mainly a strategy to return to Italy (in 1938 and 1939). He suffered the consequences of his (forced) volte-face after 10 June 1940, as his name appeared on lists obtained by the British secret services from the Glasgow *fascio*, leading to his arrest and internment. He was one of the few lucky ones to survive the sinking of the *Arandora Star.*

The mutual Machiavellianism between Lungo and Serra was just one example of the clash between 'subversives' and diplomatic representatives. Tronchetti was, once again, complicit in Coia's strategic change of political allegiance when it was discovered that he was a subscriber to *La Lotta Umana* in 1927. Initial investigations led the prefect of Campobasso to report in January 1928 that the merchant 'had always expressed Masonic ideas, to the extent that neither of his two children had been baptised or confirmed'.[58] The investigation was passed on to the consulate in Glasgow, with Tronchetti initially reporting Coia as a member of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, but then stating that 'he immediately joined the Fascist Trade Union of Italian Merchants, which I founded here in recent months'.[59] A second report from the prefect of Campobasso highlighted the fundraising for Malatesta in 1925, which further complicated Coia's position. He was described as being 'capable of deceiving people's good faith in order to achieve his goals'.[60] However, the prefect did not realise that Tronchetti was the same. In the ensuing exchange of information, the 'father of the Scottish *fasci*' contradicted both his previous statements and those of the Italian territorial authorities, emphatically stating that Coia 'had never belonged to Freemasonry and that the collection in aid of the anarchist Malatesta was completely unfounded'. Tronchetti concluded

[57] Telespresso form from Consul Serra to the Ministry of the Interior, 5 January 1937, loc. cit. note 55.

[58] Report by the Prefect of Campobasso to the Ministry of the Interior, 5 January 1928, in ACS, CPC, envelope 1396, folder Coia Agostino.

[59] Communication from Tronchetti to the Ministry of the Interior, 3 July 1928, loc. cit. note 58.

[60] Report by the Prefect of Campobasso to the Ministry of the Interior, 2 August 1928, loc. cit. note 58.

that 'it is only right that he be removed from the register of subversives', especially since Coia had, in the meantime, been elected secretary of the Fascist Trade Union of Italian Merchants.[61] In October 1928, the prefect approved Coia's removal from the Central Political Register after accepting the evidence provided by the consular regent in Glasgow. Although Coia was still receiving anarchist publications by 1931, the authorities took an unusually lax approach and did not reopen the investigation.

Coia's case may be explained by a potential commercial compromise with Tronchetti, who allegedly guaranteed his immediate removal from the list of 'subversives'. In turn, Coia would either have taken over the leadership of the union on Tronchetti's behalf or bought supplies from the company run by Tronchetti, as many other Italian Scottish merchants were already doing.[62] Although there is no clear evidence of a similar agreement, it seems that their relationship was indeed driven by economic interests, given the men's character, the consular regent's contradictions and zeal, and Coia's appointment as head of the union — a role which, from a Fascist perspective, would perhaps have been better entrusted to a member of the *fascio* or, at the very least, to someone with an impeccable reputation. After all, Coia was the only subscriber to the anarchist press suited to this type of negotiation; the others were either barbers or relatively unknown figures in the community.

Devoted anti-fascists

Of all the Italians listed in Table 1, Vincenzo Pacitti was the only devoted anti-fascist. He never abandoned the cause, nor did he renounce it or recycle himself — in Italy or Scotland — as a supporter of Fascism. He paid a high price for this consistency, suffering the consequences of his political conviction in both countries. Born in Glasgow and raised between Scotland and Cassino, Pacitti was hired in 1919 as a brakesman for the Italian state railways. Between 1920 and 1922, he took part in 'all class strikes' and was almost inevitably dismissed in 1923, when the parliamentary guard changed after the March on Rome. In those same years, his wife Filomena gave birth to Lenin and Liliana Alba Rivoluzionaria ('revolutionary dawn'), names that attest to Vincenzo's clear political commitment. In 1924, Antonio was born, who would later become a renowned Italian Scottish artist. When Pacitti threatened a customs officer with a weapon in August 1928, he was arrested.[63] Although the offence

[61] Communication from Tronchetti to the Ministry of the Interior, 10 September 1928, loc. cit. note 58.

[62] Telespresso form from Consul Gavotti to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 August 1933, in ASMAE, Ambasciata Londra (1861-1950), envelope 805, folder 2.

[63] Report by the Prefect of Frosinone to the Ministry of the Interior, 23 March 1933, in ACS, CPC, envelope 3640, folder Pacitti Vincenzo.

was pardoned, the political and social climate in Cassino worsened, forcing Vincenzo to retrace the journey he had made almost thirty years earlier. In an interview, his son later recalled that some local Fascists gave his father 24 hours to leave the city in the province of Frosinone.[64]

When he arrived in Glasgow in January 1929, Vincenzo immediately became involved in incidents that drew the attention of the Scottish police. He thus helped a certain Francesco Cavaliere to enter Britain illegally (a crime for which he spent 40 days in prison) and became a 'fervent follower' of a small local radical group, the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation. Following this turbulent start, the Pacitti family faced a long period of poverty and unemployment. Perhaps these precarious conditions and internal conflicts within the subversive group to which he belonged may explain why Vincenzo's political activism seemed to wane in the first half of the 1930s. In a note sent to the consulate in Glasgow, the Scottish police chief emphasised that the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation 'is now in a decaying condition and Pacitti was too timorous to expound his views openly'. He concluded by saying that, after his conviction, Pacitti had not been involved in any noteworthy actions.[65] However, as the ideological clash between Nazi-Fascism and communism intensified in the second half of the 1930s, Pacitti's idealism was rekindled. During the Spanish Civil War, he helped political refugees and, at the outbreak of the Second World War, he volunteered as a firefighter in Glasgow. Antonio followed in his father's footsteps and enlisted in the British Army.[66]

The causes of 'silent anti-fascism' in Scotland

An analysis of Italians in Scotland registered in the Central Political Register confirms a statement made by Consul Spanò. In 1932, he concluded a report on the Italian Scottish community and the activities of the *fasci* with the following words: '[T]he phenomenon of *fuoruscitismo* is absent here, and the danger of pathetic reprisals against Fascist action is therefore eliminated.'[67] However, this does not mean that immigrants did not dissent from Fascism and the regime. In her book *Everyday Life in Fascist Venice*, Kate Ferris discusses the dichotomy between consensus and dissensus, arguing that these two categories represent the extreme poles of the attitudinal and character spectrum of Italians under the dictatorship, which also includes forms of resistance such as indifference,

[64] www.antoniopacitti.co.uk/OtherPDFs/2015%20Antonio%20Pacitti.pdf (last accessed 31 October 2024).

[65] Letter from the Assistant Chief Constable to the Italian Consulate in Glasgow, loc. cit. note 63.

[66] *Antonio Pacitti obituary*, www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/sep/23/antonio-pacitti-obituary (last accessed 31 October 2024).

[67] Report on the Italian colony in Scotland by Consul Spanò, July 1932, loc. cit. note 8.

distance and non-conformity.[68] With the exception of Lungo and Pacitti (and perhaps a few others who escaped the police and consular network and left no traces in the sources), these categories seem to apply to a minority of Italians in Glasgow and Edinburgh, cities where the *fasci* were active for almost twenty years. The testimonies of some Italian Scots, collected and analysed by Richard Wright and Wendy Ugolini, reveal that anti-fascist sentiment — driven by ideology, assimilation and concern — was primarily expressed within the family unit.[69] However, it probably also emerged among acquaintances and trusted relatives at the back of shops, perhaps during card games, as may have been the case with the subscribers to the anarchist press in Bellshill.

Dissent subsequently manifested itself outside the private sphere, through non-involvement in the activities of the *fasci* — both by adults and their offspring — and de-Italianisation, which involved acquiring British citizenship or anglicising one's name. We do not know how many engaged in these acts of passive resistance for ideological and political reasons. For example, the fact that some community members did not gravitate towards the *fasci* and the Casa d'Italia can also be explained by geographical and economic considerations, which were in fact the main causes of the weakness of the *fasci* in Aberdeen and Dundee. But even when quantitative data is available, as in the case of British naturalisations (albeit only from 1936 onwards, when the so-called blue books were introduced), the lack of diaries, memoirs or biographies makes it difficult to discern personal motivations. Thus, Alfredo Annovazzi, a dissident from the liberal period who obtained British citizenship in 1931, may have applied for it because he felt completely integrated into Scottish society or because of his socialist ideas (if he had any) in contrast to the Italian regime, or for both reasons. Others were driven by psychological and opportunistic reasons, particularly following the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. This provoked a series of hostile actions, including boycotts, riots and violence, against Italians by the Scottish population. As Consul Luppis pointed out, several 'deserters' — including members of the *fasci* — attempted to de-Italianise themselves in the hope that local hostility would cease.[70]

In view of all this, an important question arises: why did opposition to the regime and the *fasci* in Scotland not become organised? Why did it remain silent? Several factors may explain this unique case in the history of Italian anti-fascism abroad. As we can see in Table 1, the two main explanations are

[68] Kate Ferris, *Everyday Life in Fascist Venice, 1929–40*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 9–10.

[69] Richard Wright, *Italian Fascism and the British-Italian Community, 1928-1943: Experience and Memory,* Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Manchester, 2005, pp. 153–160; Wendy Ugolini, *Experiencing War as the 'Enemy Other': Italian Scottish Experience in World War II*, Manchester, Manchester United Press, 2011, pp. 76–79.

[70] Remigio Petrocelli, *The Impact of the Ethiopian War on Italian Immigrants in Scotland*, "Journal of Contemporary History", 2023, n. 3, pp. 468–487, here p. 478.

based on the characteristics of the Italian Scottish population and Italian political migration to Great Britain. Regarding the first aspect, we must consider the same causes that negatively influenced the appeal of the *fasci* opened in various Scottish cities, with the exception of Glasgow and Edinburgh: urban dispersion, apathy and individualism, and employment patterns. The latter, in particular, prevented the emergence of those elements that became a breeding ground and glue for anti-fascist mobilisation in countries such as France and Belgium, where Italians were employed in politicised sectors: class struggles, exchange of ideas and connections. Furthermore, unlike the countries mentioned above, which saw a huge influx of exiles, only about three hundred Italians crossed Hadrian's Wall in the 1920s,[71] with Pacitti being the only documented case of political exile.

At the same time, the anti-fascist movement in Glasgow struggled to gain momentum partly because of the fragility of the London anti-fascist group that founded *Il Comento*, as well as their lack of activism — along with that of other prominent anti-fascists — in inciting and expanding the struggle against the regime among Italians outside the British capital. On 30 December 1922, just a few days after the opening of the Glasgow *fascio*, an anonymous correspondent of *Il Comento* published an article warning that the coercive methods employed by the Fascists in Italy would soon become apparent in the Scottish city. With regard to Tronchetti, the anonymous correspondent noted that 'it will be very easy for him to include new items in his imports: black shirts, clubs and castor oil'. They added that 'if it is not possible to administer purges and beatings with impunity to Italianise all those suspected of not being Italian enough, this could be achieved by mixing the tasty mixture into bread' — a reference to the company for which Tronchetti worked, which had started out as a bakery.[72] Over the following weeks, *Il Comento* published two more anonymous articles. This time, they were written by First World War veterans living in Glasgow, who claimed that not everyone in the community was ready to accept 'the infallible word and virtues of the Duce'. Moreover, they highlighted the hypocrisy of the central party in Rome, which entrusted the Glasgow branch to people who monopolised 'patriotic sentiment' despite not having fought in the war, and that they did so for personal gain. The 'proud display of Italian identity' served to obtain political and socio-economic advantages.[73]

In addition to suggesting a clear and strong opposition to Fascism in the early 1920s, the three articles show that *Il Comento* was also read by some Italians in Scotland, and that they had established contacts with the 'radical' group in London. However, this transnational network was not consolidated.

[71] T. Colpi, *Italians' Count in Scotland*, cit., p. 44.

[72] *Una novità per la colonia italiana di Glasgow*, "Il Comento", 30 December 1922.

[73] *Una novità anche in Scozia*, "Il Comento", 24 February 1923; *Lettere dalla Scozia*, "Il Comento", 10 March 1923.

From the publication of the third article in March 1923 until *Il Comento* ceased circulation the following year, no other signs of verbal opposition to Fascism came from Scotland. It is unclear whether the anonymous contributors had been 'struck down' on the road towards Rome or whether other articles, sent but never published, were ignored because the London group preferred to focus on what was happening in the British capital — a logical choice given the greater number of Italians who could be won over to the cause — and in Italy. Whatever the reason, the 'subversives' in London, who could have led the anti-fascist struggle in Great Britain thanks to their greater cultural and intellectual preparation and experience of associative and radical mobilisation, failed to develop the spontaneous dissent of their compatriots living in Glasgow.

The weak ties between the few Italian opponents living in England and Scotland left no margin for manoeuvre for the Italian Scots, who could have organised themselves if encouraged by more significant support. A similar failure would have occurred even if the anti-fascist immigrants had sought support among the Scottish population or among politically active local circles. This was not only because the ideological ties and processes of politicisation that typically define working-class environments and shared socio-economic conditions were absent. Looking at the social fabric, until the Italian imperial war in Africa, large sections of Scottish society sympathised with Fascism, its leader and the local *fasci*, and therefore also with the Italian community. Between 1923 and 1935, religious and civil authorities — including Archbishop Donald Mackintosh and the mayors of Glasgow and Edinburgh — actively participated in many 'institutional' events organised by the *fasci*. These included the blessing of the pennants, the annual celebrations of the March on Rome with street parades and the inauguration of the Casa d'Italia.[74] These initiatives, as well as educational and markedly propagandistic ones, were also attended by elites of entrepreneurs and intellectuals from the Scoto-Italian Society. Born out of the ashes of the First World War, the latter was founded by a number of academics to promote knowledge of 'the Italian ally', and the *fasci* used it as a channel for Italian and Fascist cultural penetration in the two main Scottish cities.[75] The attitude of state, cultural and religious representatives in Scotland was thus in line with the general consensus with which much of the British public, press and politicians welcomed and accompanied Mussolini and Fascism for several years.[76]

[74] See, for example: *Il movimento fascista in Iscozia*, "L'Eco d'Italia", 6 February 1924; *Solenne Messa di Requiem*, "L'Eco d'Italia", 13 November 1926; *L'On. Fani in Iscozia*, "Notiziario del Fascio di Glasgow", November 1934; *City mansion as club*, "The Evening News", 16 May 1935.

[75] R. Petrocelli, *Importing Fascism*, cit., pp. 62–66.

[76] Richard J. B. Bosworth, *The British Press, the Conservatives, and Mussolini, 1920-34*, "Journal of Contemporary History", 1970, n. 2, pp. 163–182; Aldo Berselli, *L'opinione pubblica inglese e l'avvento del Fascismo (1919-1925)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1971; Claudia Baldoli,

As for the Scottish radical parties and groups, which were very active in terms of trade unionism and class struggle in the country's major industrial centres, especially after the Bolshevik Revolution,[77] they remained indifferent to Italian Fascism — or, rather, to the local *fasci*. Italian Fascists in Scotland did not get involved in local political issues, and the *fasci* were essentially invisible, apart from a few public ceremonies characterised by Fascist rituals and symbols (e.g. parades, uniforms, flags, Roman salutes, etc.), carrying out their activities almost secretly. For these reasons, local socialist and communist groups did not perceive the Italian blackshirts as a threat. Perhaps they considered them 'an eccentric and amateurish pressure group whose public activities were largely innocuous', much like the British Fascists, a small group of British citizens inspired by Mussolini's party.[78] The 'occult Fascism' of the Italians was probably a crucial factor in the absence of hostility from anti-fascists and indigenous radical groups. This seems to be confirmed by the different treatment they gave to Oswald Mosley's much more conspicuous British Union of Fascists (BUF) in the 1930s. The rise of the BUF, which grew from a few thousand members to around fifty thousand in less than two years, and its vehement ultra-nationalist and anti-Semitic campaigns — coupled with the growing Nazi threat in Europe — triggered anti-fascist mobilisations across Britain. In Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and other smaller cities, demonstrations by British Fascists often ended in riots, protests and physical clashes.[79]

It is no surprise that the only explicit criticism of Italian Fascists since the days of *Il Comento* and Lungo was made amid this heated climate. In May 1934, a certain 'Glasgovian' complained about the blackshirts gathered in Glasgow's central square to mark the anniversary of Italy's entry into the First World War.

> Apart from the fact that they should make those militaristic demonstrations in their own country where Mussolini is a dictator, why should the British public witness apathetically those political demonstrations intended to subvert our people's orderly mentality? Is it not enough for the Italian Fascisti to live in this country undisturbed, making money, and going back someday to Italy with their pockets filled?[80]

This suggests that public demonstrations by Italian Fascists attracted more attention than before, when there was a general indifference among the Scottish public. This is because of changes in the British and European polit-

Exporting Fascism: Italian Fascists and Britain's Italians in the 1930s, Oxford, Berg, 2003, pp. 97–119.

[77] William Kenefick, *Red Scotland!: The Rise and Fall of the Radical Left, C. 1872-1932*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

[78] Nigel Copsey, *Anti-fascism in Britain*, London, Macmillan Press, 2000, p. 7.

[79] Gavin Bowd, *Fascist Scotland: Caledonia and the Far Right*, Edinburgh, Birlinn, 2013, pp. 11–80.

[80] *Italian political propaganda*, "The Evening Times", 17 May 1934.

ical context. The war in Ethiopia highlighted the aggressive militarism of Fascist Italy, inadvertently making the Italian minority more visible and exposing its members, as mentioned, to boycotts and violence. Possibly intimidated by the prospect of becoming the target of local anti-fascist protests, as had happened with members of the BUF, the Italian Fascists shifted their focus from 'occult Fascism' to 'isolationism'. Hence, from 1935 onwards, they avoided all public political events, such as the rally criticised by the 'Glasgovian' or the usual annual parades to celebrate the March on Rome. When events such as memorial services for the fallen of the First World War could not be avoided, they switched to 'incognito Fascism', with uniforms and party symbols being banned from the BUF.[81]

Although the Scottish anti-fascists achieved — albeit indirectly — a small success, this did not strengthen opposition to Fascism within the Italian enclave. The most opportune moment to voice their opposition to Mussolini, the regime and the Fascists did not turn out to be as significant as it could have been. If we leave aside the 'deserters', the pride generated by the war and conquest of Ethiopia, as well as concerns about the hostile climate surrounding the Italian ethnic minority, played a decisive role in persuading many to join the *fasci* and frequent the Casa d'Italia.[82] Opponents in the community, who had developed only passive resistance measures, were therefore forced to remain silent observers.

Conclusion

Before Mussolini came to power in 1922, Fascism and its local branches strongly benefited from the peculiarities of the Italian population in Scotland, that is, the disintegration of the social and community fabric and the lack of a politicised core. With the initial support of both Carlo Tronchetti and the scrupulous organisational machine directed from Rome, the regime established and controlled the cultural, political, religious and recreational aspects of Italian immigrants' community life. This process resulted in even higher levels of participation in Glasgow and Edinburgh than in London, where the *fascio* could count on hierarchical and representative figures such as Dino Grandi and Guglielmo Marconi, and on the financial contribution of important Italian companies. Furthermore, Fascism penetrated the private lives of many Italian Scottish families. For example, over a hundred children were given names evoking the Fascist 'new Italy' (e.g. Benito, Italia, Romano,

[81] Circular from the secretary of the Glasgow *fascio*, 3 November 1937, in ASMAE, Ambasciata Londra (1861-1950), envelope 1001, folder 1.

[82] Report by the British secret services to the Home Office, 28 June 1937, in TNA, Home Office 144/21079.

Adua, etc). Even small business owners, who had previously been very prudent with their capital, were so captivated by the 'new Italy' propaganda that they deposited (and subsequently lost) the 'fruits of a lifetime' in the Italian Bank founded in Glasgow in the late 1920s by Mario Olivieri,[83] a war veteran who had arrived there from London in 1925 and immediately rose to become one of the leaders of the *fasci*. Hence, the regime not only dominated the public life of the community, but also partially realised one of the cornerstones of the totalitarian project, aimed at merging and controlling the public and private spheres of Italians in Italy and abroad.

While there were many internal and external convergent factors that contributed to the Fascist monopoly in Scotland, even breaking down the barriers of parochialism, individualism and urban dispersion to some degree, the same cannot be said for the anti-fascist cause. The analysis of the files in the Central Political Register and the lack of overt anti-fascist opposition demonstrates that Italian Scottish dissent was of a 'silent' nature. Few Italians resorted to exile or mobilised local anti-fascists and transnational opposition networks, which could have helped to cultivate and openly express anti-fascist ideals; when they did act, it was in a disorganised manner. Additionally, they risked being investigated and marginalised by Italy or by the Italian Scottish community itself. The cases of Buonaccorsi, Lungo and Renucci, for example, did not go unnoticed and may have dissuaded some from publicly opposing the regime and the *fasci*, while pushing others to embrace Fascist conformism. As a result, there was a significant imbalance of forces in the field: on the one hand, a Fascist majority that was unopposed and largely accepted by the host society, at least until 1935; on the other, a minority of political opponents who failed to overcome the apathy and passivity they had inherited from the pre-Fascist period or were sucked back into it, as in the case of Ceragioli and Vincenzo Pacitti.

This in-depth study of 16 'subversives' living in Scotland has shed light — in a unique and innovative way — on a neglected aspect of the dualism between Fascism and anti-fascism in Britain and its impact on one of the country's most important Italian communities. Specifically, it has highlighted the peculiarity of Italian anti-fascism in Scotland, as well as some typical aspects of the anti-fascist movement abroad and in Italy: the modus operandi of the authorities; denunciation for revenge and opportunism; the use of expedients to overturn political decisions; the transition to the opposite camp; and registration in the Central Political Register and the border register as a result of simply receiving newspapers opposed to the regime and engaging with people already known to the police. At the same time, analysis of the files on the lowest strata of emigrants (anti-fascist and non-anti-fascist) has revealed specific social and power dynamics, exposing the limitations of the Fascist

[83] Joe Pieri, *The Scots-Italians: Recollections of an Immigrant*, Edinburgh, Mercat Press, 2005, pp. 84–85.

totalitarian system and its investigative apparatus. Even minor acts of negligence or the personal motivations of those involved in the chain of events linking the centre to the periphery were enough to result in Italian immigrants being improperly (and sometimes permanently) labelled as 'subversive'. In other cases, this allowed the guilty — from a Fascist perspective — to be absolved or, in some cases, prevented from being caught by the police in the first place.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

Between distancing and competition: the cultural policies of West Germany and East Germany in Italy during the Cold War (1947–68)

Costanza Calabretta*

This article examines the cultural policies developed by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in Italy during the Cold War, from the initial contact established after the Second World War until the end of the 1960s. An important transformation occurred during this period. Although initial exchanges were limited, both states began to actively pursue cultural policies in the mid-1950s. This gradually turned into open competition, particularly during the 1960s, which is reflected in the relationship between the two most influential German institutions based in Rome: the Deutsche Bibliothek, overseen by the West German embassy and the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Thomas Mann Centre, led by Italian intellectuals and supported by the GDR and the Italian Communist Party. The article will focus on the activities of the two institutions, drawing on a variety of German and Italian sources, ranging from the respective foreign ministries to those of the institutions themselves.
Key words: Cold War, cultural policies, Federal Republic of Germany, German Democratic Republic, cultural competition

Introduction

In 2023, the German government decided to close the Goethe Institut in Turin, the first of its kind in Italy when it was opened in 1954.[1] The decision also affected the institutes in Genoa and Trieste, and was primarily driven by strategic considerations, namely the need to reduce the institutes' resources in order to prioritise investments outside of Western Europe. Founded in 1952 in Munich, the Goethe Institut is currently the world's leading institution for the dissemination of German language and culture. During the Cold War, it was

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[1] Diego Molino, *Chiude dopo settant'anni il Goethe Institut, la protesta dei dipendenti a Palazzo Civico*, "La Stampa", 23 October 2023.

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one of the key players in the West German state's *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik* (foreign cultural policy).[2]

If culture can be considered as 'a particular space in which dialogue and exchange took place, both in terms of state agendas (cultural diplomacy) and inter-personal interactions (cultural relations)',[3] the definition of 'cultural policy' allows us to explore the role of institutions as formal actors and a broad range of cultural relations, which include a variety of actors (e.g. schools, universities, associations, individuals) and media (e.g. literature, theatre, musical and film productions, translations). Furthermore, it sheds light on the choices made by institutional actors (e.g. the government, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture), bringing together both cultural diplomacy as a means of building bilateral and multilateral relations and national self-representation. The field of institutions should not be treated as a monolithic entity; different orientations, divergences and conflicts coexist within and between them. Similarly, the institutional level should not be considered isolated or closed, but in relation to that of society, from which questions and demands arise, sometimes leading institutions to change their direction.

If we take the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), we can see that Italian historiography has devoted more consistent and comprehensive attention to West Germany. One reason for this disparity lies in the different relationships that Italy established with the two countries. Thus, the FRG was an important economic and commercial partner of Italy, its international ally in NATO and co-founder of the nascent European Community. It was precisely this international context, as well as the priority given to relations with the FRG (which also promoted the Hallstein Doctrine[4]), that resulted in a lack of official relations with the GDR, which neither Italy nor other Western countries recognised as a sovereign state. Its status changed between 1973 and 1974, after West Germany had recognised the GDR as part of Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*.[5] It subsequently

[2] For a history of the Goethe Institut, see Steffen R. Kathe, *Kulturpolitik um jeden Preis. Die Geschichte des Goethe-Institut von 1951 bis 1990*, Munich, Martin Meidenbauer, 2005.

[3] Simo Mikkonen, Jari Parkkinen, Giles Scott-Smith, *Exploring Culture in and of the Cold War*, in Idd. (eds.), *Entangled East and West. Cultural Diplomacy and Artistic Interaction during the Cold War*, Oldenbourg, De Gruyter, 2019, pp. 1–11, here p. 7.

[4] The Hallstein Doctrine was formulated by Walter Hallstein, the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It provided for the termination of diplomatic relations with those states that recognised the GDR, in accordance with the principle of *Alleinvertretungsanspruch* (exclusive representation of the German nation) claimed by the FRG; see Werner Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin. Der diplomatische Krieg zwischen der BRD und der DDR (1955-1973)*, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 2001.

[5] Relations between the FRG and the GDR were governed by the *Grundlagenvertrag* (Basic Treaty) in 1972, which followed the agreement between the FRG and the Soviet Union and Poland (1970). Some of the most recent publications on *Ostpolitik* include: Benedikt Schoenborn, *Reconciliation road: Willy Brandt, Ostpolitik and the quest for European peace*,

managed to establish official relations with other European states and the US, with the Italian government recognising the GDR in January 1973. In previous decades, relations between the two countries had been promoted and supported by other actors, primarily the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano, PCI) and later also the socialist parties (i.e. the Italian Socialist Party and the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity).

It should be noted that conducting historiographical research within the GDR was more challenging than in the FRG. Although some significant work had been carried out previously,[6] a real expansion of studies only occurred after 1989, when the socialist state collapsed and its archives became accessible. In the early 2000s, more comprehensive studies aimed at reconstructing the complex political, economic and cultural relations between Italy and the GDR were published in Germany.[7] This renewal was echoed in Italian historiography, which devoted new studies to specific aspects of the East German state and its relations with Italy,[8] particularly in the cultural sphere.[9] The latter were highly significant at least until the GDR was officially recognised by Italy in 1973, and they remain a fruitful area of research.[10]

On the other hand, histories of interactions between Italy and the FRG focused on the recovery of relations in the post-war period, emphasising political and economic issues. Topics of interest included the parallel processes of democratic reconstruction following the collapse of the Nazi-Fascist regimes;[11] the diplomatic action that rebuilt relations between the two

New York, Berghahn, 2020; Tetsuji Senoo, *Ein Irrweg zur deutschen Einheit? Egon Bahrs Konzeptionen, die Ostpolitik und die KSZE 1963-1975*, Frankfurt a. M., Peter Lang, 2011.

[6] See, in particular, Enzo Collotti, *Storia delle due Germanie (1945-1968)*, Turin, Einaudi, 1968.

[7] Charis Pöthig, *Italien und die DDR. Die politischen, ökonomische und kulturellen Beziehungen von 1949 bis 1980*, Frankfurt a. M., Peter Lang, 2000; Johannes Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft im Kalten Krieg? Die politischen, kulturellen und ökonomischen Beziehungen der DDR zu Italien 1943-1973*, Frankfurt a. M., Peter Lang, 2001.

[8] See, for an overview, Sara Lorenzini, *La storiografia italiana e la Rdt*, in Magda Martini, Thomas Schaarschmidt (eds.), *Riflessioni sulla DDR. Prospettive internazionali e interdisciplinari vent'anni dopo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2011, pp. 77–95; Monica Fioravanzo, *A trent'anni dalla caduta del Muro. Nuovi orientamenti di ricerca in Italia sulla DDR*, "Storia e problemi contemporanei", 2021, n. 87, pp. 5–10.

[9] Marco Paolino, *Intellettuali e politica nel periodo della "Guerra fredda": i rapporti culturali fra il Pci e la Rdt*, in Sandro Rogari (ed.), *Partiti e movimenti politici fra Otto e Novecento. Studi in onore di Luigi Lotti*, vol. II, Florence, Centro editoriale toscano, 2004, pp. 999–1018; Magda Martini, *La cultura all'ombra del Muro. Le relazioni culturali fra Italia e Rdt (1949-1989)*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2007.

[10] Thomas Bremer, Daniel Winkler (eds.), *Italien und die DDR*, "Zibaldone. Zeitschrift für italienische Kultur der Gegenwart", 2023, n. 76; Costanza Calabretta, Marialuisa Lucia Sergio (eds.), *Italia-DDR. Nuove prospettive di ricerca*, Rome, Studi Germanici, 2023.

[11] Cfr. Hans Woller (ed.), *La nascita di due Repubbliche: Italia e Germania dal 1943 al 1955*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1993.

countries;[12] and the deep understanding between Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi, united by their membership of the Christian Democratic family.[13] Less attention has been paid to the area of cultural relations, even though it has attracted growing interest since the 2000s. In fact, German historiography has closely examined the FRG's cultural policy, also in relation to Italy, questioning its (dis)continuity after the Second World War and paying particular attention to the history of the German research and cultural institutes in Rome (the Deutsche Archeologische Institut, the Deutsche Historische Institut, the Hertziana Library and Villa Massimo).[14] So far, Italian historians have shown little interest in the subject.[15]

To sum up, the two German states and their connection to Italy have been studied separately, and there is virtually no research connecting the two cases beyond the narrow confines of bilateralism. However, relations between the FRG and the GDR have been marked by a peculiar dynamic made up of observation, antagonism, competition and distancing. One of the new directions taken by German historiography in the 1990s was to make this inter-German dynamic a research theme, overcoming a divided and segmented representation that sometimes depicted the two republics as two *Halbgeschichten* (half-stories). This idea was launched by Christoph Kleßmann, a historian who suggested looking at the two German histories as 'parallel histories intertwined in an asymmetrical way'.[16] His approach was widely discussed and adapted to suit different perspectives.[17] It proved fruitful, provided that a 'mechanical

[12] Cfr. Christoph Vordermann, *Deutschland-Italien 1949-1961. Die Diplomatische Beziehungen*, Frankfurt a. M., Peter Lang, 1994; Maddalena Guiotto, Johannes Lill, *Italia Germania, Deutschland Italien (1948-1958). Riavvicinamenti Wiederannäherungen*, Florence, Olschki, 1997; Federico Niglia, *Fattore Bonn. La diplomazia italiana e la Germania di Adenauer (1945-1963)*, Florence, Le Lettere, 2010; Filippo Triola, *L'alleato naturale. I rapporti tra Italia e Germania occidentale dopo la Seconda guerra mondiale (1945-1955)*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2017.

[13] Cfr. Tiziana Di Maio, *Alcide De Gasperi e Konrad Adenauer. Tra superamento del passato e processo di integrazione europea (1945-1954)*, Turin, Giappichelli, 2004.

[14] Bernd Roeck et al. (eds.), *Deutsche Kulturpolitik in Italien. Entwicklungen, Instrumente, Perspektiven*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer, 2002; Michael Matheus (ed.), *Deutsche Forschungs-und Kulturinstitute in Rom in der Nachkriegszeit*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer, 2007; Andreas Hindrichs, *"Teutonen" in Arkadien. Deutsche auswärtige Kulturpolitik und Kulturvermittlung in Italien von 1949-1970 zwischen Steuerungsversuch und dem Wunsch nach Anerkennung*, Munich, Martin Meidenbauer, 2010.

[15] However, there are a few studies that focus on unresolved issues of the post-war period: Francesca Cavarocchi, *Ricerche e restituzioni delle opere d'arte sottratte dai nazisti: il caso italiano (1945-1950)*, "Contemporanea", 2018, n. 4, pp. 559–586; Ead., *L'accordo culturale del 1956 fra Italia e Repubblica federale tedesca*, "Passato e Presente", 2019, n. 106, pp. 48–72.

[16] Christoph Kleßmann, *Verflechtung und Abgrenzung. Aspekte der geteilten und zusammengehörigen deutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte*, "Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte", 1993, n. 29–30, pp. 30–41.

[17] For an example of the debate, see *Getrennte Vergangenheit — Gemeinsame Geschichte? Protokoll einer Podiumsdiskussion vom 29. Mai 1999*, "Potsdamer Bulletin für Zeithistorische Studien", 1999, n. 15, pp. 13–46.

comparison' was avoided, since this could obscure the differences between the two systems, that is, between a democracy and a dictatorship, between a federal state and a centralist state, of which the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) was the vital nerve centre.[18] In recent decades, comprehensive and wide-ranging studies offering an updated view of post-war German history[19] have been accompanied by works focusing on more specific topics, including the *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik* of both the FRG and the GDR. In addition to research on the role of figurative art in the GDR's cultural policy,[20] there have been studies on the relations and competition between the two German states in European countries that remained neutral during the Cold War, such as Sweden and Finland.[21]

Although Italy's position on the international stage differed from that of other European nations, the peninsula was nevertheless a key transit point: a crossroads in cultural relations between the East and the West, where the two German states observed each other and adjusted their cultural policies in relation to one another, in a sort of mirror game. As we will see, the German cultural institutions based in Rome — the Deutsche Bibliothek (FRG) and the Thomas Mann Centre (GDR) — influenced each other in terms of initiatives and the promotion of authors and works, also in response to the preferences of the Italian public. The recent past linked to the Second World War and the German occupation played an important role in this exchange. Despite the governmental collaboration between Italy and the FRG, prejudices and negative representations of Germans persisted among sectors of public opinion. At the same time, a public memory was constructed that failed to address the legacy of Fascism, instead attributing all the blame exclusively to Nazism.[22] In the post-war period, an anti-fascist paradigm prevailed, albeit not without political conflicts and contrasts. It emphasised the memory of the anti-fascist Resistance and described the war of liberation as a patriotic war with anti-German over-

[18] Konrad H. Jarausch, *"Die Teile als Ganzes erkennen": zur Integration der beiden deutschen Nachkriegsgeschichten*, "Historical Social Research", 2012, n. 24, pp. 292–312, here p. 296.

[19] Cfr. Petra Weber, *Getrennt und doch vereint. Deutsch-deutsche Geschichte 1945-1989/90*, Berlin, Metropol, 2020; Gunilla Budde, *So fern, so nah. Die beiden deutschen Gesellschaften (1949-1989)*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2023.

[20] Cfr. Christian Saehrendt, *Kunst als Botschafter einer künstlichen Nation. Studien zur Rolle der bildenden Kunst in der Auswärtigen Kulturpolitik der DDR*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 2009; Id., *Kunst im Kampf für das "Sozialistische Weltsystem". Auswärtige Kulturpolitik der DDR in Afrika und Nahost*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 2017.

[21] Cfr. Alexander Muschik, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten und das neutrale Schweden. Eine Dreiecksbeziehungen im Schatten der offenen Deutschlandfrage 1949-1972*, Münster, LIT, 2005; Olivia Griese, *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik und Kalter Krieg. Die Konkurrenz von Bundesrepublik und DDR in Finnland 1949-1973*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2006.

[22] Cfr. Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della Seconda guerra mondiale*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2013. For an analysis that focuses on Europe, see Tony Judt, *Postwar. La nostra storia 1945-2005*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2005, pp. 989–1023.

tones. The GDR fitted into this climate perfectly, presenting itself as a new, anti-fascist, pacifist and progressive Germany that was free from any ties to the Nazi regime.

This article aims to establish a connection between the histories of the FRG and the GDR, integrating them without ignoring their fundamental differences. By highlighting their commonalities, it is possible to establish a multi-perspective approach that will enable a triangular analysis and provide insight into the dynamics that developed between the two German states and the Italian Republic during the Cold War period. Although the main purpose of the analysis is to understand the relations between the GDR and the FRG, the article also seeks to shed light on the relationship between the two countries and Italy, albeit from the perspective of cultural policies. More precisely, it examines the 20-year period from the immediate post-war era to the end of the 1960s, when significant changes occurred in the cultural policies and relations of the two German states. In central Europe, inter-German detente was indeed part of a broader context of transformation on a European and global scale, which softened their bipolar antagonism.

This interpretative approach draws on German historiography, which invites us to connect the histories of the FRG and the GDR, and cultural Cold War studies. Since the late 1990s, the broadening of perspectives has made it possible to better define the role of culture, seen not as 'a passive reflection of Cold War policies, but an active contributor to the East–West confrontation'.[23] In other words, culture was a space for both ideological confrontation and rapprochement between the two blocs. Furthermore, the greater focus on social and cultural representations has permitted an examination of the specificity of international cultural relations without reducing them to an exclusively diplomatic dimension.[24] In fact, cultural relations retain their specific characteristics and follow a potentially different timeline to diplomatic relations, revealing a continuity that is less affected by sometimes rapid political changes.

Finally, one last preliminary note should be made regarding the sources. These are drawn from the following German and Italian archives: the Politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts in Berlin, which holds the documents of the FRG's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Historical Diplomatic Archives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome; the Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv, which holds documents from the parties and organisations of the GDR; the archive of the

[23] Konrad H. Jarausch, Christian F. Ostermann, Andreas Etges, *Rethinking, Representing and Remembering the Cold War: Some Cultural Perspectives*, in Idd. (eds.), *The Cold War. Historiography, Memory, Representation*, Oldenbourg, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 1–18, here p. 7.

[24] See, for an overview, Emanuela Costantini et al., *Introduzione*, in Idd. (eds.), *Le relazioni culturali Est-Ovest durante la Guerra fredda. Diplomazia, propaganda e reti personali in Italia e nel mondo*, "Mondo contemporaneo", 2020, n. 2–3, pp. 7–18.

Italian Institute of German Studies, which contains the Thomas Mann Centre collection; the State Archives of Siena, which holds the Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli collection, named after the Centre's first president; and, finally, the Gramsci Foundation in Rome, where the historical archives of the PCI are located. The documents relating to the Thomas Mann Centre in the archive of the Italian Institute of German Studies, which have only recently been sorted and made available for research, have given me access to an almost unexplored source that is particularly useful for gaining a deeper understanding of relations between Italy and the GDR.

The first cultural contacts

In the complex international context of the post-war period, Italian foreign policy — developed mainly by Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi and Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza — was in favour of the rehabilitation of West Germany and its integration into the European political context, driven above all by the need for a rapid recovery of economic and trade relations.[25] Between 1947 and 1948, Italy opened its first diplomatic representation in Frankfurt, a commercial office in Hamburg and a consulate, which had other offices in Munich and Baden-Baden. In turn, Federal Germany, opened its first diplomatic representation in Rome in December 1950. It was elevated to embassy status and entrusted to Clemens von Brentano in May 1951, after the Allied powers had revised the Occupation Statute to allow the reconstitution of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose cultural department — responsible for the *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik* — also resumed operations. Also in 1951, Chancellor Adenauer made his first state visit outside Germany, travelling to Rome; the following year, De Gasperi made a reciprocal visit. Even on a symbolic level, the two meetings represented the happy resumption of Italo-German relations at a time when the countries were in complete alignment.

However, the USSR did not recognise the GDR's sovereignty until 1955. Only after this point was the East German state able to develop its own foreign policy, albeit within the confines of the Soviet bloc. Seeking to overcome its diplomatic isolation, it developed contacts and relations with Western European countries (mainly France, Britain and Italy) on an informal level, since official relations were forbidden until the 1970s.[26] This is why it assigned a very important role to cultural relations, making the *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik* a sort of 'surrogate for state relations'.[27] The support of the communist parties was deci-

[25] On this theme, see F. Triola, *L'alleato naturale*, cit., pp. 69–79.

[26] Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen. Die DDR im internationalen System 1949-1989*, Munich, Oldenbourg, 2007, pp. 179–187.

[27] C. Pöthig, *Italien und die DDR*, cit., pp. 145–147.

sive, which in Italy expressed itself in the form of a dialogue between the PCI and the SED. The Italian party never wavered in its solidarity and commitment to the international recognition of the GDR; after all, this was part of a general policy of European stabilisation. Even in the face of some dramatic moments, such as the protests in factories and cities in the GDR in 1953 (repressed with Soviet intervention) or the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the PCI avoided criticising East German policy. However, there was never any deep harmony between the two parties, due to differences in political culture and ideological approach, to the extent that there were several moments of friction, especially from the second half of the 1960s onwards.[28]

In the first years of the post-war period, cultural contacts between West Germany and Italy were sparse and sporadic, overshadowed by the many unresolved issues inherited from the war (e.g. the return of internees, war cemeteries, German state and private property in Italy and vice versa, war crimes, etc.). The first initiative to resume contact came from the German side. In 1947, the University of Tübingen requested to re-establish relations with Italian universities,[29] while the Staatsbibliothek asked the Central National Library of Florence to recommence the exchange of publications and bibliographic material, which had been interrupted by the war.[30] The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported both requests, and the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale was released from seizure that same year. However, Italy remained aloof, seemingly less interested in resuming cultural relations. Between 1948 and 1949, the consul in Hamburg repeatedly urged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to accept and support requests from universities and academies in Düsseldorf, Cologne and Dortmund to organise conferences or student trips in collaboration with their Italian counterparts. The consul noted that while there was 'German interest' in Italy, the latter had to align itself 'with the active action of other countries' and follow the examples of Great Britain and France, which were already very active.[31]

On the occasion of the celebrations for the bicentenary of Goethe's birth (1749), Italian institutions began to pay more attention to the cultural situa-

[28] Cfr. Francesco Di Palma, *Die Sed, die Pci und der Eurokommunismus* and Fiammetta Balestracci, *Zwischen ideologischer Diversifikation und politisch-kulturellem Pragmatismus*, in Arnd Bauerkämper, Francesco di Palma (eds.), *Bruderparteien jenseits des Eisernen Vorhangs. Die Beziehung der Sed zu den kommunistischen Parteien West-und Sudeuropas*, Berlin, Links, 2011, pp. 149–166 and pp. 167–185.

[29] Memo, Directorate-General for Cultural Relations to Directorate-General for Political Affairs, 27 July 1947, in Archivio storico diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari esteri (hereafter Asd-MAE), Affari politici 1946-1950, Germania occidentale, envelope 10, folder 7.

[30] Memo, Directorate-General for Cultural Relations to Directorate-General for Political Affairs, 2 August 1947, in Ivi.

[31] Telespresso form no. 00987, Italian Consulate in Hamburg to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 January 1949, in Asd-MAE, Affari politici 1946-1950, Germania occidentale, envelope 30, folder 7.

tion in West Germany. Italy took part in the events with a number of delegations, and this participation was seen as an important 'necessity' in view of 'the resumption of our cultural relations with Germany' in the context of European cooperation.[32] The Italian consul in Frankfurt, Vitale Gallina,[33] wrote a detailed account of the celebrations, adopting a tone that alternated between admiration and fear. In fact, he observed that the difficult economic, political and moral circumstances did not stop the anniversary from being a great success in many parts of the FRG, and that this demonstrated 'the reaffirmation before the whole world of the intrinsic value of German culture'.[34]

Goethe was also a prominent figure in the cultural landscape of the GDR. The latter sought to position itself within the tradition of classical German humanism, of which the poet was one of the earliest exponents,[35] and it organised bicentenary celebrations in Weimar, the East German *Kulturstadt* where Goethe had lived for many years. The event was also attended by Italian delegations, but little is documented about this. A few months later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave its first negative opinion on representatives of Italian universities participating in the 250th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the German Academy of Sciences in Berlin, organised by the GDR.[36] Travel was only permitted as private citizens, a policy that remained in force even afterwards. On the other hand, East German citizens were only allowed to enter Italy if they had the approval of the Allied Travel Office in West Berlin, and if they were not representing East German institutions in an official capacity. In other cases, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not authorise travel, denying visas or delaying their allocation. These provisions were only relaxed in the second half of the 1960s and had a particularly negative impact on the cultural sector, hindering exchanges. Two events that occurred in 1954 illustrate Italy's closed attitudes towards the GDR: the unfavourable opinion given to the request for tours by the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra and the Thomanerchor, and the refusal to allow the Italian Film Week to be held in

[32] Draft response to Senator Ciasca's inquiry addressed to the ministers of Education and Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (cabinet), 20 January 1950, in Asd-MAE, Affari politici 1946-1950, Germania occ., envelope 43, folder 8.

[33] A diplomatic officer who had already served during the Fascist period, Gallina arrived in Frankfurt in January 1947 as a secretary of the embassy of the first Italian representation in Germany. On his mission, see M. Guiotto, J. Lill, *Italia Germania*, cit., pp. 33–47.

[34] Telespresso form no. 10666, Consulate General of Italy in Frankfurt to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4 September 1949, in Asd-MAE, Affari politici 1946-1950, Germania occ., envelope 30, folder 7.

[35] Cfr. Andreas Heyer, *Der gereimte Genosse. Goethe in der SBZ/DDR*, Baden-Baden, Tectum, 2017.

[36] Memo, Directorate-General for Political Affairs to Directorate-General for Cultural Relations, 16 May 1950, in Asd-MAE, Affari politici 1946-1950, Germania occidentale, envelope 43, folder 8.

East Berlin.[37] In this case, the Directorate General for Cultural Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs retracted its previous favourable opinion; the USSR had, in the meantime, recognised the GDR's sovereignty, and the event could have been 'mistakenly interpreted as a kind of hasty recognition' of this act.[38]

At the time, the Italian government was not very interested in relations with the GDR, especially cultural relations, and they were easily subordinated to the Atlantic international order and relations with the FRG. In fact, the latter made it clear — through its ambassador — that it would never recognise the East German government, urging Italy to support it in this decision, preventing the GDR from establishing its own diplomatic and consular representations, and asking to be informed of any trade missions.[39] A few weeks later, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs opposed an award in honour of Thomas Mann so as not to 'give rise to discordant impressions in Germany'.[40] Despite his undoubted literary merits, the writer was viewed with a certain mistrust by the FRG as a result of certain choices he had made, including his decision not to reacquire German citizenship and to participate in the bicentenary of Goethe in the GDR, as well as his pacifist positions.

However, the first cultural exchanges between Italy and the FRG gradually shifted towards a conscious and organised reconstruction of relations. In what was otherwise a rapid normalisation of relations between the two countries, priority was given to the economy and diplomacy on both sides. As Christof Dipper noted, the 'official and political form' of culture was the area that developed most slowly.[41] The German historian identifies two main causes: reservations about the young Federal Republic and the preference of many Italian intellectuals for the GDR ('the better Germany'), and the divisive issue of South Tyrol. With regard to the *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik*, it should be noted that the FRG's ability to plan deliberate action in this field developed only gradually and was preceded by the reorganisation of its bureaucratic and administrative apparatus.

[37] Memo, Directorate-General for Political Affairs to Directorate-General for Cultural Relations, 26 November 1954, in Asd-MAE, Affari politici 1951-1957, Germania orientale, envelope 1242, folder 4.

[38] Report: project for an 'Italian Film Week in East Berlin', Directorate-General for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries to Directorate-General for Political Affairs, 2 April 1954, in Ivi.

[39] Talks between HE the Minister and the German Ambassador Brentano, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 April 1954, in Asd-MAE, Affari politici 1951-1975, envelope 264, folder 1/2.1 Rapporti politici.

[40] Telespresso form no. 5-1203: Thomas Mann — award, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7 May 1954, in Asd-MAE, Affari politici 1951-1957, envelope 264, folder 1/2.3 Rapporti culturali.

[41] Christof Dipper, *Deutsche und Italiener in der Nachkriegszeit*, in M. Matheus (ed.), *Deutsche Forschungs-und Kulturinstitute in Rom in der Nachkriegszeit*, cit., pp. 1–20, here p. 19.

The establishment of the Deutsche Bibliothek and the Thomas Mann Centre

During the early stages of the Cold War, the greater autonomy in foreign policy of the two German states became more evident in the cultural sector, at a time when their ideological opposition was intensifying in the context. In the mid-1950s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the West German Embassy founded the Deutsche Bibliothek in Rome; almost at the same time, East Germany and the PCI established the Thomas Mann Centre. Although they were different in origin, structure and functioning, the Deutsche Bibliothek and the Thomas Mann Centre had to perform similar tasks: to promote German culture and bring the local media and public closer together. The aim was to convey a positive image of the country of reference.

The idea for the Deutsche Bibliothek was first proposed by Rudolf Salat, director of the cultural department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Dieter Sattler, a cultural attaché at the embassy in Rome.[42] The two began discussing the project in 1952, driven by the realisation that, although the capital hosted many specialist institutions (e.g. the Archeologische Institut, the Deutsche Historische Institut, etc.), it lacked a non-specialist institution that could accommodate a wider audience and offer both a library and a hall for conferences, presentations and concerts.[43] The idea was also supported by the difficulty encountered in starting cultural activities in Italy. According to Salat, the latter was burdened by the 'mortgage of the past': the old supporters of Fascism felt they were 'special friends of Germany', while their opponents still viewed the FRG with mistrust.[44] Hence, the most influential political and cultural groups were distrustful of Bonn, while neo-fascist sympathies had a negative impact on the country's public image.

The ambassador to the Federal Republic, the aforementioned Clemens von Brentano (1951–57), did not immediately approve a cultural institution of the kind proposed by Sattler and Salat. Financial considerations appear to have been the main reason for his desire to locate the library in Villa Massimo, the academy founded in 1913 along Via Nomentana to host and promote German artists.[45] Furthermore, he did not believe that the institution designed by Sattler — an official at his own embassy — would be attractive enough for German

[42] On Sattler, see Ulrike Stoll, *Kulturpolitik als Beruf. Dieter Sattler (1906-1968) in München, Bonn und Rom*, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2005.

[43] On the opening of the Deutsche Bibliothek, see Ulrike Stoll, *Die Gründung der Deutschen Bibliothek in Rom (1955)*, in M. Matheus (ed.), *Deutsche Forschungs-und Kulturinstitute in Rom in der Nachkriegszeit*, cit., pp. 235–252.

[44] Protokoll über die Besprechung mit den Kulturreferenten verschiedener Auslandsmissionen, R. Salat, 25–27. November 1955, in Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amts (hereafter PAAA), envelope 11, ref. 3/962, f. 30.

[45] Bericht: Deutsche Bibliothek in Rom, Botschaft der BRD an das Auswärtige Amt, 7. Oktober 1954, in PAAA, envelope 90, ref. 6/92, f. 44-47.

intellectuals and the Roman public. However, Brentano felt it was important for the FRG to have a dedicated space for representative events or concerts. In 1954, he even wrote that 'the days when the representatives of the Federal Republic had to deliberately hold back are finally over',[46] hinting at the possibility of benefiting from a new scope for initiative.

The Deutsche Bibliothek, a name chosen for its neutral connotation ('Cultural Institute' would have evoked memories of the Third Reich[47]), was eventually located in the centre of Rome, in Palazzo Bonaparte in Piazza Venezia, as Sattler had wished. Reinhard Raffalt, Vatican correspondent for a Bavarian newspaper and organist at the German community's Catholic church (Santa Maria dell'Anima), was chosen as its first director. After a delay of a few months, the library was inaugurated in March 1955 with a concert featuring works by Georg Friedrich Händel (1685–1759). The event was attended by more than six hundred people.[48] In addition to Raffalt, Brentano also gave a speech, in which he emphasised the Bibliothek's task of imparting knowledge about German literature and intellectual life in order to 'contribute to strengthening the bonds of friendship between the two peoples'.[49] Meanwhile, cultural relations between the two countries were improving. After lengthy negotiations, the German research and cultural institutes in Italy that had been seized by the Allies during the war were returned to the FRG in 1953 (except for Villa Massimo, which had to wait until 1956), while negotiations were underway on a bilateral cultural agreement — eventually signed in 1956 — to regulate the activities of institutes, schools and associations, which allowed for greater exchange. The Bibliothek's debut on the Roman scene also seemed positive; both the library and the German language courses were well attended, and presentations and concerts were held regularly (approximately one or two per month). However, it was the musical programme that mainly made the library famous, thanks in part to Raffalt's efforts in founding the Bach Gesellschaft, an association dedicated to promoting the Baroque composer and musician.

A different process led to the establishment of the Thomas Mann Centre, which began in 1954 at the initiative of Paolo Robotti, a PCI member responsible for foreign affairs. During a conversation with his partner Keller, secretary of the Gesellschaft für kulturelle Verbindungen mit dem Ausland (GKV), an organisation dealing with the *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik*, Robotti proposed

[46] Bericht: Deutsche Bibliothek in Rom, Botschaft der BRD an das Auswärtige Amt, 12. Februar 1954, in Ivi, f. 121.

[47] Aufzeichnung: Deutsche Bibliothek in Rom, D. Sattler, 12. Februar 1954, in PAAA, envelope 90, ref. 6/92, f. 134.

[48] Tagesbericht 1266/55, Botschaft der BRD im Rom, 18. März 1955, in PAAA, envelope 24 ref. 204/248, f. 354.

[49] Deutsche Übersetzung der Rede des Herrn Botschafters, in Asd-MAE, Affari politici 1951-1957, envelope 341, folder 1/2-3, f. 356-357.

the creation of a sort of study committee on the GDR.[50] As with the Deutsche Bibliothek, the idea arose from the realisation that something was missing: a friendship association with the GDR, like those between Italy and the USSR and between Italy and other countries of the socialist bloc, with which regular diplomatic relations were maintained. The aim was to 'raise awareness of the reconstruction, cultural life and peace policy of the German Democratic Republic',[51] thus normalising the country's image and facilitating its international recognition. For the PCI, the initiative made it possible to re-establish relations with the SED and promote the stabilisation of the GDR.[52] For the latter, the idea of the Centre presented an excellent political opportunity, enabling it to exploit the trust of a section of the Italian population in the PCI and its interest in improving relations with socialist countries.[53]

The project did not see the light of day until 1957, a year after the Hungarian crisis had been resolved, with the formation of the first initiative committee. It was composed of cultural figures linked to the PCI and the Italian Socialist Party, as well as independent actors, all of whom were united by a common anti-fascist background. The first members were the philosophers Antonio Banfi, Galvano della Volpe, Remo Cantoni and Mazzino Montinari; the Germanist Paolo Chiarini; and a journalist, Fausto Codino. Over the years, they were joined by the historian Enzo Collotti, the Germanist Cesare Cases, the philologist Angelo Monteverde and translator Lavina Mazzucchetti. The first president was archaeologist Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, a PCI member and director of the Gramsci Institute. The Centre was initially based in Via San Pantaleo, near Piazza Navona, not far from the Deutsche Bibliothek.

The Thomas Mann Centre operated differently from its West German counterpart, as it depended on cooperation with and mediation through East German institutions, which provided funding, materials and contacts. However, the institution was mostly animated by Italian intellectuals, who carved out spaces of relative autonomy in which they followed guidelines that did not always coincide with the needs of the SED. In fact, there were moments of tension and conflict, as well as periods during which the Centre's activities decreased. The first clash with the GDR partners occurred just two years after it opened. During conversations with Sergio Segre, a correspondent for the PCI's newspaper *l'Unità* in East Berlin, and Giuliano Pajetta, a representative of the PCI's foreign affairs department, GKV secretary Herbert Meyer attrib-

[50] Unterredung zwischen Robotti und Keller, 9. Februar 1954, in Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BArch), DY 30/96999.

[51] Robotti to Keilson, 6 December 1955, in SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/96999.

[52] Francesco Leone, *Die italienische Kommunistische Partei und die Deutsche Frage 1947-1973*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2022, pp. 136–138.

[53] Arbeitsbericht 1956 Italien, 8. Januar 1957, in SAPMO-BArch, DY 13/75.

uted the clash to the overly apolitical nature of the Centre's activities.[54] The latter adopted a predominantly cultural approach, with political issues present but in an indirect way. In fact, in 1961, the Centre even set up a dedicated political and economic relations committee, composed of socialist and communist parliamentarians.

While a neutral name was chosen for the Deutsche Bibliothek, the Centre was named after Thomas Mann, whose 'unifying and non-divisive value' for the German people was emphasised.[55] In reality, as we have seen, the West's relations with the writer were not so straightforward. The Centre sought to offer 'a unified vision of the German nation and culture',[56] a goal that was more propaganda than anything else, aimed at attracting independent figures and avoiding possible censorship by the state authorities, given that it dealt exclusively with the GDR.

This aspect did not go unnoticed. The West German press described the opening of the Thomas Mann Centre as a cultural offensive by the Soviet zone, which used Thomas Mann's name as a 'banner' to mislead the Italian public with 'this veiled propaganda from Pankow'.[57] The West German embassy also viewed the Centre's initiatives with suspicion, especially after it had established partnerships with major publishing houses such as Mondadori, and requested the intervention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which approached its Italian counterpart. For the FRG, the activities of the Thomas Mann Centre represented a clear political problem and were seen as an attempt to enable the GDR and the USSR to penetrate Western Europe. Such an initiative could have had damaging effects on relations between the Federal Republic and Italy, the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned. It therefore asked the government to take all measures deemed appropriate 'to ensure that the activities of the Thomas Mann Centre were substantially restricted or — if possible — prevented',[58] also referring to the importance of supporting anti-communist action. The Italians promised to keep a close eye on the Centre, especially regarding requests for authorisation of events or initiatives,[59] but as the Thomas Mann Centre was formally a private Italian association, no concrete measures

[54] Report on the trip to East Berlin, Sergio Segre, 6 March 1959, in Fondazione Gramsci Archivio storico del Pci (FG APci), Rdt, envelope 0465, f. 0153-4; Notes on conversations held in Berlin, Giuliano Pajetta, 2 November 1959, in ivi, f. 0203.

[55] Programmatic statement, February 1957, in Archivio dell'Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici (hereafter AIISG), Centro Thomas Mann, series 1, envelope 1, folder 1.

[56] Ibidem.

[57] Carlo G. Mundt, *Da Thomas Mann a Villa Massimo*, "Rheinischer Merkur", 1 November 1957, in Asd-MAE, Direzione generale affari politici 1945-1960, envelope 64.

[58] Bericht: "Centro Thomas Mann" in Rom, Auswärtige Amt an Botschaft der BRD Rom, 9. September 1957, in PAAA, envelope 24 ref. 204/247, f. 240.

[59] Telespresso form no. 36A/1173/10: "Centro Thomas Mann", Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 29 April 1957, in Asd-MAE, Direzione generale affari politici 1945-1960, envelope 64.

were ever taken to prevent its activities. Nevertheless, it was obstructed in a more indirect way other decisions, such as the refusal to grant visas to artists, theatre companies and music groups from the GDR, which led to the cancellation of tours and performances that had sometimes already been organised.

The opening of the Thomas Mann Centre drew the attention of the West German press to the Deutsche Bibliothek, whose activities were considered unsystematic and unrepresentative of 'all German spiritual trends',[60] given that most of its initiatives focused on chamber music. Even before 1957, some journalists accused Bonn of not having a clear idea of the Deutsche Bibliothek's remit; they deemed its programme incapable of attracting the Roman public, as the 'elegant' receptions reserved for diplomats did not seem particularly useful for promoting the FRG.[61] The activities were based on classical German heritage, revolving mainly around Goethe, Schiller, Winckelmann, Bach and Beethoven. The presentations, which were rather conventional, were entrusted to people close to Raffalt and Sattler, or to members of German intellectual circles. This elitist attitude prevented the Deutsche Bibliothek from reaching a wider audience or exploiting the full potential of newspapers.

In the meantime, the FRG's *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik* began to receive greater attention in the Bundestag. More funding and a new direction were primarily solicited by the deputies from the Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD), including the head of cultural policy, Georg Kahn-Ackermann. During a lengthy debate with the Foreign Affairs Minister, Heinrich von Brentano (1955–61), Kahn-Ackermann cited the case of Italy, complaining that no knowledge of German cultural life had been disseminated in the peninsula since 1945.[62] In a similar vein, Sattler acknowledged the disorientation of West Germany and the difficulty of providing clear cultural references in the contemporary world: 'Following emigration, war, denazification and the division of Germany, it is difficult for outside observers to know how important, for example, Thomas Mann, Bertolt Brecht, Carl Zuckmayer, Hermann Hesse or Hans Carossa, Ernst Jünger and Heidegger are in the intellectual life of the Federal Republic.'[63]

[60] Joachim Schilling, *Sonno beato a Roma. L'offensiva culturale di Pankow in Italia trova un appoggio nella passività della Repubblica federale*, "Welt der Arbeit", 5 April 1957, in Asd-MAE, Direzione generale affari politici 1945-1960, envelope 64. Similar arguments can be found in Josef Schmitz van Vorst, *Musica barocca e luce di candela. In merito all'orientamento della politica culturale tedesca in Italia*, "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", 4 December 1957, in Ivi.

[61] Friedrich Meichsner, *Come lavora la diplomazia culturale tedesca?*, "Die Welt", 5 February 1957, in Ivi.

[62] Georg Kahn-Ackermann, in *Verhandlung des Deutschen Bundestags*, 2. WP, 150. Sitzung, 20. Juni 1956, p. 8019.

[63] D. Sattler, cited in U. Stoll, *Die Gründung der Deutschen Bibliothek*, in M. Matheus (ed.), *Deutsche Forschungs-und Kulturinstitute in Rom in der Nachkriegszeit*, cit., pp. 235–252, here p. 247.

Kahn-Ackermann returned to the Italian case in a subsequent parliamentary debate, after pointing out that 'the cultural department was a sort of stepchild' of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,[64] poorly supported and inefficient. The opening of the Thomas Mann Centre reflected the desire for a fresh approach to cultural offerings more than ever before, taking into account the presence in Rome of 'a very international, very modern, very liberal public opinion',[65] who wanted to learn more about German avant-garde art than the authors presented up to that point. This marked the beginning of a clash between conservatives and social democrats over the role and content of foreign cultural policies. In response to the criticism, the Deutsche Bibliothek emphasised that its activities were not intended as an 'immediate counter-reaction to the manifestations of the Thomas Mann Centre, with its explicitly political aims'; instead, it reiterated that it had managed to gain respect among foreign cultural institutions in Rome 'thanks to initiatives that were entirely apolitical and far removed from everyday events'.[66]

The trends in the FRG's *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik* in relation to the Italian case were no exception. This initial phase was characterised by the lack of a clear concept of cultural policy and an attitude of restraint, reserve and moderation (*Zurückhaltung*).[67] The decision not to propose initiatives linked to current issues or with political content seems to highlight embarrassment and unease in confronting the present and the recent past. German cultural tradition, untainted by the Third Reich, thus provided an easy refuge from the difficult confrontation with modernity.

Cultural and ideological competition

Neither the Deutsche Bibliothek nor the possibility of a cultural competition with it is mentioned anywhere in the documents relating to the establishment of the Thomas Mann Centre. This could be explained by the fact that the Centre's founders primarily aimed to support the Democratic Republic. Additionally, the Deutsche Bibliothek was perhaps not perceived as a real adversary, given the criticism that it received from the West German press. Filling the void left by the FRG, the Thomas Mann Centre was able to exploit particularly fertile

[64] G. Kahn-Ackermann, in *Verhandlung des Deutschen Bundestags*, 2. WP, 208. Sitzung, 9. Mai 1957, p. 11988.

[65] Ivi, p. 11990.

[66] Tätigkeitsbereich der Deutschen Bibliothek Rom, Botschaft der BRD Rom an das Auswärtige Amt, 12. Februar 1960, in PAAA, envelope 96, ref. 606/38.

[67] Cfr. Eckard Michels, *Zwischen Zurückhaltung, Tradition und Reform: Anfänge Westdeutscher Auswärtiger Kulturpolitik in den 1950er Jahren am Beispiel der Kulturinstitute*, in Johannes Paulmann (ed.), *Auswärtige Repräsentationen. Deutsche Kulturdiplomatie nach 1945*, Cologne, Böhlau, 2005, pp. 241–258, here pp. 246–249.

ground: the Italian intellectual world, which was dominated by left-wing intellectuals, with whom the FRG failed to establish contact. The Centre's cultural offerings also compensated for the shortcomings of the Deutsche Bibliothek. The first author to be presented to the Italian public was the poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), through a travelling exhibition and a series of conferences and concerts to mark the centenary of his death. He was chosen partly because he had been a friend of Marx and Engels, partly because he represented the 'democratic strand of German culture'.[68] The authors presented by the Centre in agreement with the GDR, which provided the materials for the exhibitions, were part of a political framework, even if they were not used for overt propaganda purposes. Furthermore, the Centre neglected German classicism, to which it only devoted space from the 1970s onwards.[69] Instead, it focused on modern and contemporary authors, such as the expressionist painter and sculptor Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), a socialist and pacifist to whom the Centre dedicated numerous exhibitions.

One of the most recurrent names in the activities promoted by the Thomas Mann Centre was that of Bertold Brecht (1898–1956). The Germanists Cesare Cases and Paolo Chiarini held conferences on his works, whereas exhibitions on his theatre company, the Berliner Ensemble, were staged for decades in various cities throughout Italy. Recitals of his lyrics and ballads, also broadcast on radio and television, were so frequent that they were even included in the celebrations for the Centre's tenth anniversary in 1967.[70] There was a fortunate convergence of interest in Brecht among important Italian intellectuals, especially the film director Giorgio Strehler and Paolo Grassi, the director of the Piccolo Teatro in Milan. Through numerous productions of his plays, they facilitated their successful reception in Italy.[71] While emphasising the political nature of Brecht's work, the intellectuals associated with the Thomas Mann Centre never presented him as an 'artist of the GDR': his figure 'exceeded' the narrow confines of the socialist state. Nevertheless, the GDR tried to use Brecht as a form of cultural capital in its relations with Western Europe, even though the playwright's relationship with the SED regime was more complex and contentious than was publicly acknowledged.[72] On the other hand, the FRG

[68] Draft of the programmatic statement, no date, in AIISG, Centro Thomas Mann, series 1, envelope 1, folder 1.

[69] For the overall history of the Thomas Mann Centre, see Costanza Calabretta, *Il Centro Thomas Mann: un'istituzione culturale della Guerra fredda*, in Ead., M.L. Sergio (eds.), *Italia-DDR*, cit., pp. 89–111.

[70] For the anniversary, Gisella May from the Berliner Ensemble gave a concert at the Olympic Stadium, accompanied by the Rome Philharmonic Orchestra. See the Programme agreed between the Thomas Mann Centre and the FRG–Italy Association, no date, in AIISG, Centro Thomas Mann, series 1, envelope 19, folder 175.

[71] Cfr. Paola Barbon, *'Il signor B. B.'. Wege und Umwege der italienischen Brecht-Rezeption*, Bonn, Bouvier, 1987.

[72] Cfr. Werner Hecht, *Die Mühen der Ebenen. Brecht und die DDR*, Berlin, Aufbau, 2013.

attempted to censor Brecht, as well as the playwright Franz Wedekind (1864–1918), by prohibiting any performances of their work abroad, as they were not considered worthy representatives of German culture. Kahn-Ackermann again denounced this action, calling it a sign of 'intolerance and petty-bourgeois political blindness'.[73]

Exploited by the Democratic Republic and opposed by the Federal Republic, Brecht became a pawn in the cultural conflict of the Cold War. Although his work was not censored in Italy, his company was prevented from touring there until the mid-1960s. In fact, since the Allied Travel Office had not given its approval, the Italian government denied visas to the Berliner Ensemble, causing the cancellation of performances already scheduled as part of the Venice Biennale (1961, 1962) and at the Maggio Fiorentino theatre (1964). These refusals triggered reactions from the Thomas Mann Centre and left-wing parties, who denounced the policies of the Italian government and the Federal Republic. In 1961, a protest letter accusing the government of damaging both the Biennale and Italy's cultural prestige, signed by around 70 intellectuals and artists, was published in *Avanti!* and *l'Unità*.[74] A satirical cartoon targeting the Minister of the Interior, Mario Scelba, drew a comparison between the measures preventing the Berliner Ensemble from entering Italy and the tolerance shown towards South Tyrolean extremist groups, who were believed to be supported by the FRG.[75] The issue of the denied visas even reached the Chamber of Deputies, where Raffaele De Grada (PCI) presented a parliamentary inquiry, speaking of a 'McCarthyist attitude' that was damaging the Venice Biennale, whose international character made 'the ban on the entry of a company that honours Europe even more odious'.[76] The arrival of the Berliner Ensemble took on symbolic significance; thanks in part to a change in the Travel Office's regulations, it received wide press coverage. The company's participation in the 25th Venice International Theatre Festival in 1966, which brought Helene Weigel (Brecht's collaborator and widow) to Italy, was a triumphant moment for the Thomas Mann Centre, which had worked towards it for a long time.

During the 1960s, the Federal Republic's attitude towards Brecht softened and the ban on presenting the author abroad was lifted. This was partly because the political climate had changed. To mark the 70th anniversary of

[73] G. Kahn-Ackermann, in *Verhandlung des Deutschen Bundestags*, 2. WP, 208. Sitzung, 9. Mai 1957, p. 11990.

[74] *Vibrata protesta di intellettuali per il veto al 'Berliner Ensemble'*, "Avanti!", 17 September 1961.

[75] *Vigilanza di Scelba alla frontiera*, "l'Unità", 13 September 1961. In the night between 11 and 12 June 1961, the Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol launched a series of bomb attacks on the city of Bolzano and the surrounding province.

[76] Summary report, Chamber of Deputies, 25 September 1962, in AIISG, Centro Thomas Mann, series 1, envelope 9, folder 89.

the playwright's birth in 1968, the Deutsche Bibliothek organised a four-day event with conferences, round-table discussions and a photography exhibition. One of the invited speakers was the Germanist Paolo Chiarini, director of the Italian Institute of German Studies and one of the most loyal and long-time collaborators of the Thomas Mann Centre. This decision annoyed Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, the president of the Thomas Mann Centre, who expressed his concern about the FRG's activities in Italy to Paul Wandel, president of the Liga für Völkerfreundschaft (an organisation that replaced the GKV). While the Thomas Mann Centre had introduced Brecht to Italy and done 'pioneering' work, the Deutsche Bibliothek was now copying its initiatives and presenting itself as the sole representative of Germany, even from a cultural point of view. The days when the Federal Republic's action was 'not palpable' and 'completely passive' towards the Centre's initiatives seemed to have ended. Bianchi Bandinelli took the opportunity to express his regret to the GDR's institutions, which were unable to update their cultural offering:

> For ten years, we have always presented only Brecht and Kollwitz, time and time again! Contemporary literature and art, science and culture in the GDR remain excluded from our activities and are practically unknown to us, as we have not established any direct contact with writers, artists and scientists, despite our requests.[77]

Bianchi Bandinelli also observed that this shortcoming not only limited the Centre's activities but also caused a certain dissatisfaction and frustration among its members and those who were genuinely interested in the GDR.

While the Deutsche Bibliothek was once criticised for its traditional programme and closed mindset towards contemporary issues, completely outclassed by the Thomas Mann Centre's more widely appealing initiatives, the tables had now turned. Despite having promoted very lively activities in the previous years, the Centre was on the defensive and lagging behind. In fact, the first half of the 1960s was a period of significant activism: important collaborations were established with publishing houses such as Einaudi and Mondadori; relationships were forged with various cultural institutions, from the Teatro Eliseo to the Casa della Cultura in Milan; and numerous initiatives were promoted throughout Italy. Moreover, the Centre adopted a clear line of action, prioritising events that emphasised its close ties with the GDR in the name of anti-fascism. This was what brought East Germany closer to both intellectuals — even those who were critical of Marxism or communism — and ordinary citizens, especially left-wing activists who were interested in the country and the campaign for its recognition. While progress was observed and appreciated in some areas of social organisation, such as urban planning, (preventive)

[77] Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli to Paul Wandel, 23. Februar 1968, in Archivio di Stato di Siena (hereafter ASS), Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, envelope 56, folder 285.

healthcare and education, it was the fact that the GDR presented itself as 'the first anti-fascist state born on German soil' that determined the support of part of the Italian population.

Anti-fascism represented a kind of 'founding myth',[78] which mainly served to legitimise the East German state and nation. After all, these were born with an initial lack of legitimacy and an identity yet to be built.[79] As Martin Sabrow points out, anti-fascism was not 'just one belief among others, but a political paradigm of absolute value',[80] pervasive and endowed with its own discursive force. Furthermore, anti-fascism allowed the GDR to promote a self-absolving interpretation of the past, absolving itself of any responsibility for Nazism and its crimes. Instead, this responsibility was attributed exclusively to the Federal Republic, which was accused of not having freed itself from Fascism, based on the persistence of a capitalist and monopolistic economic system associated with reactionary forces; rearmament, which was linked to German militarism; its failure to recognise the borders with Poland, which was considered a sign of revanchism; limited denazification; and continued presence of Fascist personnel in the state and administrative apparatus. Furthermore, the Federal Republic's attempts at dealing with the past in the 1950s — under liberal-conservative governments — had proved rather limited and reticent, which reinforced criticism of the country.[81] Anti-fascism was, then, used as a dividing line, allowing the GDR to distance itself from Bonn, discrediting the FRG's image and simultaneously strengthening its own at a time when the East German state was not yet recognised internationally.

The PCI agreed with this interpretation not only because of its ideological proximity to East Berlin or the anti-German sentiment inherited from the partisan Resistance, but also because attacking the FRG for its lingering Fascism and militarism strengthened opposition to West German rearmament and NATO. Furthermore, from the late 1950s onwards, memories of anti-fascism and, especially, the Resistance became firmly established in the Italian

[78] Cfr. Herfried Münkler, *Antifaschismus und antifaschistischer Widerstand als politischer Gründungsmythos der DDR*, "Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte", 1998, n. 45, pp. 16–29.

[79] Cfr. Edoardo Lombardi, *Uno Stato senza nazione. L'elaborazione del passato nella Germania comunista (1945-1953)*, Milan, Unicopli, 2022.

[80] Martin Sabrow, *Antifascismo e identità nella Repubblica democratica tedesca*, in Alberto De Bernardi, Paolo Ferrari (eds.), *Antifascismo e identità europea*, Rome, Carocci, 2004, pp. 255–268, here p. 263.

[81] Cfr. Norbert Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik: die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit*, Munich, C. H. Beck, 1996. A wealth of literature exists on the different ways in which the past was reinterpreted in the two German states, including: Peter Reichel, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland. Die Auseinandersetzung mit der NS-Diktatur von 1945 bis heute*, Munich, C. H. Beck, 2001; Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory. The Nazi Past in the two Germanys*, Cambridge (MA) - London, Harvard University Press, 1997; Jürgen Danyel (ed.), *Die geteilte Vergangenheit: zum Umgang mit Nationalsozialismus und Widerstand in beiden deutschen Staaten*, Berlin, Akademische Verlag, 1995.

collective consciousness, generating effective political mobilisation. In this context, the Thomas Mann Centre organised initiatives focused on the memory of the anti-Nazi Resistance, receiving widespread approval. It also embraced the interpretation developed by the GDR, which emphasised its differences with the Federal Republic and discredited the latter for its alleged authoritarian tendencies.[82] This interpretation became a popular argumentative device, used at both cultural and political events. For example, the book *Die Weiße Rose* (The White Rose) by Inge Scholl, the sister of two German students and opponents of Nazism who were killed in 1943, was presented in Rome in 1959. A lively debate involving the writer Joyce Lussu, the politician and journalist Achille Battaglia and Ferruccio Parri highlighted the differences in the educational programmes of the two Germanys. While young people in the GDR were 'educated in the spirit of democracy' and made aware of the true nature of Nazism, oblivion prevailed in the FRG, where anti-fascist fighters were 'forgotten or even vilified'.[83] In February 1961, again in Rome, Erich Kuby's book *Das ist den Deutschen Vaterland* (This is the German Fatherland) and a special issue of the magazine *Nuovi argomenti* on the German right were presented, with Cesare Cases, Roberto Battaglia and Sergio Segre among the invited speakers. On this occasion, criticism was directed at the FRG's foreign policy and decision to rearm, as well as its educational policy, which was viewed as a continuation and a restoration of the past. Cases spoke of a 'state of hibernation' in which Bonn had lived, when it had set aside problems such as 'the survival of the Nazi legacy, anti-Semitism and nationalism' in the face of those of the 'so-called economic miracle, that is, in the face of this kind of intoxication with prosperity that had struck the Germans'.[84] This was another recurring theme, which associated the failure to come to terms with the past with uncontrolled adherence to American-style consumerist models.

While the Thomas Mann Centre launched this cultural and ideological offensive against the Federal Republic (of which I have only given two examples), the Deutsche Bibliothek was reorganised; as happened with the German cultural institutions in Milan and Trieste, it was absorbed by the Goethe Institut, which was expanding globally. Between 1961 and 1963, it opened branches in Naples, Genoa and Palermo, bringing the total number in Italy to seven, including the one in Turin. Although the Deutsche Bibliothek retained its name for several years, perhaps to mark its unique history, it was effectively integrated into the growing network of the Goethe Institut.

[82] Cfr. Antonio Missiroli, *Un rapporto ambivalente. Le due Germanie viste dall'Italia 1945-1989*, "Storia e Memoria", 1996, n. 1, pp. 99–112.

[83] Presentation of Inge Scholl's monograph *La rosa bianca* (The white rose), 30 November 1959, in AIISG, Centro Thomas Mann, series 1, envelope 5, folder 57.

[84] Conference/discussion 'The German Right'. Typed transcript, December 1960–February 1961, in AIISG, Centro Thomas Mann, series 1, envelope 8, folder 77.

The Deutsche Bibliothek enjoyed greater recognition among Italian intellectuals. This is demonstrated by the presence of writers such as Ignazio Silone, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Carlo Emilio Gadda, Aldo Palazzeschi and Giorgio Bassani at the opening of an exhibition on the Piper publishing house in Munich in 1961. In response to past criticism, it began to reflect on how to raise awareness among the Italian public of 'current German life and cultural issues',[85] without resorting to propaganda or ideology, but no longer shying away from confronting the present. The cultural offering gradually began to modernise, attracting a younger audience, as with the concert by composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, held in 1961 at the Teatro Eliseo.

Struggling to compete with the Thomas Mann Centre in cultural and ideological terms, the Deutsche Bibliothek also started to address the theme of the anti-Nazi Resistance, no longer leaving it solely to the Centre. However, the first conference, entitled 'The German Resistance — yesterday, today and tomorrow' (1960), was poorly attended, demonstrating the difficulty of attracting new audiences. The Deutsche Bibliothek continued its efforts, as demonstrated by the 1963conference on the White Rose group. Bianchi Bandinelli, the president of the Thomas Mann Centre, was also invited but declined. In doing so, he reminded the director of the Deutsche Bibliothek, Freiherr Marschall von Bieberstein, of the Centre's pioneering work in this area, having organised a presentation on the subject as early as 1959.[86] Two years later, when he was invited to visit the 'Germans against Hitler' exhibition organised by the Deutsche Bibliothek, he wrote an even more scathing note to Marschall von Bieberstein:

> I hope that the exhibition may fit into a general movement to re-evaluate the Resistance against National Socialism and Fascism, and that this movement is strong enough in Germany to make the circles responsible in the FRG think twice when the next decision is taken on the statute of limitations for crimes against humanity committed during Hitler's regime. Were this not the case, the tribute to the Resistance will not have much value; indeed, it could seem like a cover for a completely different political agenda![87]

The controversial note referred to a parliamentary debate on the statute of limitations for Nazi crimes punishable by life imprisonment, which, after a long debate, was extended until the end of the 1960s. As with the anniversary of Brecht's birth in 1968, Bianchi Bandinelli's words seem to reveal a claim also to moral primacy, according to which only the Thomas Mann Centre was the legitimate repository of the Resistance.

[85] Bericht: Die Tätigkeit der Deutschen Bibliothek in Rom in Haushaltsjahr 1960, Botschaft der BRD Rom an das Auswärtige Amt, 23 März 1961, in PAAA, B. 96 Ref. 606/38.

[86] Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli to Freiherr Marschall von Bieberstein, 16 May 1963, in ASS, Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, envelope 55, folder 270.

[87] Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli to F. Marschall von Bieberstein, 4 March 1965, in Ivi.

A new phase began in the second half of the 1960s. While the Deutsche Bibliothek broadened its cultural offerings and received a positive response from the public, the Thomas Mann Centre prioritised initiatives that recognised the GDR, which were more politically oriented. Cultural events began to lose momentum, becoming repetitive and lacking innovation, and the antagonism towards the FRG that had characterised the previous years gradually softened. Although the Centre did not abandon the theme of anti-fascism, it no longer sought to compete with and distance itself from the FRG. Several factors can explain this change, including a changed attitude towards the East German state. Intellectual dissent, as exemplified by Robert Havemann's case,[88] and participation in the repression of the Prague Spring led to growing disillusionment with the socialist state, especially among intellectuals. Following the events in Czechoslovakia, Bianchi Bandinelli resigned and the Thomas Mann Centre entered a period of crisis, even if it continued its activities. The same issues had widened the gap between the PCI and the SED, exacerbating the differences regarding the Italian party's decision to adopt a 'national road to socialism' and then to enter into dialogue with West German social democracy. While the SED remained impervious to change, the East German institutions maintained an unchanged approach, even with regard to cultural policy. Conversely, in the Federal Republic, the SPD's entry into government drew attention to the *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik*, which was reconsidered both in its organisational and concept.[89]

Many observers identify 1969 as the beginning of a new phase, in which the focus shifted from German tradition — which was considered immaculate and eternal — to 'the pluralism and varied contradictions of contemporary culture'; in this climate of detente, the dimension of cultural exchange was emphasised over competition between systems.[90] In this evolution, even the Deutsche Bibliothek in Rome was able to offer a new cultural programme, ranging from dodecaphonic to electronic music, film screenings by directors such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Werner Herzog, and initiatives with authors such as Günther Grass, Max Horkheimer and Hans-Georg Gadamer. In the 1970s, the Deutsche Bibliothek — like the other Italian branches of the Goethe Institut — entered its most intense and positive phase of activity,[91] to

[88] Between 1964 and 1966, the chemist was dismissed from Humboldt University and the Akademie der Wissenschaften for his criticism of the dogmatism of the SED.

[89] Cfr. Karl-Sebastian Schulte, *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik im politischen System der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Berlin, Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 2000, pp. 48–55.

[90] Jörg Lau, *Bildungsroman Bundesrepublik: das Goethe-Institut und die Entwicklung der BRD*, in Goethe Institut (ed.), *Murnau, Manila, Minsk: 50 Jahre Goethe-Institut*, Munich, Beck, 2001, pp. 39–47, here p. 42.

[91] On the Italian case, see Gian Enrico Rusconi, *Etappen einer Erfolgsgeschichte. Ein halbes Jahrhundert Goethe-Institute in Italien*, in Goethe Institut (ed.), *Murnau, Manila, Minsk: 50 Jahre Goethe-Institut*, cit., pp. 49–60.

which the Thomas Mann Centre no longer responded with the determination of the previous decade.

Conclusion

This article has examined the extent to which the cultural policies of the Federal Republic and the Democratic Republic were implemented in Italy from the early post-war years until the end of the 1960s. It took a decade for the two German states to gain sovereignty in foreign policy and launch an effective cultural strategy following the first limited contacts established at the end of the Second World War. The analysis of the Deutsche Bibliothek and the Thomas Mann Centre revealed the interplay of typical Cold War dynamics. In fact, the two leading German institutions in Rome adopted similar attitudes, including a desire to differentiate themselves from each another and emphasise the distance between the two German states. The Deutsche Bibliothek avoided referring to political content, which was considered an example of GDR ideological propaganda, whereas the Thomas Mann Centre used the theme of anti-fascism to propose a contrasting representation of the GDR and the FRG. Competition and antagonism flared up especially between the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. The clear orientation and use of anti-fascism, the initiatives on contemporary authors and the support of intellectuals willing to actively mobilise gave the Thomas Mann Centre a leading role. Its competition prompted the Deutsche Bibliothek to reconsider its cultural offerings, even before Willy Brandt's SPD government introduced more radical changes to the FRG's *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik*.

The historian Johannes Lill has highlighted the uniqueness of the Italian case, writing that Italy was the only NATO country in which 'the image of communist Germany [could] be presented in such an influential and penetrating way […], without the GDR's direct presence'.[92] This uniqueness requires further examination, but it seems at least partly confirmed by the fact that the structural disparity in relations between the two German states and Italy was counterbalanced by intellectual and left-wing political support for the GDR. Thanks mainly to the Democratic Republic's emphasis on anti-fascism, left-wing parties and intellectuals in Italy were able to mobilise a section of Italian society that expressed solidarity with the socialist state. Things were different at the institutional level. Although the Italian governments were reluctant to close the Thomas Mann Centre, they were loyal allies of the Federal Republic and wanted to prevent possible conflicts (as with the refusal to award Thomas Mann an honour). Even in a country that was not neutral during the Cold

[92] J. Lill, *Völkerfreundschaft im kaltem Krieg*, cit., p. 301.

War, dynamics of distancing and competition emerged, making Italy a unique terrain for confrontation and conflict between East and West.

Furthermore, the article has confirmed the role of culture in constructing national self-representation, as well as in the inter-German and inter-bloc confrontations of the Cold War era. Finally, it touched on other themes at the heart of the cultural policies of the two states, including the public use of the Third Reich's past. The GDR used the latter to delegitimise the FRG, while the FRG used it to present itself in a positive light through its anti-Nazi initiatives. The two institutions also approached political and current affairs issues differently. Although the activities promoted by the Thomas Mann Centre were mainly cultural (despite the wishes of the SED), they did not shy away from political content, even if this was presented in an indirect manner to avoid overly propagandistic tones. The Deutsche Bibliothek, by contrast, initially ignored political and current affairs topics. For example, it avoided promoting debates on issues such as German division or dual statehood, whereas the Thomas Mann Centre addressed these with the aim of promoting recognition of the GDR. Furthermore, while the Centre had no qualms about tackling modern authors, the Deutsche Bibliothek took refuge in German tradition. With regard to these two aspects (openness to current or past political affairs and engagement with modernity), the Deutsche Bibliothek was undoubtedly prompted to abandon its more traditional and conservative orientation by competition with the Thomas Mann Centre. By the end of the 1960s, the situation had reversed: the Deutsche Bibliothek was showcasing contemporary German authors and themes, while the Thomas Mann Centre remained focused on Brecht and Kollwitz.

There are several avenues for further research that cannot be explored here. These include widening the chronological scope by analysing the development of cultural policies in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as studying the dynamics between the GDR and the FRG during this period. The reception of cultural events also merits closer examination, as this could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the two states' cultural policies. Finally, the scope of the investigation could be widened to include other European countries in order to better determine whether the Italian case was truly unique, or if similar dynamics of distancing and competition with the Federal Republic also developed in other NATO countries, such as France, Great Britain or the Netherlands. These were countries that the GDR considered relevant to its foreign policy before 1973, and where it found room for manoeuvre.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

New (and old) challenges in the study of neo-fascism. The turning point of 1945, the limitations of political history and the vulnerability of the category

Andrea Martini*

The growing popularity of far-right groups in the global political landscape has led to a substantial rise in the number of studies on neo-fascism in recent years. However, these studies contain several flaws, partly because the very category of neo-fascism is problematic and has been used excessively in public debates to describe a wide range of personalities and parties. Nonetheless this literature review argues that the quality of research on neo-fascism has improved through the adoption of certain good practices in recent scholarship, including the tendency to reinterpret the turning point of 1945, to move beyond an event-driven analysis and to adopt a transnational approach.
Key words: neo-fascism, far right-wing parties, Italian Fascism, transnational history, cultural history, political history

It is more urgent than ever to reflect on the state of research on neo-fascism, which has many evident limitations. In particular, it relies too heavily on an event-driven approach, a shortcoming that has only been partially compensated by the recent focus on cultural history. Furthermore, the limited consideration of gender studies prevents a comprehensive understanding of how fascism, based on the cult of virility, could adopt a rhetoric of victimhood after 1945. Nevertheless, a progressive renewal has taken place. In the 1980s, the Italian Social Movement (Movimento Sociale Italiano, MSI) was joined by other political groups with radical views, primarily the French Front National,[1] and in the

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[1] See, for example, Cristopher T. Husbands, *Contemporary Right-Wing Extremism in Western European Democracies: A Review Article*, "European Journal of Political Research", 1981, n. 9, pp. 75–99; Joseph Algazy, *La tentation néofasciste en France de 1944 à 1965*, Paris, Fayard, 1984; Id., *L'extrême-droite en France de 1965 à 1984*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1989; Piero Ignazi, *L'estrema destra in Europa. Da Le Pen a Haider*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2000 (1st ed. 1994). Older works that are worth citing include Petra Rosenbaum, *Il nuovo fascismo: da Salo ad Almirante,* Milan, Feltrinelli, 1975 and Franco Ferraresi, author of *Studi sul radical-*

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early 2000s, groups that can be traced back to the far right became a constant presence on the international political scene, albeit with different destinies.[2] In addition to journalistic reports,[3] which had a certain merit in themselves, studies based on more solid documentation and a more refined methodology tried to capture the various forms of post-1945 fascism and trace its history. These were followed by research focusing on fascist ideology, the continuities and discontinuities between the various generations that adhered to fascism and its impact on Europe and the wider world.[4]

It is also urgent to consider the tension affecting this field of study, even if only indirectly. This tension is rooted in the undoubtedly problematic tendency to use the category of fascism (and related topics) to interpret certain contemporary political and cultural phenomena and positions. More or less direct allusions to fascism can be found even outside the Italian political context,[5] although the Lega–Movimento 5 Stelle coalition government (June 2018–August 2019), and even more so the current right-wing government led by Fratelli d'Italia, which shows significant continuities with the MSI and Alleanza Nazionale, have led several scholars to emphasise the topicality — in the broadest sense — of fascism in Italy.[6] Others have expressed scepticism

ismo di destra I. La destra radicale americana nell'interpretazione neo-pluralista, "Studi di Sociologia", 1974 n. 3–4, pp. 286–323 and *Minacce alla democrazia: la destra radicale e la strategia della tensione in Italia nel dopoguerra*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1995.

[2] See Paul Hainsworth (ed.), *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, London, Bloomsbury, 2000; Cas Mudde, *The ideology of the Extreme Right*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000; Pierre Milza, *L'Europe en chemise noire*, Paris, Fayard, 2002; Elisabeth Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005.

[3] Dennis Eisenberg, *L'internazionale nera: fascisti e nazisti oggi nel mondo*, Milan, Sugar & Co, 1964; Angelo Del Boca, Mario Giovana, *I figli del sole: mezzo secolo di nazifascismo nel mondo*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1965; Franco Giannantoni, *Varese in camicia nera*, Varese, Ed. a cura dell'Anpi, 1972. A more recent work that is worth mentioning here is Uki Goñi, *Operazione Odessa: la fuga dei gerarchi nazisti verso l'Argentina di Perón,* Milan, Garzanti, 2003 (1st ed. 2002). Journalistic enquiries continue to be published, some of which still prove to be valuable: Paolo Morando, *Prima di Piazza Fontana: la prova generale*, Bari, Laterza, 2019; Id., *L'ergastolano: la strage di Peteano e l'enigma Vinciguerra*, Bari, Laterza, 2022; Id., *La strage di Bologna: Bellini, i NAR, i mandanti e un perdono tradito*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2023; Maurizio Dianese, Maurizio, Gianfranco Bettin, *La strage degli innocenti: perché piazza Fontana è senza colpevoli*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2019.

[4] See C. Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, cit., p. VII.

[5] Donald Trump's first election as US president has led several scholars to question the threat of a more or less explicit reassertion of fascism. See Madeleine Albright, *Fascism: a warning*, New York, HarperCollins, 2018; Federico Finchelstein, Pablo Piccato, Jason Stanley, *Will Fascism Win the US Election?* "Project Syndicate", 30 October 2020, www.project syndicate.org/commentary/trumpian-threat-of-fascist-authoritarianism-after-election-by-federico-finchelstein-et-al-2020-10 [last accessed 25 August 2023].

[6] At the time of writing this literature review, the most recent book on the Italian case is David Broder, *Mussolini's Grandchildren: Fascism in Contemporary Italy*, Pluto Press, London, 2023.

regarding the use of the category of fascism for the post-1945 era. However, if the fascist experience really ended with the fall of Mussolini and Hitler, as suggested by Alberto De Bernardi and Emilio Gentile (despite using different perspectives and methodological approaches), and fascism 'died' with the end of the Second World War, the question arises as to the scientific value of works shedding light on neo-fascism.[7]

The reconstruction of this debate is beyond the scope of this literature review, but it is worth noting that not all the participants have developed such clear-cut theses. Although some contest the generic and instrumental use of the term fascism,[8] they do not dispute its legitimacy in describing the European and global history of the 1950s or in drawing comparisons with the so-called strategy of tension that plagued the Italian peninsula between the late 1960s and the mid-1970s.[9] Others continue to use the category even in the present, giving it greater or lesser political weight — depending on the case — in the current configuration of the far right.[10] Yet a general reflection on the most recent publications seems useful, as it offers insight into a comparison that somehow risks calling the legitimacy of research on neo-fascism into question — a reflection that obviously also takes into account the intrinsic ambiguity of the category of neo-fascism itself.[11] While the term is used here because it can effectively indicate the shift of attention towards the post-1945 era, it remains difficult to define. As Andrea Mammone, one of the leading experts in this field, has observed, 'neo-fascism' serves both to evoke the original ideology (i.e. the cult of violence and authoritarianism, the belief in one people's superiority over others and the desire for the regeneration of a national community) and to allude to the processes of recontextualisation, ramification and refor-

[7] Alberto De Bernardi, *Fascismo e antifascismo. Storia, memoria e culture politiche*, Donzelli, Rome, 2018, p. 120. Emilio Gentile's position is more nuanced; he recognises the persistence of fascism in the MSI as well as in scattered formations and political actors today. *Chi è fascista?*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2019.

[8] Think, for example, of Roger Griffin, even if his definition of generic fascism (*The nature of Fascism*, London, Pinter, 1991) contributed to the legitimisation of studies on neo-fascism. In a recent introduction to a new journal focused on the far right, Griffin raised several doubts about the wide and instrumental use of the category in the current political debate. See Eliah Bures, *Right-Wing Studies: A Roundtable on the State of the Field*, "Journal of Right-Wing Studies", 2023, n. 1, pp. 33–36.

[9] Cfr. P. Ignazi, *L'estrema destra in Europa*, cit., and C. Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, cit.

[10] For example, Stanley Payne in *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, New York, Routledge, 2003 (1st ed. 1995), p. 496 points out the paradox that there were more fascist formations after 1945 than in the inter-war period, although he gives them little weight, unlike R. Griffin, *The nature of fascism*, cit., p. 146 and Nigel Copsey, *Fascism… but with an open mind: Reflections on the Contemporary Far Right in (Western) Europe: First Lecture on Fascism — Amsterdam — 25 April 2013*, "Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies", 2013, n. 2, pp. 1–17.

[11] See the emblematic considerations of Walter Laquer in *Fascism: Past, Present and Future*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 7. Laquer admits to using the category of neo-fascism not so much because he fully supports it, but because there are no valid alternatives.

mulation that have characterised this political experience since the immediate post-war period, as well as to the political and cultural actors who have implemented them (and perhaps continue to do so).[12]

In addition to summarising the latest research on neo-fascism, this literature review aims to fill a gap. In fact, very few studies examine the events that happened after 1945, let alone interact with research on the period between the two world wars.[13] The main purpose is therefore to outline the current state of the art, but rather than being exhaustive, I will explore some innovative trends of recent years and highlight some unresolved issues on which I believe it is important to start reflecting. Studies focusing on the Italian case will receive particular attention. However, I do not aim to oppose Italian and international historiography. To do so would be anachronistic, and it would ignore the fact that the 'emotional community' of fascism has perceived itself as a transnational entity ever since the immediate post-war period.[14] This was a necessary condition to first survive and then relaunch itself after the end of the war. Hence, it seems counterproductive to focus exclusively on the Italian peninsula. It would be more useful to use international research that has explored fascist regimes outside Italy, as well as to consider those works that have touched on themes such as post-1945 reconstruction, the Cold War and decolonisation — all decisive historical periods in which the evolution of neo-fascism can be observed.

The chosen chronological span is extensive, beginning at the close of the Second World War and ending in the turbulent 1970s. This decade would have deserved an analysis of its own, given the number of publications on it, but also because it intersects with one of the most important crossroads in contemporary Italian history: the strategy of tension. While the latter was not solely the result of neo-fascist forces, this is not enough to skip this historical period aside or to stop earlier. Rather, this literature review aims to examine the long-term development of the neo-fascist universe (and inevitably also its progressive distancing from so-called historical fascism), as well as to interweave different periods of neo-fascism that I believe raise common questions and therefore similar methodological reflections.[15]

[12] Andrea Mammone, *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 15. Precisely because neo-fascism is an ambiguous category, many scholars prefer terms such as post-1945 fascism, post-fascism, the far right or, more simply, fascism. However, these are not real synonyms, at least not in the case of 'post-fascism', which reflects a kind of conscious overcoming of fascist ideology and, consequently, a process of modernisation and moderation of one's political agenda (Cfr. Enzo Traverso, *The New Faces of Fascism: Populism and the Far Right*, London, Verso, 2019). On the other hand, the 'far right' seems to refer to a broader whole, that is, an area within which fascism is located but does not occupy it entirely, and it will be used here in this sense.

[13] See for example Stefano Cavazza, *Worldwide Fascism. Italian Historians in an International Debate*, "Ricerche di storia politica", 2022, special issue, pp. 41–54.

[14] On the concept of 'emotional community', see Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Worrying about Emotions in History*, "American Historical Review", 2002, n. 107, pp. 821–845.

[15] For an explanation of why the broadest possible chronology is essential for understanding the far right, see Johannes Dafinger, Moritz Florin (eds.), *A Transnational History of Right-Wing*

The turning point of 1945

When discussing other forms of fascism around the world, it is impossible to avoid taking about the impact of the turning point in 1945 on the fate of fascism and the problematic nature of the neo-fascist category. The book on fascist movements in Northern Europe (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) edited by Nicola Karcher and Markus Lundström invites us to look at 1945 from a different perspective. The end of the war, or, rather, the collapse of the Fascist and Nazi regimes in Italy and Germany and the subsequent unravelling of the so-called collaborationist governments, undoubtedly also marked the everyday lives of the fascists in this part of Europe, both in the present and in the future. However, political ideas and actors continued to circulate. In other words, 1945 was just another stage in the evolution of fascism, driven by the constant conditioning of the political arena, even of the most moderate circles.[16] One of the most striking cases is that of Per Engdahl. A leading figure in the Swedish fascist movements of the 1930s, Engdahl managed to remain a transnational point of reference even after 1945. He stimulated the reactivation of a network that, in turn, led to the establishment of the European Social Movement (ESM), one of the most important and long-lived international fascist organisations after the Second World War.[17]

In this regard, Joe Mulhall's *British Fascism after the Holocaust* (2021) is even more intriguing. According to Mulhall, the history of fascism in Great Britain was not defined by 1945, but by the years 1939–40, when Britain declared war on Germany (September 1939) and Defence Regulation 18b (1940) was implemented. The latter led to the decision to intern Oswald Mosley, the leader of the British Union of Fascists, and many of his supporters, suspected of forming a kind of fifth column for the Axis forces. While it is true that the two-year period marked the end of political activism for some fascists, for others it was the beginning of a process of radicalisation.[18] Moreover, prison allowed the British fascists to perceive themselves not only as a community of the defeated,[19] but also as exiles in their homeland, which made them perfectly in tune with those fascists who would soon be affected

Terrorism. Political Violence and the Far Right in Eastern and Western Europe since 1900, New York, Routledge, 2022.

[16] Nicola Karcher, Markus Lundström (eds.), *Nordic Fascism. Fragments of an Entangled History*, New York, Routledge, 2022.

[17] Elisabeth Åsbrink, *When Race Was Removed from Racism: Per Engdahl, the Networks that Saved Fascism and the Making of the Concept of Ethnopluralism*, "Journal of the History of Ideas", 2021, n. 82, pp. 133–151.

[18] Joe Mulhall, *British Fascism After the Holocaust. From the Birth of Denial to the Notting Hill Riots 1939-1958*, New York, Routledge, 2021, p. 29.

[19] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *La cultura dei vinti,* Bologna, il Mulino, 2014.

by the purging measures.[20] Despite the difficult living conditions, especially in terms of hygiene and sanitation,[21] the freedom enjoyed by the British fascists imprisoned in the camps put them in a position to redefine their political agenda at an early stage. In other words, the resurgence of the British far right in the 1970s with the National Front, and again in the 1990s with the British National Party, was due to fascism, which had seemingly been marginalised. Paradoxically, however, it gained renewed momentum from the experience of internment, which eventually led to the formation of a new party in 1948: the Union Movement.

Mulhall's take on the category of neo-fascism is also interesting. He argues that the prefix 'neo' alludes to a discontinuity, to a departure from a previous period that remains to be explored. This does not mean that we should ignore what came before. For example, only from the second half of the 1940s, Mosley emphasised his pro-European stance as a reaction to the initial stages of the Cold War and decolonisation. More simply, we must avoid taking them for granted.[22] There is much more to explore in terms of persistencies and discontinuities, which alone would justify more scholarly attention being given to the immediate post-war period and that of the 1950s.

In those years, the MSI gained ground,[23] becoming the most influential post-1945 fascist party in Europe. At the same time, the international fascist network was reactivated, giving rise to two distinct organisations: the aforementioned ESM and the New European Order (NOE). Perhaps more importantly, magazines began to circulate that evoked the deeds and behaviour of those who had fought for the fascist cause during the war, but they also described the inevitable generational tensions of the time and proposed a future agenda. They included *Défense de l'Occident*, directed by the Frenchman Maurice Bardèche, Mosley's *The Union* and, on the Italian side, *asso di bastoni*, *La rivolta ideale* and *Cantiere*, to name just a few.[24] These years were furthermore marked by a wealth of publications that sought to influence *how* the recent past was described.[25] Not everyone agrees on the actual impact of

[20] Andrea Martini, *Defeated? An analysis of Fascist memoirist literature and its success*, "Journal of Modern Italian Studies", 2020, n. 25, pp. 295–317 and Jonathan Preda, *Le discours victimaire de l'extrême-droite en France depuis 1945: entre minimisation et trivialisation des crimes du nazisme*, "RevueAlarmer", published online 20 September 2021.

[21] J. Mulhall, *British Fascism After the Holocaust*, cit., p. 29.

[22] Graham Macklin, *Failed Führers: A History of Britain's Extreme Right*, London, Routledge, 2020, pp. 92–178.

[23] Nicolas Lebourg, *Les Nazis ont-ils survécus? Enquête sur les internationales fascistes et les croisés de la race blanche*, Paris, Seuil, 2019, pp. 116–123 and 128–129.

[24] On the Italian magazines, see Giuseppe Pardini, *Fascisti in democrazia: uomini, idee, giornali (1946-1958)*, Florence, Le Lettere, 2008 and Elisabetta Cassina Wolff, *L'inchiostro dei vinti: stampa e ideologia neofascista, 1945-1953*, Milan, Mursia, 2012.

[25] For an overview, see Mario Isnenghi, *La guerra civile nella pubblicistica di destra*, "Rivista di storia contemporanea", 1989, n. 18, pp. 104–115; Raffaele Liucci, *Scrivere e ricor-*

these texts within the broader process of creating a public memory,[26] although it seems to be underestimated. However, even assuming that their circulation was limited to neo-fascist circles, they still allowed fascism to view itself as a living political cause despite its defeat.[27] Moreover, some of these volumes gave rise to denialist literature, which would grow in the following decades.[28] Think, for example, of *The Jewish War of Survival* by the Brit Arnold Leese (1946) or Bardèche's *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise* (Nuremburg or the Promised Land, 1948) and *Nuremberg II ou Les Faux Monnayeurs* (Nuremburg II or the Counterfeiters, 1950).

Hence, the recent publications that examine this chronological framework, albeit from different perspectives, are a welcome addition to the literature. With regard to the Italian case, at least two important studies complement Giuseppe Parlato's *Fascisti senza Mussolini* (Fascists without Mussolini, 2006) and Antonio Carioti's *Gli orfani di Salò* (The orphans of Salò, 2008), two earlier works that can be credited for shedding light on this period. I am referring to *La genesi del neofascismo in Italia* (The genesis of neo-fascism in Italy, 2019) by Nicola Tonietto and *La scoperta della destra: il Movimento sociale italiano e gli Stati Uniti* (The discovery of the right: The Italian Social Movement and the United States, 2019) by Gregorio Sorgonà. The former stands out for its extensive archival resources, including documents produced by the Allies. This reminds us that the events of the immediate post-war period took place in a country affected by the evolving international situation and, therefore, the early stages of the Cold War. The latter investigates the — internally heterogeneous — positions of the MSI in relation to the US.

Next, there are studies that focus their analysis on regional or local levels. In this regard, exploring the periphery has produced important findings in studies on historical fascism, particularly in relation to key issues such as consensus and the regime's ability to implement the anthropological revolution it had

dare Salò. La Repubblica sociale italiana, tra storia, memoria e letteratura, "Studi piacentini", 1996, n. 20, pp. 35–70; Francesco Germinario, *L'altra memoria. L'estrema destra, Salò e la Resistenza*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 1999 and Roberto Chiarini, *L'ultimo fascismo. Storia e memoria della Repubblica di Salò*, Venice, Marsilio, 2009.

[26] Gian Enrico Rusconi, *Resistenza e postfascismo,* Bologna, il Mulino, 1995; Enzo Collotti (ed.), *Fascismo e antifascismo. Rimozioni, revisioni, negazioni*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2000; Roberto Chiarini, *25 aprile: la competizione politica sulla memoria*, Venice, Marsilio, 2005; Filippo Focardi, *La guerra della memoria: la Resistenza nel dibattito politico italiano dal 1945 a oggi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2005; Id., *Nel cantiere della memoria: Fascismo, Resistenza, Shoah, Foibe*, Rome, Viella, 2020.

[27] Angelo Ventrone, *Il fascismo non è una causa perduta. Ricordi e rimozioni nei vinti della Repubblica sociale italiana*, "Meridiana", 2017, n. 88, pp. 133–154. See also my own publication, *Fascismo immaginario. Riscrivere il passato a destra*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2024.

[28] Dan Stone, *Fascism, Nazism and the Holocaust: challenging histories*, New York, Routledge, 2021.

aspired to.[29] This approach is far less common in the study of neo-fascism, both among researchers interested in its subversive and terrorist dimensions, who often neglect the importance of understanding local variables, and among those who want to write a history of the MSI.[30] Firstly, there is the problem of sources. As far as the MSI is concerned, its archives have not been properly preserved. While there is a wealth of archival collections of important political figures at a national level, mostly preserved by the Ugo Spirito and Renzo De Felice Foundation, the situation at a provincial level is extremely critical. With a few exceptions,[31] researchers interested in the MSI's local activities must therefore rely on alternative sources, such as prefecture and police records, often kept in state archives, although these only provide a partial view of the subject as they tend to focus on public order and national security.

The neglect of the 'local' is also based on a methodological premise that is taken for granted (wrongly, in my opinion): that of dealing with a monolithic, highly centralised party. In this sense, it is worth mentioning Luca La Rovere's and Raffaello Pannacci's studies on the MSI and on the FUAN in the province of Perugia (which lasted until the mid-1970s),[32] respectively, as well as Michelangelo Borri's reflections on fascism in Tuscany (which, instead, ended at the MSI's National congress in Viareggio on 9–11 January 1954).[33] They help explain the relationship between the party — in all its facets — and the territory, as well as providing starting points for future prosopographical analyses of the cadres of the various federations. Furthermore, their analyses remove the monopoly on such reconstructions from the protagonists (who tend to use apologetic tones and abuse the aforementioned victim paradigm).[34]

[29] See, at least, Paul Corner, Valeria Galimi (eds.), *Il fascismo in provincia: articolazioni e gestione del potere tra centro e periferia*, Rome, Viella, 2014.

[30] On the lack of local studies on the MSI, see Giuseppe Parlato, *Destra e neofascismo in Italia. Il contributo della storia locale*, in Luca La Rovere (ed.), *I "neri" in una provincia "rossa": destre e neofascismo a Perugia dal dopoguerra agli anni Settanta. Atti della Giornata di studio (Perugia, 5 dicembre 2018)*, Foligno, Editoriale umbra, 2020, pp. 15–37. Important exceptions include: Roberto Chiarini, Paolo Corsini, *Da Salò a Piazza della Loggia. Blocco d'ordine, neofascismo, radicalismo di destra a Brescia. 1945-1974*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1983 and Roberto Bonente, *Il ritorno dei "vinti". La nascita del Movimento sociale italiano a Verona*, in Emilio Franzina (ed.), *Dal fascio alla fiamma. Fascisti a Verona dalle origini al MSI*, Sommacampagna (Vr), Cierre edizioni, 2010, pp. 139–187.

[31] In recent years, the Spirito Foundation has acquired the archival heritage of the MSI sections of Latina and Rieti, as well as that of the Roman Trieste-Salario district.

[32] Luca La Rovere, *Il Movimento sociale italiano a Perugia. Dalla resilienza alla politica (1947-1969)* and Raffaello Pannacci, *Dal Circolo D'Annunzio al ghetto. Trent'anni di Fuan a Perugia (1947-1979)*, in L. La Rovere, *I "neri" in una provincia "rossa",* cit., pp. 147–178 and 179–197, respectively.

[33] FUAN stands for Fronte Universitario d'Azione Nazionale (National University Action Front). Michelangelo Borri, *Il Movimento sociale italiano in Toscana, dalla nascita al congresso di Viareggio. Appunti per una ricerca*, "Società e storia", 2023, n. 179, pp. 63–89.

[34] See, for example, two reconstructions of the MSI's activities in Verona: Movimento sociale italiano-Destra nazionale (ed.), *Destra nazionale: 50 anni di vita missina veronese*, Vago di

Some of the most underestimated sources are precisely the life stories of fascists in the post-1945 period, despite the presence of the above-mentioned archival collections of political figures, which have by now been inventoried and valued, and deserve to be explored in greater depth. I am thinking of the personal collections of Mario Cassiano, Concetto Pettinato and Augusto De Marsanich, which are preserved at the Spirito Foundation, or Giorgio Pini's precious personal collection (held at the Central Archives of the State), which extends beyond 1945 and sheds light on both the phase in which the fascists were purged and subsequent periods. An exception to this oversight is a work by David Bernardini on the eccentric Edmondo Cione, *Per una destra cattolica e nazionale* (For a Catholic and national right, 2022), based on documentation held at the State Archives of Naples. Looking beyond national borders, an excellent biographical analysis was conducted by Graham Macklin, who published an important biography of Mosley in 2007. Unlike Robert Skidelsky's famous 1975 biography, it was characterised by depth and methodological rigour,[35] and it focused on the post-1945 period.[36] In more recent years, Macklin has written about other personalities of British fascism who gained notoriety after the Second World War, including Arnold Leese and A.K. Chesterton.[37] But it is the transnational dimension that has made the most important progress in recent years, shedding light on the reactivation of fascist networks, their short- and long-term impact, and the preconditions that made their reconstitution possible.

Narrating the long journey of fascism from a transnational perspective

Some scholars who have sought to outline a transnational history of post-1945 fascism tend to focus on particular alliances. These include the Italian-Spanish one, which dates back to the inter-war period. It is of particular interest due to the intense contacts and reciprocal influences. However, it underwent a profound redefinition after the conflict ended.[38] There was also an Italian-French partnership, which brought together different organisational structures

Lavagno (Vr), Dex - Tipografia La Grafica, 2000 and Paolo Danieli, *Verona a destra. La destra veronese dal dopoguerra al Terzo Millennio*, Rome, Settimo Sigillo, 2018.

[35] Robert Skidelsky, *Sir Oswald Mosley*, London-New York, Macmillan, 1975.

[36] Graham Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black: Sir Oswald Mosley and the resurrection of British Fascism after 1945*, London, Tauris, 2007.

[37] G. Macklin, *Failed Führers*, cit.

[38] Matteo Albanese, Pablo del Hierro, *A Transnational Network: The Contact between Fascist Elements in Spain and Italy, 1945–1968*, "Politics, Religion & Ideology", 2014, n. 15, pp. 82–102; Matteo Albanese, Pablo Del Hierro, *Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century: Spain, Italy and the Global Neofascist Network*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016 and Pablo Del Hierro, *The Neofascist Network and Madrid, 1945–1953: From City of Refuge to Transnational Hub and Centre of Operations*, "Contemporary European History", 2022, n. 31, pp. 171–194.

capable of reciprocal contamination (dominated by the MSI and, on the French side, by smaller groups),[39] and the alliance between European fascism and the American far right.[40] Conversely, others have chosen to provide a general overview of these networks, focusing on their origins, protagonists and developments. Furthermore, they have described the various national authorities' positions on these organisations, although this aspect has — in my opinion — not yet been fully explored.[41]

Leaving aside the intrinsic problems of the transnational approach as outlined by Nancy L. Green,[42] I believe that the most common error in the analysis of post-1945 fascist networks consists in overestimating their importance and available resources. Both the ESM and the NOE played a relatively important role on the global political scene, thanks also to the decision of the MSI — the most important post-war fascist party — not to (formally) take part in either organisation, despite its initial interest in the ESM, which chose Rome for a preparatory meeting in March 1950.[43] Nevertheless, there is no doubt that reactivating a network ensured the survival of the fascist cause. In fact, if the methodological accuracy of recent studies, particularly Gerald Steinacher's research,[44] has made it possible to deconstruct the very *naive* image of a black international, debunking the myth of a monolithic, influential organisation that saved the Nazi-fascists with the complicity of Peron's Argentina,[45] these same works have highlighted the extensive support enjoyed by fascists, Nazis and collaborationists.[46] But these networks had another important function: putting fascist ideas back into circulation. This was a cultural 'journey',[47] capable of attracting interest even — if not above all — among the so-called populist governments and those led by military juntas in Latin America (or at least some of them),[48] and of influencing the political and cultural arena more

[39] Andrea Mammone, *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015; Pauline Picco, *Liaisons dangereuses: les extrêmes droites en France et en Italie (1960–1984)*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016.

[40] Martin Durham, *White Hands across the Atlantic: The Extreme Right in Europe and the United States*, in Id., Margaret Power (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 149–169.

[41] N. Lebourg, *Les Nazis ont-ils survécus?*, cit.

[42] Nancy L. Green, *The Limits of Transnationalism*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2019.

[43] Andrea Martini, *Travelling to See, Reading to Believe: Being Fascists after the End of the Second World War*, "Contemporary European History", 2023, online first, pp. 5–6.

[44] Gerald Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run: how Hitler's Henchmen Fled Justice*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011.

[45] U. Goñi, *Operazione Odessa*, cit.

[46] P. del Hierro, *The Neofascist Network and Madrid, 1945-1953*, cit.

[47] Matteo Albanese, *Neofascism in Europe (1945-1989): a Long Cultural Journey*, New York, Routledge, 2023.

[48] Federico Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism in History*, Oakland, University of California press, 2017.

broadly. Some scholars claim that this contamination persists, despite groups claiming proximity to fascist ideology having low electoral weight.[49]

However, beyond demonstrating the continued relevance of the fascist cause today, which echoes the aforementioned debate, I believe that insisting on the material conditions and outcomes of this 'journey' is the most fruitful aspect of a transnational history of neo-fascism. It allows us to avoid a purely event-based history that, in the case of transnational history, would lead to nothing more than a list of contacts between political actors from different countries. This is what makes Olivier Dard's studies so interesting.[50] Other than the scholar's decision to broaden the perspective to encompass the wider universe of the far right, what is striking is his focus on ideologues and, even more so, *passeurs* and *vulgarisateurs*, that is, the people who made it possible for certain works or political programmes to circulate, sometimes across multiple borders. This is the case of Franco Freda, a neo-fascist from the Veneto region who played a leading role in the Piazza Fontana massacre of 1969 (to which I will return), but also the founder of the Ar publishing house, which revived Bardèche's ideas.[51] In fact, a transnational history of fascist cultural products would be important to consider. One example is a recent article by Pablo del Hierro on fascist networks in the 1960s and 1970s, which examines the impact of magazines such as *Défense de l'Occident* and *Nation Europa*, as well as the French publisher Les Sept Couleurs (founded by Bardèche).[52] Del Hierro demonstrates that the journey of fascist ideas was characterised by a multiplicity of itineraries and, probably, destinations. One of these is already well-known: it concerns the Italian far-right groups active between the late 1960s and the 1970s.

A history of neo-fascist terrorism — or perhaps more a crime story?

The 1995 publication of *Minacce alla democrazia* (Threats to Democracy), written by the sociologist Franco Ferraresi, shows that the first in-depth studies of the strategy of tension and, in this case, the neo-fascist component that played a decisive role in its execution were by no means a recent trend.

[49] Claudio Vercelli, *Neofascismo in grigio: la destra radicale tra l'Italia e l'Europa*, Turin, Einaudi, 2021.

[50] Olivier Dard (ed.), *Doctrinaires, vulgarisateurs et passeurs des droites radicales au XX siècle (Europe-Amériques)*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2012 and Id. (ed.), *Références et thèmes des droites radicales au XX siècle (Europe-Amériques)*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2015.

[51] Pauline Picco, *Franco G. Freda: idéologue, éditeur, activiste*, in O. Dard (ed.), *Doctrinaires, vulgarisateurs et passeurs*, cit., pp. 148–149.

[52] Pablo del Hierro, *'From Brest to Bucharest': Neofascist Transnational Networks during the long 1970s*, "European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire", 2022, n. 29, pp. 520–547.

However, it is equally evident that 'a vast memoirist and autobiographical literature' has long overshadowed scientific research,[53] and that the actions of so-called red terrorism ultimately diverted the attention of scholars, despite the quantity and lethality of terrorist violence attributable — in part or in full — to the far right between 1969 and 1982.[54]

The problem is not just a lack of interest, but also the 'unfinished elaboration' of the strategy of tension in historiography.[55] While there seems to be an abundance of chronicle-like reconstructions, even of high quality, they struggle to combine a microanalysis aimed at reconstructing the plots behind each specific attack and explaining the outcomes of the related judicial proceedings with a more in-depth reflection. Nevertheless, it is crucial to place a single event within a broader historiographical debate: for example, the level of political agency of far-right groups in those years in relation to the national and international political landscape, and the radicalisation process that led to those attacks.[56] In recent years, this gap has been partially filled by some valuable publications. An important trailblazer was *L'Italia degli anni di piombo* (Italy in the leaden years, 2010), edited by Marc Lazar and Marie-Anne Matard Bonucci. Although it did not abandon a popular but problematic 'journalistic' construction, namely that of the leaden years,[57] it sought to present a comprehensive history of the 1970s that encompasses both red terrorism and the political violence of the neo-fascist right, without resorting to the simplistic and unsubstantiated thesis of convergences between opposing extremisms. Mirco Dondi's *L'eco del boato* (The eco of the blast, 2015), which focuses on the strategy of tension (1969–74), is also highly relevant. Dondi identifies a discontinuity in terms of individuals and political objectives in subsequent subversive actions, characterised by a greater degree of armed militancy. In doing so, he accurately describes the intersection of the different worlds of the neo-fascist right, on the one hand, and conservative-reactionary circles and state apparatuses, on the other, as well as the circumstances that paved the way for it.[58]

Another interesting analysis is that by Guido Panvini. While he stressed that 'the action of far-right groups' cannot be separated from a dense 'field of

[53] Giovanni Mario Ceci, *Il terrorismo italiano: storia di un dibattito*, Rome, Carocci, 2013, p. 15.

[54] Donatella Della Porta, Maurizio Rossi (eds.), *Cifre crudeli. Bilancio dei terrorismi italiani*, Bologna, Istituto di studi e ricerche Carlo Cattaneo, 1984, Table 14, pp. 64–65.

[55] Mirco Dondi, *L'eco del boato. Storia della strategia della tensione. 1965-1974*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2015.

[56] Barbara Armani, *La produzione storiografica, giornalistica e memoriale sugli anni di piombo*, in Marc Lazar, Marie-Anne Matard Bonucci (eds.), *Il libro degli anni di piombo. Storia e memoria del terrorismo italiano*, Milan, Rizzoli, 2010, pp. 207–223.

[57] G.M. Ceci, *Il terrorismo italiano*, cit., pp. 14–15.

[58] An interesting study in this regard is Giovanni Mario Ceci's work on the years of terrorism as seen through the eyes of the CIA: *La CIA e il terrorismo italiano: dalla strage di piazza Fontana agli anni Ottanta (1969-1986)*, Rome, Carocci, 2019.

forces' mainly animated by corrupt state apparatuses, at least since the second half of the 1960s, he also insisted on the need to explore the political repertoires and cultural references that gave rise to neo-fascism.[59] Indeed, we cannot 'dismiss' the neo-fascist universe as a purely nihilist force determined to assert 'one's own self against everything else', as Renzo De Felice suggested in his *Intervista sul fascismo* (Interview on fascism, 1975). The nihilist element was certainly present, as was the inclination towards political violence. As Panvini observed,[60] the latter was a prerequisite for the terrorist actions that began in 1969, but it was accompanied by a more rational and constructive mindset, keen on fostering an authoritarian shift in the country (albeit with different outcomes over time). If, indeed, the neo-fascist front was initially inclined towards a clash with the state because it 'considered [the latter] to be compromised with the "party-dominated degeneration"', hoping, however, 'to provoke a reaction from the "healthy bodies" within it', from 1974–75 onwards, 'the frontal attack on the institutions was established, hoping for the outbreak of a "long lasting" civil war'.[61]

A study that adopts a transnational and cultural approach is Galadriel Ravelli's article about the magazine *Confidentiel*, which was published by the self-declared Institut européen de recherches et d'études politiques, founded at the end of 1978.[62] Although the magazine was only published from 1979 to 1981, with just eight issues printed in France and even fewer in Italy, Spain and Argentina, it offers interesting avenues for research. In fact, *Confidentiel* marks the latest stage in the ongoing reconfiguration of the fascist front following the collapse of its last important 'hub': the Spanish one.[63] Latin America was the fascists' new earthly paradise, as we may deduce from the life story of Stefano Delle Chiaie, the founder of Avanguardia nazionale and one of the protagonists of the strategy of tension. From the second half of the 1970s until the end of the 1980s, Delle Chiaie spent his life between Chile, Argentina and, above all, Bolivia, even if trying to make an impact in Europe remained his main objective. What is even more interesting is the analysis of the French version of *Confidentiel*, as it sheds light on the evolution of the subversive right, attracted by Alain De Benoist's Nouvelle Droite. It is precisely this rapprochement that favours the collaboration of a wider circle — the conservative right — with a

[59] Guido Panvini, *La destra eversiva*, in Giovanni Orsina (ed.), *Storia delle destre nell'Italia repubblicana*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2014, p. 214.

[60] In this sense, an essential study is *Ordine nero, guerriglia rossa. La violenza politica nell'Italia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta (1966-1975)*, Turin, Einaudi, 2009.

[61] G. Panvini, *La destra eversiva*, cit., p. 232.

[62] Galadriel Ravelli, *Strategies of Survival: Reviving the Neo-Fascist Network Through a Transnational Magazine*, "European History Quarterly", 2022, n. 52, pp. 65–86.

[63] The fact that the end of Franco's regime marks a turning point that should be investigated in greater depth is also mentioned by A. Mammone, *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy*, cit., p. 43.

less radical approach. This is evidenced by the contributions of an exponent of the British Conservative Party, Geoffrey Stewart-Smith, and those of Bernard Hamel, a French journalist and an expert on the geopolitics of South-East Asia.[64]

While Ravelli focuses on the fascists' survival strategies after the collapse of Franco's regime, when they were hit by legal measures and the banning of several organisations (strategies that would be worth comparing with those deployed immediately after the Second World War), Caterina Prever has recently investigated another, equally fascinating period: that preceding the Piazza Fontana massacre and the subsequent radicalisation of various Italian far-right groups. Prever's article revolves around members of the Veneto cell who were close to Freda and formed part of the 'riverbed of Ordine nuovo'.[65] On 3 May 2005, the Court of Cassation found them responsible for the terrorist attack in Milan on 12 December 1969, after other judicial proceedings had already established their responsibility for 17 other attacks between April and December of that year.[66] Prever's description of the group's development and progressive radicalisation allows her to deconstruct the image of the neo-fascists as mere 'puppets of the "deviated" secret services' and of the 'occult powers'.[67]

Particular attention is paid to Freda, who, in 1963, published an anti-Semitic and negationist pamphlet entitled 'Manifesto of the Ar group', a group he founded at the same time as establishing a publishing house of the same name. This Manifesto was one of the first signs of the group's radicalisation, stemming from their dissatisfaction with the MSI's political repertoire, considered to be excessively moderate. Prever insists precisely on the need for the group to form itself — and renew itself with respect to what the MSI was propagating — in order to activate those antibodies that would prevent potential contamination by the dominant materialistic culture. This explains why Freda organised group readings in which he devoted considerable time to Plato and Evola, published texts from an anthology of Palestinian poems (praising the authenticity of the Palestinian cause and its fighters in his preface) and gave space to the writings of the Nazi theorist Hans F.K. Gunther and novels published in a series called 'The Winged Horse', including Gustav Meyrink's *The Green Face*, which was steeped in esotericism.[68] The name of the series inevitably

[64] G. Ravelli, *Strategies of Survival*, cit., p. 82.

[65] The definition is taken from the sentence of the II section of the Court of Cassation, no. 470/05 of 3 May 2005, cited by Caterina Prever, *Intensificare la "presenza ideologica" dell'estrema destra in Italia: l'attivismo culturale di Franco Freda e del gruppo di Ar (1963-1969)*, "Italia contemporanea", 2023, n. 302, p. 114. It should be noted that Freda always denied any involvement in the Veneto cell of Ordine nuovo.

[66] Ibidem.

[67] Ivi, p. 115.

[68] Ivi, pp. 132–133.

calls to mind the Éditions du Cheval Ailé, a Franco-Swiss publishing house active in the immediate post-war period.[69] Prever argues that these cultural practices and ideological references played a key role in the activation of a 'field of political presence',[70] which affected the entire right-wing spectrum in those years and, more generally, republican Italy, since at least some of the members of that circle were responsible for heinous attacks. In doing so, they made the history of the strategy of tension an integral part of the history of fascism *tout court*.

Finally, it is worth mentioning Tobias Hof's analysis of the circulation of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* alongside Evola's works. Hof considers these readings to be a decisive turning point in shaping the ideological and cultural heritage of the far right (or at least part of it), causing it to partially distance itself from the fascism of the *ventennio*.[71]

Giving the history of neo-fascism a place in post-war global history

Alongside the expansion of scholarly research on so-called neo-fascism, what can be described as a reconfiguration of the narrative of post-1945 history — particularly of the post-war period — has taken place.[72] This reconfiguration engages with the affirmation, or — in some cases — the re-affirmation, of democratic culture in various parts of the globe, beginning with Western Europe (with the notable exceptions of Portugal and Spain), and it seeks to depict this process in a more complex and detailed manner than was customary in the past. Far from defining post-war history as the result of a linear and almost predictable path, recent studies stress the complexities of this path, highlighting its convoluted nature and the multiple variables that have influenced its outcome, despite the presence of other factors

[69] Founded by Jean Jardin, Pierre Laval's cabinet director, the Éditions du Cheval Ailé had launched the memoirs of Belgian collaborationist Léon Degrelle and the French translation of Rachele Mussolini's biography, *La mia vita*. For more information, see A. Martini, *Travelling to See, Reading to Believe*, cit., p. 12.

[70] C. Prever, *Intensificare la "presenza ideologica"*, cit., p. 130.

[71] Tobias Hof, '"Of Hobbits and Tigers": Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism in Italy since the mid-1970s' in J. Dafinger, M. Florin (eds.), *A Transnational History of Right-Wing Terrorism*, cit., pp. 174–196.

[72] Richard Bessel, Dirk Schumann (eds.), *Life after Death. Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003; Ian Buruma, *Year Zero: A History of 1945*, London, Atlantic Books, 2013; Pepijn Corduwener, *The Problem of Democracy in Postwar Europe. Political Actors and the Formation of the Postwar Model of Democracy in France, West Germany, and Italy*, London, Routledge, 2017; Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back. Europe 1914–1949* (2nd ed.), London, Penguin Books, 2016, pp. 470–522; Paul Betts, *Ruin and Renewal. Civilizing Europe after Second World War*, London, Profile Books, 2020; Martin Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age: 1945–1968*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2020.

that could have favoured different scenarios. In giving an account of the intricate nature of post-1945 history and the dynamics that shaped it, emphasis is placed on the Cold War, the political decisions of individuals and parties, the complex process of decolonisation and so on. However, the reaffirmation of a far-right culture — especially its fascist element — is struggling to gain a foothold in these works.[73] The category of fascism thus runs the risk of disappearing even from the most effective and solid post-1945 narratives, only to reappear in certain geographical contexts and historical turning points (e.g. the French-Algerian operations of the Organisation Armée Secrète and the strategy of tension in Italy). Alternatively, it is used to describe specific political groups such as the Front National, the MSI and even the Nazi skinhead movement, which were prevalent in Germany (and beyond) in the 1990s. Yet such reappearances are inadequate as they fail to explain the actual conditioning capacity of fascist ideology and fascist movements on the global, European and Italian scene, and how various countries positioned themselves in relation to the re-emergence of fascism itself.

It seems to me that the affirmation of a new threat to Europe in the form of communism, coupled with the change in international geopolitical logic following the clash between the US and the USSR, caused the governments to underestimate the fascist phenomenon, while various countries used ideas and human resources traceable to the fascist political universe precisely for anti-communist purposes. Nevertheless, these deductions seem to conceal a more complex history that deserves to be investigated as much in its national dynamics as in its transnational and international ones. For example, it is essential to understand the considerations and measures that individual nations developed to tackle the resurgence of fascism, but unlike timely research on specific case studies and chronologies,[74] these issues do not seem to be adequately addressed (least of all from a comparative perspective).[75] In a similar vein, it is important to not only account for the transnational dimension of fascism, but also for the process through which the security forces began to address fascism as an international phenomenon.

[73] Important and illuminating exceptions are those of Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, New York, Vintage Books, 2000 (2nd ed.), pp. 288–292 and P. Corduwener, *The Problem of Democracy*, cit.

[74] For the Italian case, it is worth citing the article on the regional commissions of inquiry on the problems of neo-fascism, active in various regions between 1974 and 1975, by Michelangelo Borri, Valerio Marinelli, *The Extreme Right and the Democratic Institutions in Italy. The response of the regions to a national and trans-national phenomenon (1973–1975)*, "Modern Italy", 2023, n. 28, pp. 230–245 and the previous study dedicated to the Umbrian case by Valerio Marinelli, *Il neofascismo in Umbria, 1969-1975: la Commissione d'inchiesta della Regione*, Venice, Marsilio, 2019. Also interesting is the British case study examined by David Renton, *Fascism, anti-fascism and Britain in the 1940s*, Hampshire, MacMillan, 2000.

[75] Andrea Martini, *The Re-emergence of Fascism and Its Impact on European Democracies in the Immediate Postwar Period*, "Journal of Contemporary History", 2023, n. 2, pp. 287–310.

In conclusion, it is of paramount importance that this history is reintegrated into the broader context of European and global history. Provided this step is not exploited for political purposes, it could help to reduce the tension surrounding the study of neo-fascism.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

The Italian Republic and maritime security, from a state-centric to a postmodern approach: studies and perspectives*

Fabio De Ninno**

This article provides an evaluation of studies on maritime security in the Italian Republic, as well as an initial interpretative framework. Specifically, it highlights the shift from a national maritime security model to an international/supranational model, which is typical of post-modern states. This shift is the result of the Italian maritime sector's transformation during the Cold War. This transition was driven by globalisation and the sector's integration into economic and military systems such as the EEC/EU and NATO.
Key words: Navy, maritime security, Italian Republic, Mediterranean

Maritime security from 1945 to the present day

This article aims to provide an overview of the historiography relating to changes in Italian maritime defence and security in the post-war era. While national studies on this topic are scarce, there is a wealth of international works. However, these often take the form of a 'hybrid' blend of historical studies and other fields of research, particularly when it comes to security. Unsurprisingly, it is precisely these areas that have produced the most significant theories to help us understand the changes in the relationship between republican Italy and maritime security.

The first issue to consider is that a so-called postmodern paradigm has changed the relationship between states and the sea since 1945. This change can be traced back to the expansion and globalisation of international maritime traffic in the post-war years, particularly after the containerisation of maritime transport in the 1970s. At the same time, the direct link between naval power, industrial

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power and merchant power has been deconstructed. On the other hand, states — especially those in the West — have increasingly applied a multilateral, interconnected and internationalised logic to the economy and matters of security.[1]

Another key aspect of the changing role of navies and other security bodies has been the redefinition of maritime sovereignty due to the territorialisation of the sea. Deborah Paci has explored this theme in depth,[2] and in this article I will limit myself to recalling two important historical moments in this postmodern transformation: the Geneva Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone (1958), and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, 1982), which defined issues of jurisdiction over archipelagic waters and exclusive economic zones.[3]

Consequently, the transformation of maritime territories has contributed to the development of new security policies and practices, which are often based on international cooperation. These include the protection of marine resources and the management of non-state actors and transnational phenomena, such as piracy, migration, terrorism and criminal trafficking.[4] At the same time, maritime security policies have changed to guarantee national rights of control over maritime space and its economic resources. As a result, from the postwar period to the present day, 'modern' (state-centric) and 'postmodern' (international and supranational) practices in the exercise of maritime defence and security have increasingly coexisted.[5]

It seems that Italian maritime historiography has not fully acknowledged these transformations. They are barely featured in the two main summaries on the subject: Paolo Frascani's study of the sea as a part of Italian identity and Eugenio Ivetic's analysis of the Adriatic as a border space and the Mediterranean as a space for foreign policy-making.[6] This shortcoming reflects the lack of studies on the relationship between the Italian Republic and the sea

[1] Robert C. Rubel, *Navies and Economic Prosperity, the New Logic of Sea power*, London, Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies, King's College, October 2012, especially pp. 3–4; Steven Haines, *Sea-power*, in Hance D. Smith, Juan L. Suárez de Vivero, Tundy S. Agardy (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Ocean Resources and Management*, London, Routledge, 2015, pp. 371–373.

[2] Deborah Paci, *La costruzione del confine marittimo nell'Italia repubblicana. Il caso della "guerra del pesce" nel Canale di Sicilia*, "Italia Contemporanea", 2024, 305, pp. 213–238.

[3] Adalberto Vallega, *Towards the post-modern ocean*, "European Review", May 2000, n. 2, pp. 201–213.

[4] Christian Bueger, Timothy Edmunds, *Blue crime: Conceptualising transnational organised crime at sea*, "Marine Policy", September 2020, p. 104067.

[5] Basil Germond, Celine Germond-Duret, *Critical geographies of the ocean: mobilities, placefulness and maritime relationalism*, in Jason Monios, Gordon Wilmmeier (eds.), *Maritime mobilities*, London, Routledge, 2018, pp. 36–37.

[6] Paolo Frascani, *Il Mare*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2008, pp. 178–198; Eugenio Ivetic, *Storia dell'Adriatico. Un mare e la sua civiltà*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2019, pp. 300–324. See also a recent pamphlet on the role of the Mediterranean in Italian history by Eugenio Ivetic, *Il Mediterraneo e l'Italia*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubettino, 2022.

in the context of security and defence, which are also absent from recent historiographical reviews of national maritime history.[7]

Before examining the national dimension of the relationship between the Italian Republic, defence and maritime security, it is useful to consider how scholars have interpreted the transformation of the role of security institutions in the postmodern sea, starting with Geoffrey Till's theories on maritime power in the age of globalisation. First, we must acknowledge that the globalised and systemic dimension of defence needs are no longer linked exclusively to the territorial space of the nation state. Second, the international system has accelerated since the 1970s, especially after the end of the Cold War. Third, maritime trade is central to ensuring the prosperity of states. In this context, security threats do not only concern states but also come from a variety of non-state actors (e.g. organised crime, piracy, human trafficking). In response to this transformation, the focus of military force has shifted towards four functional aspects: control of the sea, overseas shipping, the maritime order and upholding a maritime consensus. The first two aspects fall within the navies' traditional functions of control and naval projection, but the third element is a product of commercial globalisation and the aforementioned changes in jurisdiction. As a result, new security issues have emerged, necessitating changes to strengthen the non-military agencies and institutions responsible for maritime security. This has led to the fourth point: the need for international cooperation to maintain good order at sea.[8]

All these changes have turned navies into instruments serving national interests and designed to cooperate in integrated international and supranational contexts. However, this postmodern trend primarily impacts the navies of Western Europe, North America, Oceania and — to a certain extent — East Asia (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore). These navies have experienced stronger supranational integration into various types of organisations (e.g. NATO, EEC/EU, UN).[9] Italy seems to fit into this category, which has significant implications for the definition of its post-war maritime security policy.

Another aspect that is worth mentioning is the transformation of naval warfare during the twenty-first century. I am thinking of new forms of conflict that fall outside conventional warfare, either below the threshold of open violence (grey zone operations) or straddling it (hybrid warfare), but which do not degenerate into open conflict as conventionally understood. Historians have

[7] A few assessments from different chronological perspectives include those by Michela D'Angelo, Elisabetta M. Tonizzi, *Recent Maritime Historiography on Italy*, in Gelina Harlaftis, Carmen Vassallo (eds.), *New Directions in Mediterranean Maritime History*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2004, pp. 55–82; Andrea Caffarelli, *Navigare necesse est. La storia marittima nell'ultimo ventennio*, "Storia economica", 2017, n. 20, pp. 673–692.

[8] Geoffrey Till, *Seapower. A guide for the 21st Century*, London, Routledge, 2009, pp. 6–19.

[9] Ivi, pp. 2–3.

pointed out that these are not new phenomena; 'gunboat diplomacy' was an integral part of naval operations even in the first half of the twentieth century.[10] However, as studies in other disciplines have shown, maritime coercion is closely linked to the territorialisation of the sea. In fact, maritime territorial disputes and conflicts are linked to the use of coercion measures falling within the grey zone, to hybrid warfare and to assertive measures entrusted to paramilitary or maritime police agencies (paragunboat diplomacy).[11]

Alongside the impact of other changes to the sea, this transformation has resulted in a redefinition of the division of roles between navies and other maritime security agencies (particularly coast guards). This is evident in the convergence of certain security tasks, including border protection and managing new postmodern threats. At the institutional level, this change has prompted a transformation characterised by a redefinition of security-related policy-making, bringing civil agencies, police forces and the military closer together.[12] As we will see, this is also a relevant aspect for the history of Italy's relationship with maritime security in the present era, especially over the last 30 years. During this time, the peninsula has become the southern frontier of an integrated supranational European space, where there is a growing overlap of functions between military defence and civil security. These operate in a fragmented institutional context in which numerous police and security organisations with jurisdiction over the sea compete with one another.

A last element that is worth mentioning concerns the transformation of international power relations and their impact on navies. The end of the Second World War and the subsequent bipolar system, followed by the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the United States as the sole superpower, changed the distribution of global naval power. Before 1939, Western Europe was home to four of the seven great naval powers: Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany (the other three were the United States, Japan and the Soviet Union). After the war, the diminished international role of most of these countries meant that their navies were reduced. In particular, after the Suez Crisis (1956), the Soviet Union remained the only European naval power capable of operating independently, while the navies of the Western European countries integrated into NATO took on an essentially regional role.[13] As a result, the European

[10] Willamson Murray, Peter R. Mansoor (eds.), *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012; James Cable, *Gunboat diplomacy 1919-1979: Political applications of limited naval force*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999.

[11] James J. Goldrick, *Grey Zones Operations and the Maritime Domain*, Canberra, Australian Strategic policy institute, Barton, 2018. I am grateful to Francesco Zampieri for some useful observations regarding these specific issues.

[12] Ian Bowers, Swee Lean Collin Koh, *Introduction*, in Id., *Grey and White Hulls, an International Analysis of the Navy Coast-Guard Nexus*, London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2019, pp. 2–13.

[13] Lawrence Sondhaus, *Navies of Europe, 1815-2002*, London, Longman, 2002, p. 284.

powers — albeit with different measures — turned into medium-sized naval powers (i.e. states whose ability to operate at sea is only partially autonomous), forcing them to integrate into supranational organisations or cooperate with other state actors to achieve their foreign policy objectives.[14]

This aspect is important for historians because it reminds them that the post-war context provides potential for comparison, which is particularly useful given the delay in national historiography. Furthermore, it shows that the post-modern transformation of Italian maritime security began relatively early. As studies on republican foreign policy point out, since 1947, Italy has had to permanently renounce its aspirations to be a great power and reposition itself as a regional middle power with ramifications in the wider Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa. This has shaped its foreign policy in terms of its support for multilateralism and international cooperation. In this evolution, the mid-1970s were a watershed. Previously, Italy had assumed a position of strict Atlantic and European adherence, subsequently characterised by the search for an autonomous role, especially in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.[15] The break in the mid-1970s is confirmed by studies of military history, to which research on naval history and maritime security history must necessarily refer. Although historiography on the military history of the Italian Republic is expanding, it has not yet reached the breadth and depth of studies focusing on previous periods. Research has emphasised the centrality of the 1975–85 period, which was characterised by the introduction of promotional defence laws (beginning with the 1975 naval law). The latter shifted the focus of military policy increasingly towards the Mediterranean area. However, studies of Italian military history during the Cold War and the subsequent period are still significantly limited in quantitative and qualitative terms, which can be attributed to a variety of factors: shortcomings of the discipline; difficulties in accessing the sources; the prevalence of the perspective offered by international (mainly US) documentation over the national one; and the sectoralisation and technical nature of certain studies.[16]

Having established these paradigmatic and methodological premises, the following pages will review the studies and possible interpretative hypoth-

[14] These theories are described in J.R. Hill, *Maritime strategy for Medium Powers*, Annapolis, Naval Institute press, 1986, pp. 20–21.

[15] Antonio Varsori, *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2021, Kindle ed., pos. 177, 12161–13889. On the concept of 'middle power' and 1975 as a turning point, see also Carlo Maria Santoro, *La politica estera di una media potenza, L'Italia dall'unità a oggi*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1991, pp. 177–178.

[16] For a historiographical framework, see Nicola Labanca, *La politica militare della Repubblica. Cornici e quadri*, in Id. (ed.), *Le Armi della Repubblica, Dalla liberazione a oggi*, Turin, UTET, 2009, pp. 67–154; Id., *Nella guerra fredda e oltre*, in Id. (ed.), *Guerre ed eserciti nell'età contemporanea*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2022, pp. 211–213, 241–242 (on the 1970s as a watershed) and the annotated bibliography, pp. 254–256.

eses relating to the relationship between the Italian Republic and the sea in the context of defence and security. In line with my interpretation of the postmodern changes to the sea and to the foreign and defence policy in republican Italy, the discussion will be divided into two chronological sections, with 1975 acting as the dividing line. In addition to the fact that the mid-1970s were a watershed, there is another reason for establishing a chronological separation in this period: access to Italian archival documentation, which was closed for 50 years following its production.

Studies and perspectives on Italian maritime defence during the Cold War (1943–75)

In a 2009 essay summarising the history of the Italian Navy from 1945 to the present, Alessio Patalano referred to it as an institution in search of a painful identity. This identity was eventually established when the Italian Navy joined NATO, the driving force behind an internal qualitative transformation that revived the country's naval projection capacity after the 1960s.[17]

In general, during the nuclear age, all navies were at risk of losing their identity and function within a country's national strategy. Even the US Navy came close to being downsized because of the impact of nuclear weapons, at least until the Korean War (1950–53). For medium-sized navies, the transformation was mainly due to their integration into international or supranational entities. This change was also prompted by the United States' decision to strengthen its alliances with Western partners by sharing technology (particularly in vital areas such as missiles, electronics and nuclear innovation) and providing training.[18] Taken immediately after 1945, this decision implied moving away from a past of strategic independence towards a future based on alliances. These aspects inevitably raise the question of how institutions redefined their identity and strategy in this new context.

A comparison with the French case reveals that the latter adopted a middle ground between autonomy and integration. Following its collapse in the Second World War, technological renewal and the sharing of Anglo-American experience within NATO altered the French Navy's doctrine and development in the nuclear age. The result was an attempt to transform it into a tool of French foreign policy on the global stage, with aircraft carrier groups becoming ever more important for maintaining a prolonged pres-

[17] Alessio Patalano, *Dal Garibaldi al Cavour. Il potere marittimo italiano*, in N. Labanca (ed.), *Le Armi della Repubblica*, cit., pp. 229–245, p. 243.

[18] Corbin Williamson, *The U.S. Navy and its cold war alliances, 1945-1953*, Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2020, p. 262. For an overview of the technological evolution of navies, see Norman Friedman, *Navies in the Nuclear Age*, London, Conway, 1993.

ence in the oceans. Although the country's financial constraints meant that the results were less impressive than expected, the French Navy did manage to define an autonomous naval policy, albeit within the strategic framework of NATO.[19] After 1945, the Japanese Navy drew on its imperial tradition to maintain a sense of continuity, but it also learned the lessons of the war and shifted the focus of its development to the defence of communications and close ties with the United States. Both elements served Japan's new role as an economic power dependent on maritime trade.[20] Conversely, after aiming to be Germany's main instrument for global expansion during the world wars, in the nuclear age, the Bundesmarine became the German Federal Republic's smallest armed force. Throughout the first 30 years of the Cold War, it was almost completely integrated into NATO and underwent technological modernisation with the aim of providing local defence, primarily in the Baltic region.[21] Existing scholarship dates the end of this reconstruction phase to around the turn of the decade, between 1965 and 1975, in line with the break that I have identified for Italy.

The Italian model seems to share some of the characteristics of the cases cited above. However, in order to establish some lines of interpretation, we must consider the relationship between the naval-military element and the maritime system that the Italian Republic had inherited.

Studies of the maritime history of the Liberal and Fascist periods have highlighted the general weakness of the shipping, heavy industry and shipbuilding sectors, leading the state to intervene — in the late nineteenth century — by subordinating the functioning and survival of these sectors to the country's power logic.[22] As a result, the Royal Navy and its projection capacity became a necessary means for opening up commercial and colonial spaces abroad for Italy, as well as a tool for the country's maritime defence in the Mediterranean.[23] This model reached its peak between the two world wars, when Italy became the world's second-largest exporter of naval armaments,

[19] Hugues Canuel, *The Fall and Rise of French Sea power, France's Quest for an Independent Naval Policy, 1940-1963*, Annapolis, Naval institute press, 2021.

[20] Alessio Patalano, *Post-war Japan as a Sea Power, Imperial Legacy, Wartime Experience and the Making of a Navy*, London, Bloomsbury, 2005, especially pp. 148–149, 152.

[21] Johanness Berthold Sander Nagashima, *Die Bundesmarine 1950 bis 1972, Konzeption und Aufbau*, Munich, Oldenbourg, 2006.

[22] The most detailed reconstructions on the issue include Ludovica De Courten, *La Marina mercantile italiana nella politica di espansione, 1860-1914: industria, finanza e trasporti marittimi*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1989; Giulio Mellinato, *L'Adriatico conteso. Commercio, politica e affari tra Italia e Austria-Ungheria (1882-1914)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2018; on shipbuilding, see Paolo Fragiacomo, *L'industria come continuazione della politica. La cantieristica italiana 1861-2011*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2011, especially pp. 18–20, 38–40, 54–64, 83–85, 91–94, 101–104.

[23] Mariano Gabriele, *Il potere marittimo italiano, 1861-1915*, Roma, USMM, 2017, pp. 39–40.

while it continued to support shipping for reasons of prestige, in the form of aid and subsidies.[24]

On the eve of the Second World War, the Royal Navy had become the fourth largest fleet in terms of number of vessels and the fifth largest in terms of tonnage. During the Fascist era in particular, Italy's naval policy emphasised the importance of the military in achieving ocean freedom, which the country lacked.[25] However, due to more general problems with its military policy, the regime failed to reconcile this perceived strategic necessity with its naval policy.[26] This failure became apparent during the Second World War, when Fascist Italy was trapped in the Mediterranean. Between 1940 and 1943, not only was the Italian Navy defeated, but the merchant navy was also destroyed, and these events also marked the end of a cycle of Italian maritime power. In fact, the collapse of the regime's maritime projects highlighted the broader limitations of a naval power based on a continental-territorial model aimed at acquiring overseas space rather than growing the country's commercial presence, which is typical of maritime states.[27]

In this sense, the 1947 Peace Treaty and the consequent end of the 'great navy' era spanning 1861–1943 fundamentally changed the relationship between the national maritime economy and the naval forces, constituting a sort of 'year zero'. In fact, by downsizing the maritime institution, the treaties also minimised the importance of the military-industrial complex. By doing so, they influenced the subsequent development of Italy's maritime economy. The latter took a path characterised by significant public intervention through the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI), in line with previous practices, but it was mainly directed towards the civilian maritime sector.[28] A clear sign of this was the substantial decline in Italian warship exports, mainly of small and specialised vessels, which lasted until the 1970s.[29]

[24] See Andrea Filippo Saba, *L'imperialismo opportunista. Politica estera e industria degli armamenti (1919-1941)*, Naples, Esi, 2001; Roberto Giulianelli, *Ship financing in Italy in the first half of the twentieth century*, "International Journal of maritime history", 2016, n. 2, pp. 335–355.

[25] P. Frascani, *Il mare*, cit., pp. 126–128.

[26] See also Fabio De Ninno, *Fascisti sul mare. La Marina e gli ammiragli di Mussolini*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2017.

[27] Colin S. Gray, *The leverage of sea power. The strategic Advantage of Navies in War*, New York, Free Press, 1992, pp. 6–8; Jack S. Levy, William R. Thompson, *Balancing on Land and at Sea. Do States Ally against the Leading Global Power?*, "International Security", 2020, n. 1, p. 18; Bruce A. Elleman, *Principles of Maritime Powers*, Boston, Rowman&Littlefield, 2022, pp. xi–xviii (Introduction by Sarah C.M. Paine) and pp. 127–136.

[28] P. Fragiacomo, *L'industria come continuazione*, cit., p. 109; Giulio Mellinato, *Lo stato navigatore. Finmare tra servizio pubblico e business (1944-1999)*, pp. 433, 437–440; Roberto Giulianelli, *La navalmeccanica dalla protezione alla competizione (1945-2002)*, pp. 392–393, both in Franco Russolillo (ed.), *Storia dell'IRI*, vol. V, *Un gruppo singolare. Settori, bilanci, presenza nell'economia italiana*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2015.

[29] Erminio Bagnasco, Achille Rastelli, *Le costruzioni navali italiane per l'estero*, Rome, Rivista Marittima, 1991, pp. 81–89.

Hence, the state of defence and maritime security in post-war Italy was hypothetically in a state of rupture with the previous period. It should be noted that, during the first phase (1945–75), the contribution of other actors — particularly the maritime police — to maritime security does not appear to have been significant. This is partly due to a lack of research. Furthermore, as we will see, the Coast Guard's transformation into a maritime border security force with autonomous operational capabilities at sea only began towards the end of the Cold War, when the Guardia di Finanza (the Italian financial police) was only responsible for maritime customs control. Following the 1958 Geneva Convention, state jurisdiction was extended to a contiguous zone of only 12 nautical miles.[30]

One of the main challenges for historians is the lack of comprehensive works on the Italian Navy during the Cold War. The main summary of Italian naval history, written by Giorgio Giorgerini in 1989, offers some important insights, but it stops at the 1980s. Giorgerini offers a periodisation that divides the history of the maritime institution into three sections: 1943–45, the defeated Navy; 1945–61, reconstruction; and 1961–88, towards the Mediterranean and beyond. The latter section ends with the intervention of the 20th naval group in the Persian Gulf (1988), but it focuses on the break with the 1975 naval law. This summary highlights the significance of the Italian Navy's inclusion in NATO, which is one of the key aspects of the postmodern internationalisation of navies. However, the book essentially presents itself as an insider's history, drawing on classic themes from journalistic investigations and memoirs about the maritime institution. The first is the armistice of 8 September 1943, presented as proof of the Navy's solidity in uniting behind the orders of the high command, which is considered proof of its detachment from the Fascist regime. This was followed by the Peace Treaty, seen as a punitive moment, and subsequently the establishment of an 'Atlantic navy' after Italy joined NATO. The 1960s were dominated by nuclear ambitions linked to attempts to strengthen Italy's role in NATO, which was confirmed in 1967 when the country was granted command of NATO's naval forces in the Mediterranean. Finally, the naval law was a 'salvific' moment that outlined Italy's new role in the Mediterranean and contributed to the restructuring of the national maritime industrial system.[31]

Although the information provided by Giorgerini is undoubtedly relevant, the book remains highly biased. For example, it openly takes sides in the

[30] S. Bertolucci, *Il problema del mare territoriale*, "Rivista Marittima", 1959, n. 4, April, pp. 53–67.

[31] Giorgio Giorgerini, *Da Matapan al Golfo Persico. La marina militare italiana dal fascismo alla Repubblica*, Milano, Mondadori, 1989, pp. 582–672; a similar approach can be found in other, more recent summaries, including Renato Battista La Racine, Franco Prosperini, *La marina militare 1861-1991. Compendio di 130 anni di vita*, Rome, USMM, 2007, pp. 97–128; Patrizio Rapalino, *Dalle Alpi all'alto mare. Il ruolo della Marina militare nella tutela degli interessi nazionali (1861-1943)*, Vicenza, in Edibus, 2014, pp. 271–325.

discussion of interforce issues, essentially echoing the viewpoint of the naval leadership rather than providing a critical analysis. Furthermore, it tends to portray the political class as incapable of understanding maritime defence issues, uncritically attributing the difficulties encountered by the maritime institution to these problems. In doing so, it ignores the complex internal and external factors that have influenced national defence policy.

Starting with the literature on the events of the armistice,[32] this limitation can be found more generally in works published between 1943 and 1975. For example, to date, the most detailed reconstruction of the events that happened between 1943 and 1946 is provided by the memoirs of the then Minister of the Navy, Admiral Raffaele De Courten. His memories seek to illustrate the maritime institution's unity between the armistice and the June 1946 referendum, suggesting that it maintained an institutional identity during the country's crisis and presenting the Navy as loyal to the monarchy. However, the editor of the memoirs, Mariano Gabriele, had already indicated that the minister's self-representation was somewhat limited.[33] In this regard, historical research has challenged the idea that 8 September represented a unifying moment, instead suggesting that it was the Navy's organisational structure that held it together after the armistice. De Courten adopted an apparently apolitical stance in subsequent events.[34] This aspect points to the influence of the memories of the protagonists of Italian naval affairs in those years, and to the methodological-historical limitations of memoir writing. Conversely, Giovanni Bernardi's study of the relationship between the maritime institution and the victorious powers during the period from the Armistice to the Peace Treaty is closer to a traditional diplomatic history.[35]

Moving on to the 1950s and the 1960s, the reconstruction of events and the problems faced by the Italian Navy once again exhibit a self-representative quality, being the product of memoirs or pamphlets of the time.[36] The analysis of the vessels seems to be more comprehensive, even extending beyond 1975, but it remains limited in terms of the link between the development of

[32] See Patrizio Rapalino, Giuseppe Schivardi, *Tutti a bordo! I marinai d'Italia l'8 settembre 1943. Tra etica e ragion di Stato*, Milan, Mursia, 2006; Concetta Ricottili, *La marina militare attraverso l'8 settembre. Il senso dell'onore tra dimensione storica e dimensione retorica*, Padua, Il poligrafo, 2007. The history of those events is described in Francesco Mattesini, *La Marina e l'8 settembre*, Rome, USMM, 1993.

[33] Usmm, *Le memorie dell'ammiraglio De Courten*, USMM, Rome, 1995, especially pp. 15–16, 53, 62, 258, 595–597; for Gabriele's request for constructive criticism, see note 109 at pp. 65–66.

[34] Elena Aga Rossi, *Una nazione allo sbando. 8 settembre 1943*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2006, p. 122; for the second point, see Andrea Argenio, *Le uniformi della Repubblica: Esercito, armamenti e politica in Italia (1945-1949)*, Rome, Viella, 2021, p. 55.

[35] Giovanni Bernardi, *La marina gli armistizi e il trattato di pace*, Rome, USMM, 1976.

[36] See the volume by the then Chief of Staff, Virgilio Spigai*, Il problema navale italiano*, Livorno, Vito Bianco, 1963; Gino Birindelli, *Vita da marinaio*, Livorno, Vito Bianco, 1991.

the assets and the Navy's military policy.[37] An event-driven overview of naval diplomacy up to the 1950s is provided through accounts of the Navy's cruises, which were also used to improve the image of the country damaged by the war.[38] More recent works that focus on specific issues, such as the Navy's nuclear ambitions, provide further insight. These studies show the importance of US technology transfer, but also the Italian Navy's ability to develop unique technical solutions, as in the case of the Garibaldi missile cruiser.[39] In this sense, Marco Di Giovanni observed that defeat in the war had prompted reflection — facilitated by contact with former enemies — and raised awareness among the officer corps of the need for rapid technological modernisation in sectors such as electronics and nuclear power, in which Italy was lagging behind most clearly. Officer training also needed to be updated. The Italian Naval Academy in Livorno modernised its programmes in the 1950s and 1960s, and close contact with other NATO navies was essential for the strengthening of new skills such as data analysis and operational planning. However, while the Navy showed greater openness than the Army, its links with scientific research remained limited to specific operative areas, leaving capital-intensive research to the impressive resources of the United States.[40]

There are also several more detailed publications that describe the essential features of the Navy's strategic thinking. These works effectively highlight the growing awareness of the loss of national autonomy and the need for Atlantic-European integration, since any conflict between the blocs would necessarily involve Italy. Hence the need to reconfigure the country's naval strategy, based on its maritime defence — aligned with NATO's overall strategy — but also on the ongoing recovery of part of the country's lost status as a regional power.[41]

[37] Giorgio Giorgerini, Alberto Nani, *Gli incrociatori italiani 1861-1975*, Rome, USMM, 1975; id, *Almanacco storico delle navi militari italiane. La marina e le sue navi dal 1861 al 1995*, Rome, USMM, 1996; Michele Cosentino, *La Marina militare italiana dal 1945 al 1975*, Rome, Rivista marittima, 1996; Michele Cosentino, Maurizio Brescia, *La Marina Militare italiana 1945-2015*, 3 volumes, Genoa, Edizioni storia militare, 2014–15; Michele Cosentino, *La Marina Militare durante la guerra fredda*, Rome, USMM, 2023.

[38] Usmm, *Storia delle campagne oceaniche della Regia Marina*, vol. IV, Rome, USMM,1993, pp. 564–595; USMM, *Giro del mondo dell'incrociatore Raimondo Montecuccoli, 1956-1957*, Rome, USMM, 2007.

[39] Vincenzo Meleca, *Il potere nucleare della marina italiana*, "Bollettino d'archivio USMM", single issue published in 2017, pp. 65–103; this must be supplemented with the analysis of military nuclear relations between Italy and the United States, which can be found in Leopoldo Nuti, *La sfida nucleare. La politica estera italiana e le armi atomiche 1945-1991*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2007, pp. 82–334.

[40] Marco Di Giovanni, *Ufficiali "comandanti" o tecnocrati? La formazione dei quadri nella marina militare italiana nel secondo dopoguerra. Tradizioni culturali, scienza e management nell'età della guerra tecnologica, appunti e ipotesi di ricerca*, "Mélanges de l'école française de Rome", volume 115, n. 2, 2003, Rome 2003, pp. 595–623.

[41] Giorgio Giorgerini, Riccardo Nassigh, *Il pensiero navale italiano dal dopoguerra ad oggi*, 3 volumes, Rome, USMM, 1997; see also the analysis by Ezio Ferrante, *Il pensiero strategico*

Although they fall outside the postmodern paradigm that I have outlined (partly because they were published before it took root in international studies), studies on strategic thinking seem to acknowledge some features of this evolution: the centrality of supranational security integration and the importance of defending national communications independently of the merchant navy. However, these studies are severely limited by their relatively limited access to primary Italian sources from the period.

In this regard, Francesco Zampieri's analysis of the events surrounding the 1975 naval law is interesting. Based on archival research in Navy sources and the private papers of the then Chief of Staff, Gino De Giorgi, Zampieri's study seeks to provide a complete picture of what was the Navy's main instrument of renewal in the era of detente and the Helsinki Accords (1975). This change was rooted in the development of a new maritime strategic concept, as set out in the 1973 White Paper, which led the armed forces to seek new ways of operating in the south and beyond the Mediterranean, as well as defining some long-term characteristics of their development.[42] This highlighted the maritime institution's search for a new, even autonomous role, partly in response to the changes taking place in the Mediterranean, starting with the increased Soviet presence and the activism of southern Mediterranean states. This was particularly relevant given the territorialisation of the sea, which accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s through the numerous bilateral agreements between Italy and neighbouring countries concerning the definition of exclusive economic zones.[43]

Another important aspect is the role of the law in laying the foundations for subsequent developments that would lead to the search for a sphere of action outside the central Mediterranean. This issue was presented in connection with broader issues, such as the energy crisis that began in 1973, the growing prominence of the Middle East and Suez in the Italian economy, and the consolidation of Soviet influence and naval presence in the Mediterranean.[44] Zampieri emphasises the significance of the transformation of the Mediterranean in the 1960s and 1970s, mainly attributing it to the process of maritime territorialisation as a driving force behind the naval law.[45] Finally, he highlights the devel-

navale in Italia, Rome, Rivista Marittima, 1988, pp. 77–81; Luigi Donolo, *Storia della dottrina navale italiana*, Rome, USMM, 1996, pp. 399–409.

[42] N. Labanca, *Nella guerra fredda e oltre*, cit., pp. 241–242.

[43] Yugoslavia (1968), Tunisia (1971), Spain (1974) and Greece (1977). For an overview of developments dating up to the present day, see Fabio Caffio, *L'Italia e gli Spazi marittimi. Risorse e dispute nel Mediterraneo. La posizione italiana*, in Matteo Bressan et al. (eds.), *Geopolitica del mare*, Milan, Mursia, 2018, pp. 81–118.

[44] An overview of these transformations from a diplomatic perspective can be found in Elena Calandri, Daniele Caviglia, Antonio Varsori, *Détente in Cold War Europe. Politics and diplomacy in the Mediterranean and the Middle East*, London, Bloomsbury, 2016. However, little attention is paid to the issue of maritime territorialisation.

[45] Francesco Zampieri, *1975 la Marina rinasce. La legge navale del 1975*, Vicenza, in Edibus, 2014, pp. 133–202.

opment of a communication strategy by the maritime institution aimed to inform the political world and public opinion about the changes taking place at sea, which are necessary for the development of a naval policy capable of responding to these changes.[46]

Research on the years between 1943 and 1975 clearly provides us with various elements that allow us to place the history of the Italian Navy within a postmodern paradigm. Nevertheless, we will need to extend our focus if we want to develop a comprehensive interpretation. In particular, we will need to analyse how the processes of defining a naval policy were influenced by the relationship with NATO and the main allies in the Mediterranean (France and Britain), and by the Italian perception of the external threat from the Soviet Union and the countries of the southern shore. It will also be essential to study the relationship with the other armed forces, especially in view of the unification of the military ministries in 1947 and the accelerated administrative integration of the 1960s. Finally, we must understand the relevance of the transfer of technological and doctrinal knowledge between the Navy and its allies. Only an analysis that brings these elements together can shed light on the extent to which the relationship between defence, security and the sea changed in the early years of the Italian Republic. The aim is to establish whether and how the changes of the 1970s were the result of a general awareness among the national leadership of the opportunities arising from a rapidly changing Mediterranean.

There are other lines of research that could broaden our understanding of security institutions. Of particular relevance is the issue of social history, which in the naval sphere has not moved beyond the Liberal period,[47] again with the exception of — now outdated — insiders' histories and contextual sociological research on the maritime institution,[48] as well as accounts of life in the Navy.[49] However, important changes in recruitment, beginning with the 1964 conscription reform that replaced the previous 'seafaring people' system by expanding the Navy's recruitment pool, have made this strand of historiography more urgent. Another key issue is the origin of naval personnel, with a clear predom-

[46] Ivi, pp. 203–220, 231–262.

[47] Nicola Labanca, *Uniformi sul mare. Note sul reclutamento della Marina militare nell'Italia liberale*, in Paolo Frascani (ed.), *A vela e a vapore. Economia, culture e istituzioni del mare nell'Italia dell'Ottocento*, Rome, Donzelli, 2001, pp. 215–246; Francesco Zampieri, *Marinai con le stellette. Storia sociale della regia Marina nell'Italia liberale (1861-1914)*, Rome, Aracne, 2008.

[48] For the first case, see Gino Galuppini, *L'Accademia navale di Livorno 1881-1981*, Rome, USMM, 1981; id, *Le scuole sottufficiali della marina militare*, Rome, USMM, 1996; an example of the second case can be found in Gian Carlo Fortunato, *Un'indagine sociologica sugli allievi dell'Accademia Navale di Livorno*, "Rivista marittima", 1970, n. 1, pp. 57–70; for a more recent analysis, see Marco Mascellani, Maurizio Licciardello, *Fischia immersione! Vita quotidiana a bordo dei sommergibili classe Toti*, Rome, Laurus, 2020.

[49] Gianfranco Bacchi, *Il punto più alto. Sulla rotta di un sogno al comando dell'Amerigo Vespucci*, Genoa, Edizioni cinque terre, 2021.

inance of officers and non-commissioned officers from the Italian South, a trend that had already become established by the mid-1980s.[50] An analysis of this aspect would also help to contextualise the development of the maritime institution within the broader framework of changes to state institutions. From the 1960s onwards, the latter were affected by the rapid increase in the dominance of personnel from southern Italy, even in middle and senior positions.[51]

The era of projection (1975–2014)

Studies focusing on the post-1975 period are more likely to fall within the remit of research on international security and contemporary maritime power. The issues under consideration inevitably revolve around the key events of the end of the Cold War (1989–91), the acceleration of European integration (i.e. the foundation of the European Union in 1993) and the new threats to the sea, which diversified after 11 September 2001, in particular. My discussion will end in 2014, when a Naval Programme for the Protection of Maritime Defence Capabilities was launched. It initiated a third transformation of the Italian Navy, which was followed by a new White Paper for International Security and Defence in 2015. According to some contextual analyses, the latter marked the beginning of a process of refocusing towards the Euro-Mediterranean area, characterised by a greater strategic consistency.[52] This aspect was confirmed in Italian naval policy in the following years, on the condition that the Mediterranean be considered an enlarged maritime area whose ramifications necessarily require the ability to operate and cooperate with other navies in the ocean areas contiguous to the area of primary national interest.[53]

The purpose of this last section is to outline potential areas for historiographical research, again in the framework of the postmodern paradigm of maritime power that underpins this article. This is not an easy task, given the unavailability of primary sources due to the closure of archives, which has complicated historical analysis, making researchers entirely dependent on official documentation or sources expressing the views of key figures involved in the events, such as direct testimonies and interviews. The latter often provide a self-representative, event-driven view of the relationship between the Italian

[50] Fabrizio Battistelli, *Soldati. sociologia dei militari italiani nell'era del peace-keeping*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1996, pp. 68–70.

[51] Guido Melis, *Storia dell'amministrazione italiana, 1861-1993*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1996, pp. 477–480.

[52] Ministry of Defence, White Paper on International Security and Defence, July 2015; see the observations in Andrea Gilli, Alessandro R. Ungaro, Alessandro Marrone, *The Italian White Paper for International Security and Defence*, "The RUSI Journal", 2015, n. 6, pp. 34–41.

[53] I have offered some provisional observations in *La marina e le guerre per mare*, in N. Labanca, *Guerre ed eserciti*, cit., pp. 334–335.

Republic and maritime security, to the detriment of a historiographical interpretation.

To understand why the transformations since the 1970s have taken place, we must consider certain events that have characterised the relationship between Italy and maritime security. In fact, the long-term consequences of the 'projective' transformation that began in 1975 can be summarised in three key issues: the acquisition of an autonomous naval aviation force in 1989, centred around light aircraft carriers (Garibaldi in 1985; Cavour in 2009); greater offensive capability and a wider range of action for ships in support of 'out-of-area' operations; and the creation of an amphibious unit capable of operating far from Mediterranean waters. In other words, since the 1980s, the naval force has been better able to 'go out to sea', viewing the ocean as an extension of the 'enlarged Mediterranean'.[54]

Furthermore, we must bear in mind an additional factor that lies beyond the remit of institutions: changes in the national maritime industry after the 1970s. One of the stated objectives of the 1975 naval was to support an industry, largely controlled by the state, which had been brought to its knees by its technical backwardness and foreign competition, especially from Japan. This led to a recovery in exports of national naval armaments from the late 1970s onwards. Consequently, this sector became one of the few successful areas of public shipbuilding, albeit through a turbulent process of concentrating production in the Ligurian and Trieste hubs.[55] Fincantieri, the public holding company that has controlled a significant part of the sector since 1959, owes much of its success to the construction of warships, thanks in part to demand from the Italian Navy.[56] This change reflects a focus on producing for the maritime sector that is better suited to the evolving landscape of the globalised maritime world.

However, the maritime institution's changed capabilities have been placed at the disposal of a political class that, following the end of the Cold War and a military policy linked mainly to territorial defence (as highlighted in the 1985 White Paper), has expanded its use of military force beyond Italy. This occurred within a context of growing international cooperation in military operations and participation in military operations other than war. In the specific case of the Italian Navy, this has also led to the development of ships whose function has been defined as 'dual-use', precisely to serve in humanitarian emergencies.[57] Another aspect to consider is that, since the 2000s, it has

[54] P. Rapalino, *Dalle Alpi all'alto mare*, cit., pp. 326–336, cit. p. 335.

[55] P. Fragiacomo, *L'industria come continuazione della politica*, cit., pp. 243, 245, 247, 266, 289, 319; R. Giulianelli, *La Navalmeccanica*, cit., p. 416.

[56] The events are described in Roberto Galisi, *Dai salvataggi alla competizione globale. La Fincantieri dal 1959 al 2009*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2011, pp. 117–118, 131, 137–138, 152.

[57] A summary of Italy's involvement in international operations can be found in Fatima Farina, *Operazioni internazionali e trasformazione militare*, in N. Labanca, *Guerre ed eser-*

been necessary to launch a new phase of technological modernisation. Linked to these issues is the management of a process of accelerated professionalisation of the armed forces, due in part to the suspension of conscription in 2005 and the introduction of voluntary military service for women in 1999.[58]

Some long-term critical issues within the national military apparatus have also had an impact on the Italian Navy. Since 1997, the powers of the Chief of Defence Staff have been strengthened precisely to remove the separation between the three armed forces inherited from the bipolar period. However, research has highlighted the persistence of institutional rivalries (e.g. the F-35 fighter jet affair in the previous decade), partly because of the relative scarcity of financial resources. At the same time, the Italian armed forces have shown considerable projection capacity, thanks in part to the naval logistical capabilities acquired after the 1970s and the presence of an independent air and naval force. An important example for the Navy was its participation in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, where Taliban forces were hit by air strikes launched from the Garibaldi aircraft carrier. Only the US and French forces demonstrated similar capabilities at the time. Its presence in Lebanon in 2006 and in Libya (Operation Odyssey Dawn) in 2011 was of similar importance in demonstrating rapid reaction and logistical projection capabilities. In the latter operation, Italian naval forces ensured the evacuation of civilians and the maintenance of the embargo imposed on the Gaddafi regime. In general, the transformation of the armed forces and the national military doctrine have increasingly emphasised their expeditionary role. This has led scholars to affirm that the Navy has responded well, even in comparison with the wealthier French and British institutions, despite growing military budgetary difficulties following the 2008 crisis.[59]

The success of 'power projection' also appears to have created a divide within the armed forces' strategic culture. While the Army has tried to present itself to the public as a 'peace force', the two institutions with the greatest projection capacity (the Air Force and Navy) remain more focused on their traditional warfighting functions.[60] This aspect raises another crucial issue,

citi, cit., pp. 424–449. Among the Navy's missions during this period, it is worth citing the following: rescue of the Boat People of Vietnam (1979); Lebanon (1982); Sinai (1982); Persian Gulf (1987–88); First Gulf War (1991); Somalia (1993); Albania (1997); Kosovo (1998); East Timor (1999); Second Gulf War (2003–06); Lebanon (2006–present); Libya (2011).

[58] For an analysis of the issue of female recruitment, see Fatima Farina, *Donne nelle forze armate. Il servizio militare femminile in Italia e nella Nato*, Rome, Viella, 2015.

[59] Fabrizio Coticchia, Francesco N. Moro, *The Transformation of Italian Armed Forces in Comparative Perspective,* Farnham, Ashgate, 2015, pp. 31, 36, 40–45, 58, 85–87, 93–94, 121; see also Jeremy Stohts, *The Decline of European Naval Forces, Challenges to Sea Power in the Age of Fiscal Austerity and Political Uncertainty*, Annapolis, Naval institute Press, 2018, pp. 73–89.

[60] Piero Ignazi, Giampiero Giacomello, Fabrizio Coticchia, *Italian Military Operations Abroad Just Don't Call it War*, London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, p. 171.

namely how this discrepancy is the product of different institutional strategic cultures, and how the latter originated. In my opinion, there is little doubt that the 'enlarged Mediterranean' is the predominant concept in the Navy's strategic culture, at least since it was theorised in the early 1980s, codified in the 1990s by the Institute of Maritime Warfare and fully developed in the 2000s.[61] This concept also seems to have gained ground in public opinion, especially after 2000, as it has been disseminated in non-specialist journals focusing on defence and security issues and analyses by specialised research centres.[62] At the same time, the 'enlarged Mediterranean' has helped to influence the European Union's strategic approach to maritime issues, given that its southern border is subject to maritime security threats — not only military ones — that give the Mediterranean a geopolitical dimension, linking the Atlantic, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, the Caucasus and even Central Asia.[63] The origin and development of this concept in the institutional sphere remains to be analysed, as does the question of whether it is linked to long-term theories,[64] as well as how — in the wake of the naval law — the maritime institution has developed its own public communication strategy for this strategic approach. In sum, it is necessary to understand the contribution of the military to the development of Italy's defence culture.

Italian strategic concepts of maritime security have begun to influence those at the European level. As I have previously demonstrated, starting in the 1990s, the doctrinal and technological integration promoted by NATO during the Cold War — especially through the establishment of the Western European Union (WEU) Maritime Force at EUROMARFOR in 1995 — was superseded by a process of strengthening naval cooperation that clearly reflected certain postmodern traits.[65] A perfect example of this evolution was the European EUNAVFOR Atalanta operation to counter Somali piracy, which was launched in 2008. The operation is fully in line with the logic — shared by postmodern

[61] Some reflections are contained in Fabio De Ninno, Francesco Zampieri, *Oltre gli stretti. La proiezione oceanica e il potere navale italiano*, "Limes, Il mare italiano e la guerra", n. 8, 2022, pp. 71–84. See also the speech by Roberto Domini at the centenary of the Institute of Maritime Military Studies and the inauguration of the 2021/22 academic year, starting at approximately 2:20:00 www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqAr07Sj8Pc&t=9500s (last accessed 4 September 2023).

[62] See, for example, *L'Italia è il mare*, "Limes", n. 10, 2020, or the ISPI series dedicated to the wider Mediterranean /www.ispionline.it/it/tag/mediterraneo-allargato (last accessed 4 September 2023).

[63] Basil Germond, *The Maritime Dimension of European Security: Seapower and the European Union*, London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, p. 153.

[64] For example, there could be a connection with strategies for the country's naval projection in the 1930s and 1940s, although these have developed since then. See Giuseppe Fioravanzo, *Il Mediterraneo centro strategico del Mondo*, Verona, Mondadori, 1943.

[65] Fabio De Ninno, *Ue, potere navale e le Marine europee: tra modernismo e postmodernismo. Alcuni spunti dalla letteratura internazionale*, "Rivista marittima", January 2020, pp. 27–33.

states — of maintaining good order at sea, but it also marked a turning point in the relationship between the European Union and maritime security. In fact, it led to unified planning, command and control, and resource sharing on a scale never before achieved independently of NATO.[66] Unlike national research, which has tended to focus on diplomacy and cooperation in the armaments sector, the analysis of supranational naval cooperation could also offer food for thought on European integration in the field of military integration.[67]

The issue of piracy reminds us that, in the first two decades of this century, new security issues have emerged that go beyond traditional naval operations involving military confrontation. Indeed, maritime institutions have increasingly had to adopt their missions to address phenomena such as piracy, organised crime and migration, in line with the new multidimensional nature of security and the maintenance of good order at sea.[68] In Italy, this challenge first manifested itself in the 1990s, when the Navy was prompted to respond to the large-scale arrival of refugees from Albania (1997), leading to the decision to start patrolling Albanian waters (Operation Alba). The problem resurfaced in 2011, following the Mediterranean migration crisis caused by the Arab Spring, which revealed the deep interconnection between the territorialisation of the Mediterranean and the responsibility of states for maritime security, as migration flows largely affected the waters off the country's maritime borders.[69]

This brings us to a final potential area of research on the post-1975 period: the 'hybridisation' between defence, security and humanitarian issues, a process that tends to remove the barriers between these areas.[70] A notable example of this trend was Operation Mare Nostrum (October 2013–October 2014). Conducted primarily by the Italian Navy, Coast Guard and Guardia di Finanza, the operation officially involved rescuing migrants crossing the central Mediterranean. However, it bore all the hallmarks of a security operation aimed at preventing illegal activities, especially human trafficking. The

[66] Trineke Palm, *Cooperative bargaining in the EU's common security and defence policy: EUNAVFOR Atalanta,* "Contemporary Politics", 2019, n. 2, pp. 129–149; Marianne Riddervold, *Finally flexing its muscles? Atalanta — The European Union's naval military operation against piracy*, "European Security", 2011, n. 3, pp. 385–404.

[67] Some examples include: Chiara Bonaiuti, Debora Dameri, *Achille Lodovisi. L'industria militare e la difesa europea*, Milan, Jaca Book, 2008; Marco Clementi, *L'Europa e il mondo. La politica estera, di sicurezza e di difesa europea*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2005; Pieri Luigi Ballini (ed.), *La comunità europea di difesa (CED*), Soveria Mannelli, Rubettino, 2009.

[68] An introduction to the problem of this transformation can be found in Francesco Zampieri, *Fondamenti di strategia marittima,* Rome, Nuova cultura, 2020, pp. 167–183.

[69] Alessandro Marrone, Michele Nones, Alessandro R. Ungaro, *Italian Defence Policy, Armed Forces and Operations in the Mediterranean*, in Alessandro Marrone, Michele Nones (eds.), *Italy and Security in the Mediterranean*, Rome, IAI/Nuova cultura, 2016, pp. 109–124.

[70] See the observations of Giorgia Bevilacqua, *Exploring the Ambiguity of Operation Sophia between Military and Search and Rescue Activities*, in Gemma Andreone (ed.), *The Future of the Law of the Sea: Bridging Gaps between National, Individual and Common Interests*, Vienna, Springer, 2015, pp. 165–189.

migration crisis emphasised the importance of the Coast Guard's and Navy's operational capabilities in managing it. Paradoxically, these capabilities were lacking in the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), established in 2004, which took over crisis management with Operation Triton (November 2014–February 2018). Interestingly, 58,499 of the 207,619 migrants who landed in Italy were rescued by the Coast Guard.[71]

A more thorough analysis is necessary to understand similar operations in subsequent years, which cannot be discussed here, as they were the result of changes in Europe's defence and security policy and its relationship with the sea. They include Operation Sophia (April 2015–March 2020), which sought to combat migrant trafficking, and Operation Irini (January 2020–present), which aims to block arms trafficking to Libya. The two missions are part of a convergence of the process of European integration and defence, marked by the launch of the Permanent Structured Cooperation at the end of 2018.[72] Finally, further changes are being implemented by both states and non-state actors, such as those relating to cybersecurity,[73] or maritime territorial disputes, as analysed by Deborah Paci.

In conclusion, the operational capabilities of the military and other security agencies have also converged in Italy. They have proven to be an integral part of the postmodern transition of maritime power. However, as Nicola Labanca recently pointed out, studies on the police forces and the history of security in the Italian Republic need to be explored further, but without the Italian model being considered as an exceptional case, even if it has some distinctive traits.[74]

The Coast Guard and the Guardia di Finanza have important maritime policing and security tasks. It is difficult to reconstruct the Coast Guard's institutional history, given that only few, mainly self-referential studies exist (see the comments at the end of this essay).[75] Once again, historical studies are not the place to look for analysis, although research is still in its infancy in other areas as well. In this regard, Alessandra Giada Dibenedetto reminds us that, although the Navy and the Coast Guard are two separate maritime security

[71] On the nature of 'Mare Nostrum' as a security operation, see Alessio Patalano, *Nightmare Nostrum? Not Quite, Lessons from the Italian Navy in the Mediterranean Migrant Crisis*, "Rusi Journal", July 2015, pp. 16–17. On the actions of the Italian Navy and Coast Guard, see Giuseppe Campesi, *Policing Mobility Regimes, Frontex and the Production of the European Border Space*, London, Routledge, 2021, pp. 162, 239; figures can be found at page 240.

[72] Antonio Missiroli, *L'Europa come potenza. Diplomazia, sicurezza e difesa*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2022, pp. 136–150.

[73] For a general introduction, see Lisa Otto (ed.), *Global Challenges in Maritime Security*, Cham, Springer, 2020.

[74] Cfr. Nicola Labanca, *What Republic without police?*, "The Journal of Modern Italian studies", 2022, n. 2, pp. 163–177.

[75] One example is Stefano Vinani, Claudio Bernetti, *Dai prefetti del mare a Guardia Costiera. La storia di un corpo al servizio del paese 1865-2021*, Rome, Ministero delle infrastrutture e dei trasporti, 2021.

agencies, reciprocity, interdependence and — at times — overlapping functions are evident.[76] Officially established in 1989 as an offshoot of the previously existing port authorities, the Coast Guard remains part of the Navy and is subject to the control of the Navy General Staff. However, it carries out its tasks in partial functional dependence on other civil agencies, particularly those responsible for infrastructure and the environment.[77] Like the Navy, the Coast Guard has also sought to develop a dual-use role, engaging in activities that support civil and environmental protection, the control of fishing activities, and safety and rescue at sea. Given that some of these operations have a security dimension, as highlighted by Operation Mare Nostrum, there is a risk of overlap.[78] Conversely, the Guardia di Finanza has gradually taken on important maritime police tasks. The expansion of its naval service began in the mid-1960s. In 2001, it was assigned economic, financial and illicit trafficking policing functions,[79] followed by the acquisition of control of the nautical teams of the State Police, the Forestry Corps and the Carabinieri in 2016. Finally, all security institutions have increasing responsibilities relating to environmental security and underwater cultural heritage.[80]

Clearly, this is not enough to formulate comprehensive hypotheses. Further investigation — including from a historical perspective — of this branch of maritime security is therefore required if we want to fully understand the peculiarities and characteristics of the global, postmodern transition of Italian maritime security.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

[76] Alessandra Giada Dibenedetto, *Ensuring Security in the Mediterranean Sea: The Italian Navy and Coast Guard*, in I. Bowers, S.L.C. Koh, *Grey and White Hulls*, cit., pp. 159–180.

[77] Reflections on environmental protection can be found in Santo Altavilla et al., *Environmental training of the Italian Coast Guard between tradition and innovation*, in Donatella Carboni, Matteo De Vincenzi, Laura Bonora (eds.), *Monitoring of Mediterranean Coastal Areas. Problems and Measurement Techniques*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2020, pp. 156–163; Roberto Patruno, Marco Mancini, Andrea Malfatti, *The activities of the Italian Coast Guard in the field of airborne remote sensing and the eventual use of satellite platforms in marine pollution abatement activities*, "Spill Science & Technology Bulletin", 1996, n. 1–2, pp. 25–31.

[78] Stefania Panebianco, *Mediterranean migration governance and the role of the Italian coast guard: varying political understandings of maritime operations in the 2010s*, "Contemporary Italian Politics", March 2022, n. 1, pp. 43–59.

[79] Nino Di Paolo, *La tutela strategica nel Mediterraneo*, in Bernardino Quattrocchi (ed.), *Economia del mare e processi di internazionalizzazione*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2011, pp. 17–26.

[80] Nicolò Carnimeo, *Tutela dell'ambiente marino, risorse marine e patrimonio culturale sommerso*, in Fabio Caffio, Nicolò Carnimeo, Antonio Leandro, *Elementi di diritto e geopolitica degli spazi marittimi*, Bari, Cacucci, 2013, pp. 153–210.

In tension. Doing 'social history' today

Michele Nani*

The publication of Alessandro Stanziani's *Tensions of Social History* provides a useful opportunity to reconsider the global field of 'social history', a topic that continues to be a fertile area of research. As the author suggests, adopting a 'social history' perspective on historiographical practices by focusing on the dialogical construction (in terms of social actors and geographical locations) of crucial junctions in historical research (archives, data, categories and models) could reinvigorate the debate in Italy as well.
Key words: social history, global history, historiography

The tendency of intellectual debates to use labels and adjectives must be traced back to the internal and external structures and dynamics of research, as a popular distinction in the history of science would have it. This intuition reminds us that even the spaces of scientific work, like all fields of cultural production, are social worlds and not merely arenas for an ideal, disembodied confrontation that triggers continuous 'turns'.[1] The reference to 'social history' is no exception. What logic can help us to understand why discussions around this field of historiography — or historiographic approach — and its practices have declined in the Italian context?[2] It would be worthwhile reopening the

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[1] Pierre Bourdieu, *Il mestiere di scienziato. Corso al Collège de France 2000-2001*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2002 (1st ed. 2001); Gary Wilder, *From Optic to Topic: The Foreclosure Effect of Historiographic Turns*, "American Historical Review", 2012, n. 3, pp. 723–745; Roger Chartier, *Introduzione,* in Id., *La rappresentazione del sociale. Saggi di storia culturale*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri,1989, pp. 9–23.

[2] Maria Malatesta (ed.), *Metamorfosi della storia sociale*, "Memoria e ricerca", 2002, n. 10; Claudia Pancino, *Storia sociale*, Venice, Marsilio, 2003; Paolo Sorcinelli, *Viaggio nella storia sociale*, Milan, Bruno Mondadori, 2002 (new edition of a 1996 book). For a reflection on social history in Italy, see Mariuccia Salvati, *La storiografia sociale nell'Italia repubblicana*, "Passato

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debate on social history in Italy, as it has been dormant for too many years, much like the *general* debate on the historian's profession,[3] which even historians of the contemporary age latter have neglected for too long.[4] This is obviously not the place to tackle so many challenging issues. It is sufficient to say that, outside of Italy, approaches to social history still have an inexhaustible vitality,[5] as demonstrated by the publication of Alessandro Stanziani's *Tensions of Social History*.[6]

Despite his Italian origins, Stanziani spent his entire career in France. After studying at the University of Naples and earning a doctorate in Economics, he worked on temporary contracts for a few years. In France, he obtained a second doctorate in History, passed his qualifying examination and was employed by the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris, where he is currently also a lecturer in *histoire globale*. In addition, he has made many research visits abroad, especially to Russia and the United States. A specialist in peasant economics and rural economists in Tsarist and Soviet Russia,[7] Stanziani expanded his research to include markets and capitalism. He began

e presente", 2008, n. 73, pp. 91–110 and Alberto Mario Banti, *La storia sociale: un paradigma introvabile?*, in Cristina Cassina (ed.), *La storiografia sull'Italia contemporanea*, Pisa, Giardini, 1991, pp. 183–208. Luigi Dal Pane identified a longer genealogy in 1952, in *Storia economica e storia sociale*, later published in Id., *La storia come storia del lavoro. Discorsi di concezione e di metodo*, Bologna, Pàtron, 1971 (1st ed. 1968), pp. 71–116. See also the dossier *Storia sociale*, edited by the Seminario polesano di storia sociale, "Storiografia", 2023, n. 27, pp. 119–203.

[3] The last real debate took place more than twenty years ago. In 'Paesi lontani e storici d'oggi' and 'Gli storici e la prospettiva neoepocale' ("Storica", 2004, n. 28, pp. 127–137 and 139–151), Francesco Benigno and Igor Mineo, respectively, responded to Giorgio Chittolini's article, 'Un paese lontano' ("Società e storia", 2003, n. 100–101, pp. 331–354). It is interesting that only one of the authors in the double issue celebrating the journal's quarter-century anniversary — all of whom members of the editorial board — addressed general issues.

[4] The debate was between medievalists and modernists. For some exceptions, significantly in terms of the history of national historiography, see Paolo Favilli, *Marxismo e storia. Saggio sull'innovazione storiografica in Italia (1945-1970)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2006; Gilda Zazzara, *La storia a sinistra. Ricerca e impegno politico dopo il fascismo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2011; Massimo Mastrogregori, *L'Italia repubblicana*, in *Enciclopedia Italiana*, vol. 8, *Il contributo italiano alla storia del pensiero. Storia e politica*, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2013, pp. 597–630 and Luca Baldissara, *Il lungo dopoguerra. Gli storici e le storie d'Italia*, "Storica", 2016, n. 66, pp. 73–111.

[5] One good example is Christophe Charle, *Homo historicus*, Paris, Colin, 2013.

[6] Alessandro Stanziani, *Tensions of Social History. Sources, Data, Actors and Models in Global Perspective*, London, Bloomsbury, 2023. My observations owe much to two discussions of the book: a session of the Seminario polesano di storia sociale (Rovigo-Associazione Minelliana, 26 May 2023) and a book launch, with the author, at the University of Padua (DISSGEA, 10 November 2023), both at the suggestion of my friend Andrea Caracausi, whom I thank. I would also like to thank Gianluca Albergoni, Piero Brunello and Andrea Rapini for their precious notes on a first draft of this text. All the internet addresses cited here were last accessed on 24 May 2024.

[7] *L'économie en révolution. Le cas russe, 1870-1930*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1998.

with the French case, before extending the comparison to Asian empires and eventually returning to the Russian case, studying the alleged role of backwardness and despotism in relation to Western development.[8] What emerges from this last approach is the focus on the role of unfree labour (e.g. slavery, serfdom, *corvées* and indentured and bonded labour) in capitalism, the topic of his only monograph to be translated into Italian thus far.[9] Stanziani's interest in the planetary dimension of labour compulsion has led him to question the genealogy of 'global history' and propose a definition,[10] with two further developments: a long-range, global history of the creation of land as capital,[11] that is, the productive and ecological cycle of industrial agriculture; and a rethinking of social history, always beyond national and regional perimeters, as set out in *Tensions of Social History*.

Stanziani's latest work is an ambitious study that begins with the dual tension implied by the plural in the title: the confrontation within the community of researchers and the relationship between that community and wider society. In reality, even scholars of the past are close to the problems of knowledge of the present, although they seem to be placed on a different level. Whether it is current or distant phenomena that are being examined, the tools of knowledge are always called into question, as are the methods of quantifying social reality and the classification of its components. This is why it is important to question these tools, and the best way for historians to do this is to attempt a 'social history of social history' capable of holding the two moments of 'tension' together. The call for scholars to connect the internal archaeology of knowledge with external social dynamics does not stop at deconstructive criticism; it demands a different attitude if it is to reconstruct the collective production of knowledge. For example, the revision of Eurocentric categories should not become an outright rejection, but rather a stimulus for adopting a trans-regional perspective and viewing them as products of multiple scales (i.e. not limited to the local and the national level). This approach also has a civic side, in that the deepening of global inequalities

[8] *Histoire de la qualité alimentaire, XIX^e^-XX^e^ siècles*, Paris, Seuil, 2005; *Rules of Exchange. French Capitalism in Comparative Perspective, Eighteenth to Early Twentieth Centuries, Cambridge*, Cambridge University Press, 2012; *Bâtisseurs d'empires. Russie, Chine et Inde à la croisée des mondes, XV^e^-XIX^e^ siècle*, Paris, Liber/Raisons d'agir, 2012; *After Oriental Despotism. Eurasian Growth in a Global Perspective*, London, Bloomsbury, 2014.

[9] *Bondage. Labor and Rights in Eurasia, 16th-20th Centuries*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn, 2014; *Sailors, Slaves, and Immigrants. Bondage in the Indian Ocean World, 1750-1914*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018; *Labor on the Fringes of Empire. Voice, Exit and the Law*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018; *Le metamorfosi del lavoro coatto. Una storia globale, 18.-19. secolo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2022 (1st ed. 2020). For a discussion between Marino Landriani and Maria Luisa Pesante, see: www.storialavoro.it/discussioni-6/.

[10] *Eurocentrism and the Politics of Global History*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018; *Les entrelacements du monde. Histoire globale, pensée globale*, Paris, Cnrs éditions, 2018.

[11] *Capital terre. Une histoire longue du monde d'après*, *XIIe-XXIe siècle*, Paris, Payot, 2021.

and the prospect of environmental destruction require us to go beyond inherited conceptual oppositions. To overcome entrenched dichotomies, Stanziani tests his dual movement of 'dis-tension' (intellectual historicisation and social contextualisation) against the four pillars of historical research: archival documents, quantitative data, social categories and interpretative models.

The analysis begins with sources, which are considered in terms of either comparison or connection — the two main operations through which scholars can examine different contexts and cases. Stanziani refuses the common opinion that comparisons was less reliable than connections, as the former would be subjective and dependent on the researcher's choices, whereas the latter would be solely based on archival traces. However, this assumption is invalid because archives are also historically constructed; historians should know the history *of* archives as well as how to work *in* archives. To account for this move, Stanziani reconstructs the archival transformations provoked by three major turning points in contemporary history: the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution and decolonisation.

Advocates of archival solutions to the problem of proving a claim are opposed by those who favour quantitative verification. But documents and data are both historical constructs, as is any artefact that scholars consider to be a trace of the past, and thus a historical source. The result is a set of similarities between the two forms of documentation, which Stanziani highlights by re-examining the historical scholarship on the profitability of slavery and the role of the 'peculiar institution' in US industrialisation. Statistics itself has a history, which is expressed through various approaches and methods, but it is important to capture their circulations rather than their distinctions. Indeed, data have a multi-layered 'social life'; rather than accepting the reductive image of a monolithic state that is inextricably linked to capitalist development, Stanziani prefers to investigate internal conflicts and the way in which they intertwine with social dynamics, both in the production of statistics and in their subsequent use in social history. This raises the issue of the indistinguishability between data and their sources, leading to the risk of numbers being uncritically interpreted as 'facts' — even Piketty himself, who has criticised this tendency among economists, would not be immune to it. The answer cannot be the postmodern dissolution of the problem, that is, the acknowledgement of the unreliability of past numbers. Rather, historians must continue to critically evaluate sources.

The invention of empirical fact and the dilemma of statistics (a universal science or a social tool?) are brought back to the analysis of a case that Stanziani knows well. Both before and after the revolution, statistics in Russia were not merely an ideological projection. As always, it involved a complex process of socially constructing the data, and the author accurately describes this process with regard to agriculture and rural society, from the selection

of survey samples and the distribution of questionnaires to the analysis and presentation of the results.

Not only social statistics, but also those concerning nature and the environment — which are apparently more objective — lend themselves to the same criticism. The Anthropocene raises questions of periodisation and geography: does it date back to the Industrial Revolution, the twentieth century or its second half? And does it concern Europe, the West or the entire world? Stanziani uses the example of weather forecasts, which move from initial scepticism to consolidation (because of the link with economically relevant phenomena, such as maritime insurance or trends in agricultural production), to examine two cases: Russian harvests and Indian Ocean cyclones. Whether their referents are social or natural, the world of data always presents itself as a two-faced Janus, balancing technique and discipline, and this constitutive ambivalence is even more pronounced in its public use. Who decides what criteria to use to collect, group together and display data? The statistical experts, the bureaucrats of the institutions that produce data or the politicians who govern them? There are many overlaps and collaborations, and the answer therefore always depends on the context. State and statistics are historically focused on control, but a strictly Foucauldian approach suffers from a lack of attention to the interactions of the groups that produce and use data, to the negotiations that these activities imply and to the global impact of specific forms of quantification of the real.[12]

Archives and statistics conceal the claims and conflicts of social agents, who are often made invisible by the reification of documents and data. But how to identify the fragments of the social, and how to turn them into real categories? Even in a reductive approach that limits itself to the basic economic level, the question inevitably arises: who acts, in the end? Individuals, groups or classes? And should we limit ourselves to the economic level, ignoring the formation of social groups upstream and downstream of production or consumption? If the nineteenth-century concept of the transition from 'status' to 'contract' (Henry S. Maine's theory set out in *Ancient Law* in 1862) still holds true today, there are many calls for group belonging criteria to be expanded. Analytically, though, it is difficult to account for their interrelation and hierarchy in specific contexts. Finally, what complicates matters is the dialectic — as much in the present as in the relationship between present and past — between self-identification of agents and their classification by external observers.[13]

This constellation of problems is covered in three concise chapters examing the relationship between workers and slaves, peasants and consumers, respec-

[12] I have written elsewhere on quantitative methods in history: Michele Nani, *The lost half. Quantitative methods and historical studies: a critical review*, in *Italia contemporanea Yearbook 2020*, Milano, FrancoAngeli 2021, pp. 183-195.

[13] Carlo Ginzburg, *Le nostre parole, e le loro. Una riflessione sul mestiere di storico, oggi*, in Id., *La lettera uccide*, Milan, Adelphi, 2021, pp. 69–85 (first published in English in 2012).

tively. For Stanziani, the category of the 'worker' (not defined exclusively by social conditions or class action) emerges in a dialectic relationship with other categories ('slave', 'artisan', 'peasant') with which it has long been intertwined because of its multi-activity and the seasonal nature of production. The Second Industrial Revolution reshaped this long-standing ambiguity, imposing a class logic and a single occupation (the prevalent one), as well as marking the emergence of the 'consumer'. However, the standardisation process was incomplete as it was fragmented nationally and limited geographically, given the exclusion of rural and colonial societies — hence of a large part of the working population. Although Stanziani focuses on labour and consumption and is implicitly wary of the nowadays popular debates on intersectionality,[14] it would have been worthwhile to expand the discussion to include the history of women (workers and consumers) and gender perspectives.[15]

Finally, *Tensions of Social History* also calls into question the 'models' that should help make individual research findings comparable and cumulative, giving direction to empirical work by proposing general reconstructions of the structure and dynamics of human societies.[16] The global revolutions of the eighteenth century, which were the outcome of profound economic and political transformations, inspired powerful theories of society, from the Enlightenment to Marxism. Later these theories were challenged and clarified by Weber and Durkheim, and then by the Annales school and economic anthropology (Polanyi and others). However, the great intellectual confrontations of the twentieth century have not eliminated the nineteenth-century Eurocentric imprint of social sciences and historiography, nor have they resolved the internal contradictions between the claim to universality and national contexts. This process of reconsideration was, instead, initiated by decolonisation and continues in the contemporary focus on non-European and 'non-Western' worlds.

In conclusion, Stanziani endorses Eric Hobsbawm's famous call for a 'history of society',[17] but argues that this approach — which in some ways is

[14] For recent, explicit critiques, see Stéphane Beaud, Gérard Noiriel, *Race et science sociales. Essai sur les usages publics d'une catégorie*, Marseille, Agone, 2021 and Loïc Wacquant, *Bourdieu va in città. Una sfida per la teoria urbana*, Pisa, ETS, 2023. See also Kathy Davis, *Intersectionality as buzzword. A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful*, "Feminist Theory", 2008, n. 1, pp. 67–85.

[15] Updated maps can be found in Ida Fazio, *Una prospettiva d'avanguardia: la storia delle donne e di genere in Italia* e Simona Troilo, *Donne e storia d'Italia: all'incrocio di nuove prospettive*, "Italia contemporanea", 2023, n. 302, pp. 219–227 and 228–241.

[16] On the relationship between history and the other social sciences, see the in-depth reflection in the special issue *Au miroir des sciences sociales*, "Annales", 2020, n. 3-4, as well as *Storia e scienze sociali*, "Meridiana", 2021, n. 100. See also Andrea Rapini, *Sperimentare controcorrente. La storia, Pierre Bourdieu e le scienze sociali*, "Italia contemporanea", 2022, n. 299, pp. 11–18.

[17] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Dalla storia sociale alla storia della società*, "Quaderni storici", 1973, n. 22, pp. 49–86, now published in Id., *De historia*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1997, pp. 89–112. The

critical of 'social history' itself — must now measure itself against three challenges: overcoming positivist residues and reductionist tendencies; broadening the narrow concept of the 'social'; and moving beyond the Eurocentric bias that still prevails. *Tensions of Social History* proposes the dissolution of all the dichotomies that condition the approach to sources (starting with the opposition between documents and data), the choice of interpretative categories and the reference to social models. Overcoming these oppositions becomes easier if a serious historicisation is applied to them. The 'social history of social history' thus reveals that contradictory approaches to the past were not — and still are not today — reflections of reality, nor are they purely ideological constructs: they are always a combination of the two. Like any other cultural artefact, the tools of the historian are social constructions, not just intellectual ones. The fact that they were created in the West does not necessarily make them Eurocentric, while their transfer is not always an imposition; a variety of social worlds at different scales have contributed to their production, and their circulation often gives rise to creative adaptations. The control of archives and statistical productions, as well as the attempts to regulate the use and organisation of information, has always been limited by the multiplicity of the agents involved. Like categories and models, documents and data also have a 'social life', which undermines both attempts to monopolise their use and the idea of their neutrality. At the end of the book, Stanziani once again invites us to cherish the knowledge of the social, always keeping discourses *and* practices, ideology *and* concreteness together. His invitation also has an explicitly political undertone,[18] with which the book closes. The aim is to achieve a knowledge of encounter that does not give in to the clash of civilisations and neoliberalism.[19]

British historian is the subject of an excellent study by Anna Di Qual, *Eric J. Hobsbawm tra marxismo britannico e comunismo italiano, Venice, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2020.*

[18] As Sergio Bologna recently reminded us, there is a very strong connection between cultural-political militancy and the reflection on history, which is emblematic in three key figures of twentieth-century culture: Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin and Marc Bloch. It is no coincidence that they all met their deaths fighting Fascism or, in the case of the Jewish-born German intellectual, trying to escape its murderous grip. See Sergio Fontegher Bologna, *Tre lezioni sulla storia*, Milan-Udine, Mimesis, 2023, pp. 24–25. The original lessons can be watched at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=naS56fWA3t0. It is perhaps worth quoting the three references in full, as they are always of crucial importance for historians: Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere* [1929-1935], Valentino Gerratana (ed.), 4 vol., Turin, Einaudi 1975 (online edition: https://quadernidelcarcere.wordpress.com/); Walter Benjamin, *Sul concetto di storia* [1940], Gianfranco Bonola, Michele Ranchetti (eds.), Turin, Einaudi, 1997 and Marc Bloch, *Apologia della storia o Mestiere di storico* [1940-1944], Massimo Mastrogregori (ed.), Milan, Feltrinelli, 2024.

[19] William Sewell has repeatedly highlighted the paradox of historical studies moving away from economic and social dimensions at a time when capitalism is shaping an increasingly unequal and polluted world: see *A Strange Career: The Historical Study of Economic Life*, "History and Theory", 2010, n. 4, pp. 146–166 and the round-table contribution: Emmanuel

Tensions of Social History deserves an Italian translation, which would facilitate its discussion and, not least, its use in degree courses and doctoral programmes in history and related subjects. This would be even more valuable if Stanziani's fluent writing, which conveys the wealth of developments and the density of the arguments in a lucid manner, could be maintained in Italian. Given the book's educational and reflective purposes, the author must also be credited for his attempt to link historiographic discussion with theoretical confrontation, which is crucial for overcoming partial approaches and serpentine neo-scepticism.[20] Moreover, his attempt does not remain at the level of general principles, but is concretely implemented in the various research sites set up by Stanziani in Europe, Russia and Asia, as well as in the scholarly debate, which is effectively reconstructed in the book.

In a world of '*social (media)* historians', where even the past becomes fuel for endless polemics on *posts* and by means of *likes*,[21] *social* historians still have something to say, without necessarily having to yield to that 'tyranny of the ego' that threatens their work even from within.[22] Had there not been a 'historiographical revolution' in the twentieth century, we would still be writing an exclusively political and institutional history, focused on the narration of the ideas and actions of men from the ruling classes who have left traces in contemporary texts.[23] Texts such as Stanziani's 'handbook-non-handbook' escape the recurrent complaint about the 'crisis' of historical knowledge in the digital and global era,[24] often combined with pale evocations of its

Akyeampong et al, *Explaining Historical Change; or, The Lost History of Causes*, "American Historical Review", 2015, n. 4, pp. 1369–1423. More generally, see Alida Clemente's extensive review, *Il racconto del mercato globale e la crisi della storicità. Sul ritorno della storia economica*, "Storica", 2018, n. 72, pp. 7–52.

[20] Dylan Riley, *Hidden Dogmatism*, "Sidecar", 23 May 2023 (available at: https://newleftreview.org/sidecar/posts/hidden-dogmatism); Andrew W. Carus, Sheilagh Ogilvie, *The poverty of historical idealism*, "History Workshop Journal", 2005, n. 59, pp. 270–281. For a critique of postmodern scepticism, see again Carlo Ginzburg, *Il filo e le tracce. Vero falso finto*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2006 and Id., *Rapporti di forza. Storia, retorica, prova*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2000 (now republished by Quodlibet in 2022). For a historicisation, see the recent publication by Sabina Loriga, Jacques Revel, *Une histoire inquiète. Les historiens et le tournant linguistique*, Paris, Ehess, 2023, on which Luisa Tasca has written a timely comment, *Il Linguistic turn in prospettiva. Su Une histoire inquiète di Sabina Loriga e Jacques Revel*, "Passato e presente", 2023, n. 119, pp. 136–141.

[21] Francesco Filippi, *Guida semiseria per aspiranti storici social*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 2022.

[22] Enzo Traverso, *La tirannide dell'io. Scrivere il passato in prima persona*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2022 (1st ed. 2020).

[23] Peter Burke introduced the expression 'historiographical revolution' in *Una rivoluzione storiografica. La scuola delle "Annales", 1929-1989*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1993 (1st ed. 1990).

[24] For a still topical critique of the rhetoric on the 'crisis', see Gérard Noiriel, *Sur la «crise» de l'histoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 2005 (1st ed. 1996). For a successful global declination of microhistory, see Christian De Vito, *History Without Scale: The Micro-Spatial Perspective*, "Past & Present", 2019, supplement 14, pp. 348–372 and Francesca Trivellato, *Microstoria e storia globale*, Rome, Officina Libraria, 2023.

possible public role.[25] Instead, *Tensions of Social History* reiterates the invitation to return to a reflection on the alternative between a history that aims to understand politics as the outcome of individual actions and decisions and a history that seeks structured explanations for the continuities and discontinuities of social dynamics. In the words of one of the great writers of the twentieth century, a 'science of the concatenation of measurable human collective facts'.[26]

Translated by Andrea Hajek

[25] For a different approach, see the recent contributions by Piero Brunello, *Gondole a Feltre. Domande di oggi, storie di ieri*, Sommacampagna (Vr), Cierre, 2022 and *Dubbi sull'esistenza di Mestre. Esercizi di storia urbana*, Sommacampagna (Vr), Cierre, 2023.

[26] In the 1970s, that divide could be traced back to the *Methodenstreit* of the late nineteenth century: see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Jürgen Kocka, *Sulla scienza della storia. Storiografia e scienze sociali*, Bari, De Donato, 1983 (1st ed. 1973 and 1977) and E. Hobsbawm, *De historia*, cit. See also Jan de Vries, *Changing the Narrative: The New History That Was and Is to Come*, "Journal of Interdisciplinary History", 2018, n. 3, pp. 313–334. The quotation is taken from Raymond Queneau, *Una storia modello*, Turin, Einaudi 1988 (1st ed. 1942), p. 84; see Ruggiero Romano's introduction to an earlier edition (Milan, Fabbri, 1973) later revised as *Raymond Queneau* in his *Tra storici ed economisti*, Turin, Einaudi, 1982, pp. 189–203.

Clio, can you hear us? Oral sources and archives for historical research: the Italian case

Alessandro Casellato*

The historiographical legitimacy of oral history has yet to be recognised in Italian academia. Scholars of contemporary history rarely use this methodology, and existing oral archives are overlooked by the very researchers who should be consulting them. Recent histories of the Italian Republic written by Italian authors neither draw on oral sources nor cite the historiography that has employed them. There are also no Italian books that systematically use oral sources to analyse the country's long-term social history, and even when ego-documents are used in Italian historiography, 'autobiographical writings' (e.g. letters, diaries, memoirs) are considered much more legitimate than oral sources. There are at least three possible explanations for this situation. Firstly, sound studies have barely developed in Italian historiography, and many contemporary historians tend to prioritise institutional political history over social history and the history of collective subjects (women, workers, suburbs). Secondly, there is a problem relating to the preservation of oral history archives, which are difficult to access and do not have the tools to facilitate their use, such as catalogues, indexes, files and transcripts. Thirdly, there is a lack of proven and shared experience in the historiographical reuse of archival oral sources, that is, interviews conducted in the past with individuals and social groups who are no longer available.
Key words: oral sources, sound studies, oral archives, historiography, reuse

Oral history is still struggling to gain legitimacy in Italian academia.[1] Scholars of contemporary history rarely use this methodology, and existing oral archives

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[1] Drawing on historiography from the last ten years, this article aims to provide an update on the optimistic assessment made in 2014 by Andrea Brazzoduro and Alessandro Casellato, *Introduzione* alla sezione monografica, *Oltre il magnetofono. Fonti orali, storiografia, generazioni*, "Italia contemporanea", 2014, 275, pp. 215–216. It builds on and further develops the article 'História oral na Itália: trajetórias e desafios' published in the journal *História oral* (vol. 26, n. 3, 2023). I am grateful for the hospitality offered to me in 2023 by the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, and for the valuable conversations with Carla Simone Rodeghero and other Brazilian historians I met during those months. Discussions with colleagues from the Department of Humanities at Ca' Foscari, the Italian Oral History Association (Associazione Italiana di Storia Orale, AISO) and the editorial staff

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are ignored by the very researchers who should be consulting them. Recent histories of the Italian Republic written by Italian authors do not draw on oral sources, nor do they cite the historiography that has employed them.[2] Even the most creative and methodologically sensitive historians rarely take oral history into account. For instance, in his book on 'writing the past in the first person', Enzo Traverso explores the relationship between history and subjectivity without ever mentioning oral history.[3] Similarly, *Lessico della storia culturale* (Lexicon of Cultural History), edited by Alberto Banti, Vinzia Fiorino and Carlotta Sorba, pays no attention to sound, orality, oral history or its practitioners.[4] Two recent publications by Francesco Benigno and Carlo Greppi on historical memory and history 'from below' are no different.[5]

Conversely, works by anglophone authors on contemporary Italian history make extensive use of oral history, either directly or indirectly.[6] This is particularly noticeable if we look at British historiography. While there are no Italian books that systematically use oral sources to analyse the country's long-term social history, this approach is evident in the writings of Joanna Bourke, Selina Todd or Jon Lawrence.[7] The gap is also considerable if we look at Latin

of *Il de Martino. Storie voci suoni* were equally important. In particular, I wish to thank Bruno Bonomo, Silvia Calamai, Virginia Niri, Mariamargherita Scotti, Francesca Socrate and Giulia Zitelli Conti, who read an early draft of this text. However, they bear no responsibility for any shortcomings it may contain. All web pages cited in the notes were last consulted on 16 December 2024.

[2] Umberto Gentiloni Silveri, *Storia dell'Italia contemporanea 1943-2023*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2024; Miguel Gotor, *Generazione Settanta. Storia del decennio più lungo del secolo breve 1966-1982*, Turin, Einaudi, 2022; Paolo Soddu, *La via italiana alla democrazia. Storia della Repubblica 1946-2013*, Rome-Bari, Laterza 2017; Agostino Giovagnoli, *La Repubblica degli italiani. 1946-2016*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2016.

[3] Enzo Traverso, *La tirannide dell'io. Scrivere il passato in prima persona*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2022.

[4] Alberto Banti, Vinzia Fiorino, Carlotta Sorba (eds.), *Lessico della storia culturale*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2023. On the links between oral history and cultural history, see Luisa Passerini, *La storia culturale: nuova disciplina o approccio transdisciplinare?*, in *L'intellettuale militante. Scritti per Mario Isnenghi*, Portogruaro (Ve), Nuova Dimensione, 2008, pp. 285–287.

[5] Francesco Benigno, *La storia al tempo dell'oggi*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2024; Carlo Greppi, *Storie che non fanno la Storia*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2024.

[6] According to John Foot, 'the success of Paul Ginsborg's History of Contemporary Italy is partly due to its confident and imaginative marshalling of oral material collected and written up by others.' John Foot, *Words, songs and books. Oral history in Italy. A review and discussion*, "Journal of Modern Italian Studies", 1998, vol. 3, n. 2, pp. 164–174 (cited at p. 164). Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy. Society and Politics 1943-1988*, London, Penguin, 1990; David Forgacs, Stephen Gundle, *Mass culture and Italian society from fascism to the cold war*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2007; David Forgacs, *Italy's Margins. Social Exclusion and Nation Formation since 1861*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014; John Foot, *The archipelago. Italy since 1945*, London, Bloomsbury, 2018. Another valuable publication — albeit based on written sources — is Christopher Duggan, *Fascist voices. An intimate history of Mussolini's Italy*, London, The Bodley Head, 2012.

[7] Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960. Gender, class and ethnicity*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994; Selina Todd, *The People. The Rise and*

American historiography.[8] In Brazil, for example, most studies on the dictatorship that followed the 1964 coup build on oral sources or, at least, engage with the historiography that has used them.[9] Oral sources are even more prevalent in cultural histories of indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, women and LGBTQ+ communities, social movements, labour, migration and urban societies.[10] In 2024, the Brazilian oral history association counted 77 'oral history collectives' in the country, both inside and outside universities.[11]

Paradoxically, Italian oral history enjoys great international prestige. Alessandro Portelli and Luisa Passerini, for example, have been called 'auctoritates' at meetings of the International Oral History Association. On these occasions, people are always incredulous when they learn that Italian universities offer only a handful of oral history courses.[12] Equally surprising is the fact that oral history thrives in Italian society, despite not receiving recognition from academics; associations, local institutions and independent researchers conduct campaigns to collect interviews and life stories. Today, these efforts are often conducted under the banner of public history, but usually in a naive and superficial way, without the necessary tools for proper interpretation and the cautionary measures required to produce a historical source.[13]

In this article, I will describe the causes and implications of this paradox, trying to avoid the stance adopted by some 'oralists' regarding academic historiography and vice versa.[14] In fact, the acknowledgement of the 'diversity of oral history' should not stop us from exploring its relationship with historiography as a scientific discipline that aims to expand and revisit knowledge according to shared procedures, the first of which is the public discussion of sources. Bruno Bonomo recently pointed out that there is still 'an unresolved

Fall of the Working Class 1910-2010, London, John Murray, 2014; Jon Lawrence *Me, Me, Me? Individualism and the Search for Community in Post-War England*, Oxford, OUP, 2019.

[8] Camillo Robertini, *La storia orale in America Latina*, "Passato e presente", 2016, n. 99, pp. 133–148.

[9] Jorge Ferreira, Lucilia de Almeida Neves Delgado, *O Brasil Republicano. O tempo do regime autoritário: Vol. 4: Ditadura militar e redemocratização. Quarta República (1964–1985)*, Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 2019.

[10] On the links between cultural history and oral history in Brazil, see Sandra Jatahy Pesavento, *História & História Cultural*, Autêntica, Belo Horizonte, 2003.

[11] www.historiaoral.org.br/conteudo/view?ID_CONTEUDO=540.

[12] Alessandro Portelli, *Italian Oral History. Roots of a Paradox*, in David K. Dunawat, Willa K. Baum (eds.), *Oral history. An interdisciplinary anthology*, Valnut Creek, Altamira Press, 1996, pp. 391–416.

[13] *history. An interdisciplinary anthology,* Valnut Creek, Altamira Press, 1996, pp. 391-416.

AISO is engaged in the difficult task of mediating between the two spheres, as demonstrated by its newsletter, 'Storia orale. Notiziario dell'Aiso': https://www.aisoitalia.org/notiziario.

[14] Andreas Iacarella, *La storia raccontata. Intervista a Cesare Bermani*, "Pandora Rivista", 2 September 2024, www.pandorarivista.it/articoli/la-storia-raccontata-intervista-a-cesare-bermani/; Andrea Bottalico, Sara Zanisi, *Il tempo della storia. Una conversazione con Cesare Bermani*, Officina Primo Maggio, no. 4, December 2021, www.officinaprimomaggio.eu/il-tempo-della-storia-una-conversazione-con-cesare-bermani/.

issue concerning the relationship between history, memory and subjectivity, as well as the use of oral sources — one that we may have prematurely deemed resolved'.[15] I fully agree with this assertion and intend to continue along these lines, paying particular attention to the relationship between historical research and oral history archives.

Oral sources in the historian's workshop

The fact that many Italian historians of the contemporary age are unfamiliar with oral sources could be attributed to their research practices and the different skills that these require. For those accustomed to working in archives and libraries or — increasingly — accessing digital databases and collections, the idea of interviewing people to produce oral sources may be a daunting prospect. It requires a willingness to leave the office and visit places that can be uncomfortable, as well as the ability to engage in dialogue with strangers who often belong to different social classes, speak differently from historians and rarely answer questions in the way that historians would like.[16]

Next, the interviews need to be edited. This is very demanding and, above all, time-consuming. Thus, transcribing an interview — a necessary step in the critical analysis of the source — takes at least three times as long as recording it (e.g. one hour of interview requires three hours of transcription), and even longer if the conversation is in a language other than (standard) Italian. Although automatic speech recognition tools now facilitate this part of the process, transcription calls for careful examination given that the transition from speech to writing cannot be delegated to a machine. Indeed, it also requires interpretation and recognition of suprasegmental features or non-verbal elements of communication, such as tone, accent, pauses and gestures, expressions and mimicry.[17] Liaising with interviewees is equally challenging. It begins before the interview and continues through subsequent stages, up to and even beyond the publication of the research results. More importantly, the need to mediate between the expectations and requests of witnesses, who are essential collaborators in the research, is dictated by both ethical and legal considerations; historians working with written documents are not used to performing

[15] Bruno Bonomo, *Storia, memoria, soggettività, fonti orali: un nodo non sciolto?*, "Meridiana", 2023, n. 106, pp. 253–265.

[16] Antonio Canovi, *Peripatetici. Dove il camminare è l'indizio, ma anche il fatto*, in Stefano Bartolini (ed.), *Camminare la storia*, "Farestoria. Società e storia pubblica", 2023, a. IV, n. 1, pp. 17–37. Miriam Hermeto, Ricardo Santhiago (eds.), *Entrevistas imprevistas. Surpresa e criatividade em história oral*, Letra e Voz, São Paulo, 2022.

[17] Francesca Di Meo, Roberta Garruccio, Francesca Socrate (eds.), *Scrivere (quasi) la stessa cosa. La trascrizione come atto interpretativo nella pratica della storia orale*, Florence, EditPress, 2022.

such mediation, which requires time, energy and a certain amount of patience. This might explain why there is a gradient linked to age and academic career. In fact, young people, students and doctoral researchers are more likely to use this type of methodology, while its practice decreases with age and higher academic positions.[18]

The reasons for the limited use of oral sources in Italian academia are not only practical, but also theoretical. Unlike other sources, oral sources cannot be 'found' and used; they must be produced depending on the research being conducted.[19] While most social scientists (anthropologists, linguists, statisticians, economists) see the possibility to control the creation of data and produce it according to protocols that are functional to specific research questions as a guarantee of the scientific validity of their work,[20] historians regard this as a violation of professional ethics. For them, documents should be stored in archives and then examined, interpreted and purged of interpolations and distortions.

In Italy, the debate about the legitimacy and specificity of oral sources in historiography has been going on for almost half a century, although it often seems that one must start all over again.[21] Suffice it to say that it has contributed to the epistemological renewal of historiography as a whole. For example, it has acknowledged memory as both a source and an object of historical study, and recognised that subjectivity cannot be ignored — not even in archival research. It has also opened up to entirely new fields of research that would otherwise have remained unexplored (or considered unexplorable), such as studies on social groups unable to create archives, indigenous communities, queer and crip studies, and so on.[22] Yet oral sources have always been part of

[18] There are exceptions, such as Francesca Socrate, who began practising oral history methodology after working mainly with printed and archival sources (www.aisoitalia.org/francesca-socrate-2/).

[19] Giovanni Contini, *Storia orale*, in *Enciclopedia Italiana. VII Appendice*, Rome, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2007: www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/storia-orale_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/.

[20] Giovanni Favero, *Sul metodo storico e le scienze sociali: per una microstoria applicata*, in Daniele Andreozzi (ed.), *Quantità/qualità. La storia tra sguardi micro e generalizzazioni*, Palermo, New Digital Press, 2017, p. 60, who cites Michael Rowlinsson, John Hasard, Stephanie Decker (eds.), *Research strategies for organizational history: a dialogue between historical theory and organization theory*, "Academy of Management Review", 2014, vol. 39, n. 3, pp. 250–274.

[21] Luisa Passerini, *Sull'utilità e il danno delle fonti orali per la storia*, in Ead. (ed.), *Storia orale. Vita quotidiana e cultura materiale delle classi subalterne*, Turin, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1978, pp. VII–XLIV; A. Portelli, *Sulla diversità della storia orale*, cit.

[22] Gabriella Gribaudi, *La memoria, i traumi, la storia. La guerra e le catastrofi nel Novecento*, Rome, Viella, 2020; Luisa Passerini, *Storia e soggettività. Le fonti orali, la memoria*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1985; Natalie Zemon Davies. *La passione della storia. Un dialogo con Denis Crouzet*, Rome, Viella, 2007. On the subjectivity of women historians, see the forthcoming book by Adelisa Malena and Tiziana Noce, *Per caso o per passione. Le*

the processes of producing and transmitting knowledge about the past.[23] Think of Herodotus, an oral historian of sorts who listened to stories and recorded them in his books.[24] Similarly, Thucydides was a contemporary historian who gave credit to direct witnesses, that is, people who knew things because they had seen them.[25] In the nineteenth century, Heinrich Schliemann managed to find the buried city of Troy because he believed in the historical accuracy of the Homeric texts, which are transcriptions of mythical stories that had been passed down orally for a long time.[26]

Even today, many oral testimonies (literally stories that are heard) preserved in archives are used for historiographical research, sometimes suggesting its interpretative keys, although they are almost never mentioned.[27] At other times, though, historians claim to have conducted interviews in order to reconstruct contexts and networks of relationships, but they do not use them openly in their research outputs. Marta Margotti, for example, admits that 'they remained in my head', although she keeps them in her research archive in dozens of neatly organised and transcribed audio cassettes.[28] 'We know that they were actually fundamental to my work,' Mariamargherita Scotti observed in her biography of Giovanni Pirelli, apologising to her witnesses for not giving space to their interviews, except in the last paragraph of the book, in memory of the 'polyphonic biography' that the 'inextricable web of stories' had initially inspired her to write.[29] It is clear that combining oral sources and written documents within the same historiographical discourse is complicated, as if they could not be measured against each other.

storiche si raccontano fra autobiografia ed ego-storia, Viella, edited by Andrea Giardina and Raffaella Sarti, to be published in the conference proceedings of *Ego-storiche. Percorsi di ricerca e narrazioni di sè*, organised by the Italian Society of Women Historians and the Central Council for Historical Studies in Rome on 15 and 16 December 2022. On crip studies, see Virginia Niri, *Disabilità migranti: quali fonti per la ricerca?* Community archives*, fonti orali ed emersioni narrative*, "Il de Martino", 2024, n. 36, pp. 173–195.

[23] Paul Thompson and Joanna Bornat, *The voice of the past. Oral history*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017 (1st ed. 1978), pp. 23–52.

[24] Piero Brunello, *Lettera a Erodoto*, in Id., *Dubbi sull'esistenza di Mestre. Esercizi di storia urbana*, Verona, Cierre, 2023, pp. 25–27; Giorgia Proietti, *Erodoto storico orale. Una lettura alla luce degli studi socio-antropologici sulla tradizione orale*, "Il de Martino", 2023, n. 35, pp. 15–26.

[25] Tucidide, *Le guerre del Peloponneso*, I, 21–22.

[26] On this controversial case, see Donald F. Easton, *Heinrich Schliemann: Hero or Fraud?*, "The Classical World", 1998, vol. 91, n. 5, pp. 335–343.

[27] The theme of the invisibility of the historian's subjectivity, memory and the oral exchange with their interlocutor, which are all heuristic resources for research, deserves a separate analysis.

[28] Citation taken from Margotti's contribution to a debate at the conference *Dissenso e istanze di cambiamento nel mondo cattolico del postconcilio*, Bergamo, 2 March 2024, published on the YouTube channel of the Serughetti La Porta Foundation, available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=YESJH6jIbes (1:39.00–1:41:00).

[29] Mariamargherita Scotti, *Vita di Giovanni Pirelli. Tra cultura e impegno militante*, Rome, Donzelli, 2018, pp. X and 265.

During the nineteenth century, oral sources were marginalised in the historian's workshop. The critical-philological method became dominant, giving historiography a scientific appearance and placing archival, documentary and official sources at the top of the hierarchy. It was only in the second half of the twentieth century that oral sources were re-evaluated, as it dawned on historians that the critical-philological method could also be applied to them. A decisive moment was the invention of instruments capable of recording and reproducing the voice, which made it possible to record stories and testimonies and listen to them at a later stage. This allowed historians (but also ethnographers and linguists) to do their work with greater precision and reliability. When, in the mid-twentieth century, the magnetophone and other recording devices replaced the phonograph and gramophone, the practice of collecting and using oral sources became widespread. At the same time, people became more aware of their unique characteristics.[30]

Nowadays, oral sources are used in many different ways, and not just in historiography. From the outset, they have transcended disciplinary boundaries, engaging in particularly intense exchanges with disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and linguistics. Key figures include Alberto Mario Cirese, Aurora Milillo, Giulio Angioni, Pietro Clemente, Luisa Orrù, Gianni Dore, Franco Ferrarotti, Maria Immacolata Macioti, Tullio Telmon and Glauco Sanga.[31] In addition, they have been used experimentally by writers (Nanni Balestrini), musicians (Luigi Nono), art critics (Carla Lonzi), radio authors (Andrea Camilleri), playwrights (Giuliano Scabia), educators (Danilo Dolci) and activists (such as those linked to the *Quaderni Rossi* magazine and the Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano). More recently, the 'digital revolution' has made it possible to explore new ways of expressing and promoting oral

[30] Gianni Bosio, *Elogio del magnetofono. Chiarimento alla descrizione dei materiali su nastro del Fondo Ida Pellegrini*, in *L'intellettuale rovesciato. Interventi e ricerche sulla emergenza d'interesse verso le forme di espressione e di organizzazione "spontanee" nel mondo popolare e proletario*, Edizioni del Gallo, Milan 1967, pp. 170–172. Patrick Urru discusses the great philological and archival attention given to sound documents by Gianni Bosio and the founders of the Ernesto de Martino Institute in his doctoral thesis, *Racconti di vita da una terra di confine. Valorizzazione dell'Archivio orale della Biblioteca Provinciale Italiana "Claudia Augusta" di Bolzano: le videointerviste del progetto Verba manent (2003-2007)*, University of Trento, 2021/2022, pp. 119–121.

[31] An in-depth account of their careers and bibliographies goes beyond the scope of this article. For more information, see the two special issues of *La Ricerca folklorica*, titled *Autobiografia dell'antropologia italiana* (2017, n. 72 and 2018, n. 73). For more information on the initial stages of interdisciplinary dialogue with anthropology around oral sources, see at least *Tradizioni orali non cantate*, a catalogue published in 1975 by the Discoteca di Stato, edited by Alberto Mario Cirese and Liliana Serafini with the initial collaboration of Aurora Milillo; the proceedings of an international conference held in Bologna in 1976, *Fonti orali. Antropologia e storia* (edited by Bernardo Bernardi, Carlo Poni, Alessandro Triulzi, Milan, Angeli, 1978); and a recollection by Pietro Clemente, *L'archivio di Luisa Orrù e il tempo delle polifonie orali*, "Lares", 2018, n. 1, pp. 67–78.

sources, for example in podcasts, videos, art installations and museum exhibitions.[32]

Oral sources have also been used in various ways within the field of historiography, and the following examples show that there is no standard methodology for oral history. Bruno Bonomo has made a distinction between a 'weak use' and a 'strong use' of oral sources: in the first case, they are used to supplement other documents, fill gaps or add information; in the second case, the historiographical interpretation emphasises the unique aspects of oral testimonies, which relate to issues of subjectivity and memory.[33] Gabriella Gribaudi has compared official narratives and local memories by combining oral and archival sources, thus considering both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' perspectives.[34] Alessandro Portelli has developed a technique of assembling oral sources that enhances their intrinsic expressive power.[35] Manlio Calegari has deconstructed them for use in his own historiographical writing,[36] and Francesca Socrate has used computational linguistics to analyse a large corpus of interviews.[37] Finally, Gribaudi edits an editorial series focusing entirely on oral history, which is characterised by the variety of ways in which oral sources are used, as well as by the themes and writing styles.[38]

Lastly, it is worth mentioning Sergio Luzzatto, a historian who specialised in the modern age. He experimented with various forms of oral sources when he began studying the history of the twentieth century. Thus, he has written an entire book — cautiously described as a 'non-history book' — based on interviews with a con man and serial thief who provided unverifiable accounts but opened a window onto a piece of recent history that would otherwise have remained inaccessible.[39] In two works on events related to terrorism, he complemented the results of extensive documentary research

[32] It is worth mentioning the podcasts produced for the Rai Radio 3 programme *Tre Soldi* by Marcello Anselmo and Renato Rinaldi. The former has a solid background as a historian, while the latter comes from the theatre but has produced several audio documentaries based on oral archives. In 2022, artist Lena Herzog created an installation ('Immersive Oratorio') on endangered languages entitled 'Last Whispers', based on recordings of speeches, sounds and songs; the Museo audiovisivo della Resistenza in Fosdinovo is entirely based on oral sources, and the M9 Museum of the 20th Century in Mestre uses them in some of its installations.

[33] Bruno Bonomo, 'Fonti orali e storia orale nella recente storiografia italiana', presentation at the AISO members' meeting, 17 April 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=VC5fxbFRzFs.

[34] Gabriella Gribaudi, *Guerra totale. Tra bombe alleate e violenza nazista*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 2005; Ead. (ed.), *Terra bruciata. Le stragi naziste sul fronte meridionale*, Naples, L'ancora del Mediterraneo, 2003.

[35] See, for example, Alessandro Portelli, *La città dell'acciaio. Due secoli di storia operaia*, Rome, Donzelli, 2017.

[36] See, for example, Manlio Calegari, *La sega di Hitler. Storie di strani soldati (1944-1945)*, Florence, EditPress, 2021.

[37] Francesca Socrate, *Sessantotto. Due generazioni*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2018.

[38] www.editpress.it/collana/storia-orale/.

[39] Sergio Luzzatto, *Max Fox o le relazioni pericolose*, Turin, Einaudi, 2019, p. 249.

with those obtained through meetings, interviews and conversations with direct witnesses.[40] And for the book *Primo Levi e i suoi compagni* (Primo Levi and his companions), he found conclusive evidence — the key document for his entire research — in an interview that he could never have conducted himself. It was recorded more than forty years earlier 'by a pioneer of Holocaust oral history' and is preserved in an oral archive.[41]

Oral archives, voice archives

Oral archives are an additional tool in the historian's workshop. They are similar to the tools historians are used to dealing with, as they do not require the effort of an interview, but are already available in documentation centres and sometimes even accessible online, such as the Voice/Video Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive at the University of Michigan, where Luzzatto found the above-mentioned interview.

An oral archive is an archive containing oral sources. As is well known, an archive can refer to both a collection of documents and the place or location where they are kept. The first oral archives emerged in the early twentieth century, following the spread of 'phonographic ethnography', which aimed to document the voices, languages and musical traditions of non-European peoples and minorities within colonial empires and nation states.[42] They grew considerably during the First World War, when teams of linguists and ethnomusicologists in German and Austrian prison camps made thousands of recordings of the voices of soldiers from different backgrounds, including those from non-European countries, who had been enlisted in the entente armies. The first Italian oral archives were thus created during the war, but they have only been rediscovered and studied in recent years.[43] Since then, sound recording technologies and methods have advanced and become more widespread.

There are three ways in which an oral archive can take shape. First of all, it can be the product of speech recordings made for communication or docu-

[40] Id., *Giù in mezzo agli uomini. Vita e morte di Guido Rossa*, Turin, Einaudi, 2021; Id., *Dolore e furore. Una storia delle Brigate rosse*, Turin, Einaudi, 2023.

[41] Id., *Primo Levi e i suoi compagni. Tra storia e letteratura*, Rome, Donzelli, 2024, p. 26.

[42] Brian Hochman, *Savage Preservation. The Ethnographic Origins of Modern Media Technology*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2014, pp. 73–114; Henry Reese, "*The World Wanderings of a Voice*". *Exhibiting the Cylinder Phonograph in Australasia*, in Joy Damousi, Paula Hamilton (eds.), *A Cultural History of Sound, memory and the Sense*, New York and London, Routledge, 2017, pp. 25–39.

[43] Serenella Baggio (ed.), *Voci di prigionieri italiani della Prima guerra mondiale*, Florence, Edizioni della Crusca, 2023; Ignazio Macchiarella, Emilio Tamburrini (eds.), *Le voci ritrovate. Canti e narrazioni di prigionieri italiani della Grande Guerra negli archivi sonori di Berlino*, Udine, Nota, 2018.

mentation purposes. For example, answering machines and — today — smartphones are oral archives that store voice messages,[44] as are the many home archives containing audio cassettes produced in a family context or received as audio letters.[45] Radio archives are, of course, essentially oral archives, where sound documents are created and used primarily as working tools. The archive of Radio Radicale is a good example, but there are also many sound archives of local radio stations, both active and defunct.[46] Then there are police and court archives, which contain wiretap and court recordings; what until a few decades ago were 'archive voices' (transcripts of interrogations, trial reports and other types of transcribed oral material) are now 'voice archives'. While historians of the ancient, medieval and modern periods have long developed criteria for analysing and conducting in-depth studies of the various indirect oral traditions in written documents, contemporary historians have only recently started to engage with archival sound sources.[47]

However, when we talk about oral sources, we usually mean recorded interviews with narrators, informants and witnesses. This is the second type of oral archive. It is the result of field research conducted in various disciplines

[44] The Sonic Memorial Project collects voice messages left on answering machines by people who were trapped in the Twin Towers after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001: David Hendy, *Noise. A human history of sound & listening*, London, Profile Books Ltd., 2014, pp. 254–255.

[45] On the practice of exchanging audio letters, see Aleksej Kalc, «Semo stadi sai contenti de sentir le vostre vosi». *Emigrazione e comunicazione: il caso di una famiglia triestina emigrata in Australia*, "Qualestoria. Rivista di storia contemporanea", 2007, a. XXXV, n. 1, pp. 13–36; Samuele Sottoriva, *Un filo d'oro con Vicenza: l'Ente Vicentini nel Mondo e i suoi circoli all'estero*, "Quaderni Veneti", 2024, 12, pp. 83–116; Cristiano Barducci, *La grande famiglia*, Original Rai Play Sound podcast, 2024, www.raiplaysound.it/programmi/lagrandefamiglia. On the circulation of audio cassettes as a counterhegemonic practice, see Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape. Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2009; Ann Komaromi, *The Voices of Samizdat and Magnitizdat*, in Mark Lipovetsky et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Soviet Underground Culture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2024, pp. 186–205.

[46] Dimitri Brunetti, Diego Robotti, Elisa Salvalaggio (eds.), *Documenti sonori. Voce, suono, musica in archivi e raccolte*, Turin, Centro studi piemontesi, 2021; Mavis Toffoletto, *Ascoltare la storia. L'Archivio sonoro di Radio radicale*, "Contemporanea", 2000, vol. 3, n. 1, pp. 189–196; Piero Cavallari, Antonella Fischetti (eds.), *L'Italia combatte. La voce della Resistenza da Radio Bari*, Rome, Odradek, 2020. On the sound archive of Radio Onda Rossa, see: https://tiraccontolastoria.cultura.gov.it/index.php?page=Browse.Collection&id=ror%3Acollection.

[47] Several examples of 'archive voices' can be found in Adelisa Malena, *The sound of silence. Spunti per un dialogo attraverso i secoli*, in Alessandro Casellato (ed.), *Buone pratiche per la storia orale. Guida all'uso*, Florence, Editpress, 2021, pp. 155–182; Maurizio Bettini, *Roma, città della parola. Oralità, memoria, diritto, religione, poesia*, Turin, Einaudi, 2022; Arlette Farge, *Essai sur une histoire des voix au XVIII siècle*, Paris, Bayard, 2009. The fact that oral history resonates more strongly among those who study periods other than the contemporary one seems to be confirmed by an editorial series of Officina Libraria called Stories, which recently republished Luisa Passerini's seminal work on Turin 40 years after it was first published (*Torino operaia e fascismo. Una storia orale*, Turin, Einaudi, 1984) along with other 'classics' by Chiara Frugoni, Carlo Ginzburg and Natalie Zemon Davies.

and using various methodologies (e.g. history, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, ethnomusicology, etc.), in which spoken (or sung) data is recorded at the request or on the initiative of researchers. Hence, it is a research archive: the remains of a research project beyond the publications that have been produced from it.[48]

The third type of oral archives does not originate from a specific research project, but from a desire to preserve a memory, to document a historical presence or to produce sources for future historians. An Italian example is the Memory Archive of the Centre of Contemporary Jewish Documentation in Milan, which began collecting oral sources in the early 1980s. It produced the first audio interviews with Holocaust survivors, followed by filmed interviews.[49] Archives, libraries and museums acquire and sometimes create their own collections of interviews in order to supplement or complete existing collections.[50] In a similar vein, companies, associations and institutions have conducted interviews with their managers, employees and activists to document those activities of internal history that are not 'spontaneously' deposited in archives.[51] For example, ten oral history programmes are preserved in the European Union's historical archives, which were created to preserve the voices of European politicians and officials.[52] These so-called collecting archives contain oral sources that mostly take the form of recorded life stories.

Oral autobiographies have a distinctive feature that sets them apart from written ones: they are prompted, guided and take the form of a dialogue. In other words, they are the result of a request and an encounter, rather than an individual decision to produce something in an intimate setting. They may concern both key figures in historical events and ordinary citizens who have had no public relevance and who would probably not have left any written record of themselves.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the term archival activism, which has been in circulation for some years now. It implies that archivists and documentation professionals take on an active and political role in the collection, management and dissemination of historical information and documents.[53]

[48] See Silvia Calamai, Alessandro Casellato, Antonio Fanelli (eds.), *Archivi di ricerca. Antropologia, linguistica, storia orale*, special issue of "La ricerca folklorica", 2025, n. 80 (forthcoming).

[49] www.cdec.it/la-raccolta-di-testimonianze-orali-e-la-produzione-del-documentario-memoria/.

[50] Ellen D. Swain, *Oral History in the Archives. Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-First Century*, in "The American Archivist", 2003, vol. 66, n. 1, pp. 139–158.

[51] Giovanni Agostini, Andrea Giorgi, Leonardo Mineo (eds.), *La memoria dell'Università. Fonti orali per la storia dell'Università di Trento (1962-1972)*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2014; Roberta Garruccio, *Voci del lavoro. Dagli anni Settanta a oggi, globalizzazione e cambiamenti in una fabbrica Pirelli*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2012.

[52] www.eui.eu/Documents/web2021/archivi-storici-dell-unione-europea.pdf.

[53] Cassie Findlay, *Archival Activism*, "Archives and Manuscripts", 2016, vol. 44, n. 3, pp. 155–159.

Archival activism is based on the idea that archives are not just neutral spaces for preserving history, but rather active contributors to the construction of memory and society, which can be used as tools for social change.[54] This is no novelty. The Ernesto de Martino Institute, for example, was founded in 1966 as a political archive 'for the critical knowledge and alternative presence of the popular and proletarian world'.[55] 'Activist archivists' try to give voice to marginalised social groups and neglected historical narratives. They collaborate with local communities and activist groups to enable them to participate actively in the preservation and management of their historical documents. They also work to ensure wider and more transparent access to documents, seeking to break down the barriers that limit access to traditional archives.[56]

Likewise, historians are personally involved in building archives of the present and, at the same time, providing counter-information and reporting on humanitarian, social or environmental emergencies. Two very similar examples are the Archive of Migrant Memories and Ithaca. Founded in 2007 in Rome and chaired by Alessandro Triulzi, the former is an independent archive created to collect oral sources that will help future historians understand what is happening between Africa and the Mediterranean. The latter is a more recent project directed by Maria Chiara Rioli, which aims to create a digital 'Super Archive' in which to collect and disseminate historical narratives on migration.[57] In 2018, Triulzi said that '[w]hen we hold Europe and Italy to account for what is happening in the Mediterranean', we will need these voices, not the transcripts, minutes or any other official document produced by institutions or large international organisations (all of which,

[54] Linda Giuva, Stefano Vitali, Isabella Zanni Rosiello, *Il potere degli archivi. Usi del passato e difesa dei diritti nella società contemporanea*, Milan, Bruno Mondadori, 2007; Randall C. Jimerson, *Archives Power. Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice*, Chicago, Society of American Archivists, 2009.

[55] Antonio Fanelli, *L'Istituto Ernesto de Martino: un laboratorio politico sulle culture popolari e la storia orale*, "Passato e presente", 2021, n. 113, pp. 135–144; Mariamargherita Scotti, *Carte dischi nastri. L'Istituto Ernesto de Martino: un archivio sonoro dell'anticolonialismo*, "Zapruder", 2025, n. 66, pp. 122–136.

[56] Two examples of 'community archives' resulting from AISO projects are the Pilastro neighbourhood of Bologna and the Sanità district of Naples: Giulia Zitelli Conti, *"Ti do il tiro". Storia orale e public history nel rione Pilastro*, in Paolo Bertella Farnetti, Cecilia Dau Novelli (eds.), *La storia liberata. Nuovi sentieri di ricerca*, Milan, Mimesis, 2020, pp. 63–85; Antonio Canovi, Hilde Merini, Daniele Valisena (eds.), *A futura memoria. Storie e paesaggi del Rione Sanità*, Milan, Mimesis, 2024. See also Stefania Voli, Ludovico Virtù, *Collective memory and trans history in the Italian context. Archival practices and the creation of the first trans archive in Italy*, "Memory Studies", 2023, vol. 16, n. 1, pp. 113–125; Virginia Niri, *Voci d'archivio. La storia pubblica incontra il '68*, Genoa, Genova University Press, 2018.

[57] https://ithacahorizon.eu/superarchive/; Alessandro Triulzi, *Archiviare il presente. L'autonarrazione dei migranti come fonte*, in Daniele Salerno, Patrizia Violi (eds.), *Stranieri nel ricordo. Verso una memoria pubblica delle migrazioni*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2020, pp. 41–62; Maria Chiara Rioli, *L'archivio Mediterraneo. Documentare le migrazioni contemporanee*, Rome, Carocci, 2021.

incidentally, are transcribed in Italian and not in the language in which people spoke).[58]

Writing history (also) with one's ears

Triulzi's almost prophetic words highlight the unique value of oral archives for future historians, but they also help us to understand what we are missing — as present-day historians — when we do not use oral sources to better understand past events. Firstly, there is the sound dimension ('these voices, not the transcripts'). Modern Western societies are 'scopocentric' (dominated by the visual order[59]), which is one reason why 'sound archives are underrepresented in academic research, teaching and collective memory'.[60] The limited use of oral sources by historians can, therefore, be partly explained by the lack of development of sound studies in Italian historiography.[61] Listening to documents is not a habit for the followers of Clio. In fact, there is only one Italian book dedicated to the history of the soundscape in the contemporary era, but even that relies entirely on written sources,[62] and there is no social (or political) history of the voice in the twentieth century, despite this being the only period for which primary sound sources are available.[63]

Triulzi invites us to distinguish between recorded voices, transcripts and — even more so — minutes. It seems that contemporary historians sometimes forget that the minutes of meetings, assemblies or interrogations — which they use as primary sources for their research — are actually transcribed oral sources that have inevitably undergone processes of translation and distortion over which they, as historians, have no control. Furthermore, immigration testimonies recorded in an official context (i.e. in front of a government official)

[58] Recording of a presentation by Triulzi during the debate at the conference 'L'era del testimone? Testimoni, testimonianze nella storia, nelle transizioni, nei tribunali', Naples 8–9 March 2018, available at: https://pric.unive.it/progetti/archivio-fonti-orali/home.

[59] Bruce Johnson, *Sound studies today. Where are we going?*, in J. Damousi, P. Hamilton (eds.), *A cultural history of sound* cit., p. 10.

[60] Tanya Clement, *Dissonant Records. Close Listening to Literary Archives*, Cambridge, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2024, p. xi.

[61] Daniele Cal, *Sound Studies and History. A Possible Meeting Point?*, "Contemporanea", 2024, n. 4, pp. 681–692. The bibliography is exclusively in English, with only one Italian study: Simone Caputo, Franco Piperno, Emanuele Senici (eds.), *Music, Space and Identity in Italian Urban Soundscapes circa 1550-1860*, New York-London, Routledge, 2023.

[62] Stefano Pivato, *Il secolo del rumore. Il paesaggio sonoro nel Novecento*, Bologna, il Mulino 2009.

[63] One exception is an issue of *Genesis* edited Sandra Cavallo and Nelly Valsangiacomo, *Dare un corpo alla voce* (2020, a. XIX, n. 2), in particular the introduction by Valsangiacomo: *Traiettorie della vocalità* (pp. 5–19). On the ancient world, see: Sabina Crippa, *La voce. Sonorità e pensiero alle origini della cultura europea*, Milan, Unicopli, 2015; Maurizio Bettini, *Voci. Antropologia sonora del mondo antico*, Turin, Einaudi, 2008.

are not necessarily more truthful than those given in the context of an independent, activist association. Similarly, testimonies given in the heat of the moment are not always more accurate or complete than those given months or years later. After all, a traumatic experience may require not only time to be processed and recounted, but also narrative forms other than factual accounts (e.g. dreams, myths, drawings or performances[64]).

Like most written documents, official reports are the end result of complex processes that preceded them and took place mainly through informal relations and oral exchanges. The latter are crucial to understanding how institutions work and how decisions are made, but they rarely leave a documentary trace. This is particularly true for the history of organisations such as political parties, companies and trade unions. However, political and trade union historians seldom seek to understand these aspects of their subjects' history, which is only possible if one examines the protagonists' accounts (oral sources) and reads written sources indirectly, obliquely and 'against the grain'.[65] Instead, business historians such as Duccio Bigazzi and Roberta Garruccio have been moving in this direction for some time,[66] as has the Central Institute for Archives. It hosts a collection of video interviews with professionals, managers and ministry officials (and other witnesses) on its 'Ti racconto la storia' (I'll tell you the story) website. These are presented as 'special historiographical sources, belonging to the category of "ego-documents" or "narratives of the self"', which suggests to historians a further field of investigation that oral sources can shed light on: the social production of the self, even within institutions and professions.[67]

Using oral sources to study the ruling classes (e.g. high-level politicians, military leaders, entrepreneurs, bankers, intellectuals and government officials) is common practice in many countries, including the United States and Brazil. In fact, the 'oral history of the elite' has produced important oral archives that have set a precedent. They were created in the belief that they would provide access to first-hand accounts of important decisions, political or economic

[64] See the project (and related publications) directed by Luisa Passerini, *BABE. Bodies across borders: Oral and visual memory in Europe and beyond*: www.eui.eu/research-hub?id=bodies-across-borders-oral-and-visual-memory-in-europe-and-beyond-babe. A perfect cinematic representation of the complexity of memory and the narration of a traumatic experience of emigration is the film *Life of Pi* (2012, dir. Ang Lee).

[65] On this topic, see Alessandro Casellato, Gilda Zazzara, *Renzo e i suoi compagni. Microstoria sindacale del Veneto*, Rome, Donzelli, 2022; Stefano Bartolini, *La storia orale e il lavoro: un terreno fertile*, in Id. (ed.), *LabOral. Storia orale, lavoro e public history*, Florence, EditPress, 2022, pp. 13–52.

[66] Roberta Garruccio, *Memoria: una fonte per la mano sinistra. Letteratura ed esperienze di ricerca su fonti e archivi orali*, "Imprese e storia", 2004, n. 29, pp. 101–146.

[67] https://tiraccontolastoria.cultura.gov.it/index.php?page=Home&lang=it. See Mary Fulbrook, Ulinka Rublack, *In Relation. The "social self" and Ego-Documents*, "German History", 2010, 28/3, pp. 263–27.

formation processes and the internal dynamics of institutions, which are often not officially documented.[68]

We know that oral history research in Italy has mainly focused on other collective and individual subjects: workers, social movements, geographical and social peripheries, and the individual members of these groups, who have experienced and negotiated the margins of their freedom. I believe that Italy's deafness to oral history is also a consequence of a broader waning interest in these subjects as active participants in the historical process, coupled with the difficulty of fitting them into historiographical overviews that combine political and social dimensions and the tendency to study them — at best — as separate and ultimately subordinate entities. Even during the centenary of the foundation of the Italian Communist Party and the thirtieth anniversary of its dissolution, the focus has returned almost exclusively to the biographies of its leaders; no attempt has been made to commemorate the millions of militants who were the party's true originality, because they made its deep roots in Italian society possible.[69] Over the last 30 years, it seems that political history has followed the example of political parties, closing itself off in institutional settings, struggling to recognise social actors, abandoning the suburbs and refusing to listen. As a result, it no longer knows how to speak except to its own kind.

The historiographical 'reuse' of oral archives

Oral sources and written first-person sources (i.e. diaries, letters and autobiographies of ordinary people) have had different roles in Italian historiography, despite entering the scientific debate almost simultaneously as a result of the same movement of social advancement and recognition of subordinate subjects. Thus, while scholars of popular writings established their field during the

[68] See the Oral History Research Office founded in 1948 at Columbia University and the Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil established in 1973 at the Fundação Getulio Vargas. On a similar project attempted in Italy in the 1980s, see Patrick Urru, *Storia orale delle élite. Intervista a Maria Grazia Melchionni*, 'Storia orale. Notiziario dell'Aiso', n. 15, 2022: www.aisoitalia.org/storia-orale-elite-intervista-melchionni/.

[69] Giulia Bassi, *Veniamo da lontano, andiamo lontano. Gli studi nel centenario della fondazione del Partito comunista italiano*, "Contemporanea", 2023, n. 2, pp. 313–330. There are some exceptions, such as Alessandro Portelli's *Dal rosso al nero. La svolta a destra di una città operaia*, Rome, Donzelli, 2023, and *Antropologia del Pci*, a collection edited by Antonio Fanelli, Giovanni Pizza, Pino Schirripa, "La ricerca folklorica", 78, 2023, pp. 3–168. See also Alfredo Mignini, Enrico Pontieri, *Qualcosa di meglio. Biografia partigiana di Otello Palmieri*, Bologna, Pendragon, 2019; Antonio Fanelli, *Carlèn l'orologiaio. Vita di Gian Carlo Negretti: la Resistenza, il Pci e l'artigianato in Emilia-Romagna*, Bologna il Mulino, 2019. It is also worth mentioning Dario De Jaco and Viola Lapiccirella's *Il Partito comunista e Napoli nel racconto di Renzo Lapiccirella a Ermanno Rea*, Turin, Zamorani, 2024, based on audio cassettes with conversations recorded by Ermanno Rea in preparation for *Mistero napoletano*, Turin, Einaudi, 1995.

1980s, with the National Federation of Popular Writing Archives being founded in 1987,[70] oral historians were either unable or unwilling to do the same. For instance, the magazine *Fonti orali*, promoted by Luisa Passerini and Daniele Jalla as a means of connecting oral historians across the country, ceased publication in 1987; the Italian Oral History Association was only founded in 2006 and has no headquarters. In the field of oral sources, there is nothing in Italy similar to what Pieve Santo Stefano, Trento or Genoa represent for autobiographical writings, that is, genuine institutionalised and public archives, where documents produced in different places and at different times can be deposited (and consulted).[71] Finally, the limited use of oral sources in Italian historiography is also a consequence of the conditions in which the archives are kept: scattered, difficult to access and without tools to facilitate their use, such as catalogues, indexes, files and transcripts.

Today, anyone who has recorded interviews in Italy has nowhere to securely store the tapes or digital files in a way that is both protected and accessible to others. Most oral history collections are kept in the homes of those who produced them, or in small, poorly equipped research centres, such as those affiliated with the network of institutes for the history of the Resistance. Universities have also not equipped themselves to preserve and make accessible what are now called 'intermediate research products', such as interviews. Much has been lost. In recent years, various entities have been addressing this issue by trying to identify preservation and processing techniques that fit the new digital context, as well as tackling complex legal and technological issues. It is not yet possible to provide an overview, which would merely be a long list of initiatives, projects and working groups (and failures) that do not currently constitute a comprehensive plan.[72] I would just like to mention one important methodological acquisition that is now widely accepted. Oral archives are complex products in which the sound source (recording) is organically linked to other documents that have been created during the research (consent forms, notes, files, photographs, transcripts) and which 'contain the informa-

[70] A recent assessment is provided in Patrizia Gabrielli (ed.) *La storia e i soggetti. La "gente comune", il dibattito storiografico e gli archivi in Italia*, "Revista de Historiografía", 2022, n. 37, pp. 8–126 and in Camillo Brezzi, Patrizia Gabrielli, *La forza delle memorie. L'Archivio dei diari di Pieve Santo Stefano*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2023.

[71] There are a few exceptions, but none of them are able to establish themselves as national references in the same way as the archives of popular writings mentioned here: the Central Institute for Sound and Audiovisual Heritage (formerly the Discoteca di Stato), the Archive of Ethnography and Social History of the Lombardy Region, the Ernesto de Martino Institute, the Gianni Bosio Society, the Vera Nocentini Foundation and others of local interest.

[72] The Permanent roundtable for oral sources (founded in 2019) has published a handbook for the treatment of oral sources, the *Vademecum per il trattamento delle fonti orali* (Rome, Ministero della cultura. Direzione generale archivi, 2023). The PRIN 2022 research project *Roads to Oral Archives Development and Sustainability* (ROADS) is dedicated to the recovery, preservation and scientific reuse of oral archives produced in the past in Italian universities: https://csc.dei.unipd.it/roads-project/index.html.

tion necessary to understand the communicative events [the interviews], the protagonists of these events and their mutual relationships'.[73] These accompanying documents are all fundamental and should not be kept separated from the recording, as they enable a more critical and insightful interpretation that acknowledges the context in which they were created, which will also be useful for future historians who may come across them in an archive.

I will end this article with a reflection precisely on the theme of the historiographical reuse of oral sources, that is, the reuse of previously collected interviews in new studies or to answer new research questions. This is an almost unknown practice in Italy, where it is still difficult to access interviews conducted by others with people and social groups that are no longer around, despite 70 years of oral history research. There have been some attempts to restudy the archives of Duccio Bigazzi and Nuto Revelli, which are available to researchers thanks to the excellent management of two private foundations that have taken care of the scholars' material legacy by digitising it, cataloguing it and opening it up for consultation.[74] Other research is underway on interviews recorded in the 1970s and 1980s by Anna Maria Bruzzone, a historian who has written important studies on women partisans, psychiatric internment and the deportation of women during the Second World War. The material history of this oral archive is so unique and exemplary that it deserves to be discussed in detail.

A school teacher by profession, a historian by passion, Bruzzone also stood out for her civic engagement; she was active in cultural associations in Turin throughout the 1970s and the 1980s. When she passed away in 2015 at the age of 90, she had been out of the public eye for many years, but the news of her death reached Silvia Calamai, a linguist at the University of Siena who had spent years preserving oral archives in Tuscany. Calamai searched for Bruzzone's relatives and managed to track down a niece, asking her if the audio cassettes recorded by her aunt were still preserved. They had remained in her home in Turin just as she had left them: neatly organised by topic, with her transcripts and the essential information needed to contextualise the audio document. A negotiation process began (not unlike the one required for an interview), and Bruzzone's sound archive, consisting of 75 audio cassettes and accompanying documents, was eventually entrusted to the University of Siena.[75]

[73] Permanent roundtable for oral sources, *Vademecum* cit., p. 27.

[74] Sara Zanisi, *Il Portello. Voci dalla fabbrica. Le interviste di Duccio Bigazzi in Alfa Romeo*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2017; Armelle Girinon, *"Il parto? Sulla paglia, un lenzuolo sotto e le bestie accanto". Les récits d'accouchement dans* L'anello forte *de Nuto Revelli*, "Italies", 2023, n. 27, 337–360. At the time of writing this article, Ninon Chevrier Chevrier was working on a doctoral thesis at the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon, titled *Recueillir et transcrire la voix des paysannes: méthodologie du recueil de témoignages féminins chez Nuto Revelli*.

[75] Silvia Calamai, *Ritrovare voci, ascoltare persone: introduzione alle interviste*, in Ead. (ed.), *Me ne scappo, me ne vengo, vado via. Voci dall'ospedale neuropsichiatrico di Arezzo raccolte da Anna Maria Bruzzone*, Milan, Mimesis, 2022, pp. 11–27.

The recordings began a new life after they left Bruzzone's family attic. They were digitised and described, and they can now be studied using methodologies and research questions different from those for which they were originally created.[76] For example, sociolinguists can trace the remains of a language that has now been largely transformed, while phoneticians are capable of picking up aspects of speech that no one else would notice and linking them to the biography and body of the speakers and their social contexts. Instead, computational linguists can deduce the emotional impact associated with the memory of specific traumatic situations by studying their rhythm and breathing.[77]

However, a voice archive also enables more personalised learning and transformative experiences, as happened to university student Rosa Marzano, who was able to fulfil her dream of meeting Bruzzone. Having read her books and listened to her interviews, which revealed the historian's voice and delicate approach to vulnerable witnesses, Marzano sought her own oral history 'teacher' in that archive. She then set out to reconstruct her biography and research, her female and feminist networks, and her collaborations with other women and women historians from Piedmont, such as Rachele Farina, Lidia Beccaria Rolfi and Anna Bravo, as well as the friendly and political dimension that nourished their interactions.[78]

Furthermore, thanks to Bruzzone's audio recordings, we can now hear Elvira's voice describing her internment in a mental hospital in a podcast on the history of Arezzo's psychiatric hospital. The words are the same as those published in the book *Ci chiamavano matti* (They called us mad), but hearing them brings out their meaning more effectively.[79]

There are several possible reasons for delaying or refusing to deposit interviews in a public archive: psychological obstacles, such as documents bearing traces of the misunderstandings, difficulties and mistakes of those who

[76] Collection "Anna Maria Bruzzone's Ravensbrück Interviews", The Language Archive, https://hdl.handle.net/1839/e24ae5a4-be49-4c31-a7b8-b0c9ed84029e.

[77] Almila Akdag Salah, Albert Ali Salah, Heysem Kaya, Metehan Doyran, Evrim Kavcar, *The sound of silence. Breathing analysis for finding traces of trauma and depression in oral history archives*, "Digital Scholarship in the Humanities", 2021, vol. 36, n. 2, pp. ii2–ii8.

[78] Rosa Marzano, *Amicizia, femminismo e storia orale: uno studio su Anna Maria Bruzzone*, "Il de Martino", 2023, n. 36, pp. 99–105. On Anna Bravo, see the essays and recollections dedicated to her in *Genesis* (2020, a. XIX, n. 1), especially Bruno Bonomo, *Anna Bravo e le fonti orali: un lungo percorso di ricerca, un patrimonio da coltivare*, ivi, pp. 123–127. See also the recent republication of Luisa Passerini, *Storie di donne e femministe*, Turin, Rosenberg & Sellier, 2024 (1st ed. 1991).

[79] *Storie dai tetti rossi* (Stories from the red roofs) is a seven-part podcast produced in 2021 by RadioFly and available on Spotify, Spreaker and Podchaser. Anna Maria Bruzzone, *Ci chiamavano matti. Voci dal manicomio (1968-1979)*, edited by Marica Setaro and Silvia Calamai, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 2021 (1st ed. Ead, *Ci chiamavano matti. Voci da un ospedale psichiatrico*, Turin, Einaudi, 1979, with an extensive introduction by Bruzzone not included in the new edition).

produced them;[80] ethical reasons, given that they are sometimes very personal conversations arising from relationships of trust that cannot be transferred to third parties; and legal motivations, related to the protection of personal data. It is also a matter of common sense: why trust a public archive or a university, given the way they have treated oral archives in the past?[81] But there are many reasons that should convince historians otherwise. Interviews are shared and intersubjective documents, which do not belong exclusively to the researcher who requested and recorded them. Furthermore, they were granted to the researcher precisely to contribute to research and, ultimately, to leave a testimony of oneself in history. Also, if the researcher is an employee of an institution, such as a university, the latter has the right to receive a copy of what was produced. Next, oral sources are internal documents of the research itself, allowing it to be validated and its purpose, turning points, decisions and hypotheses — whether confirmed or discarded — to be retraced. For this reason, they can also be valuable material for the history of the studies and intellectuals who were involved in them. Finally, they are unique and irreplaceable records of the lives of individuals and social groups that are often no longer available. They are therefore valuable, if not indispensable, for future scholars who will no longer have direct access to these realities.

Raphael Samuel once wrote that '[h]istorians in the future will bring fresh interests to bear upon the materials we collect; they will be asking different questions and seeking different answers. And the more successful we are in executing our own research tasks, the more likely it is that their work will diverge from our own.'[82] Archiving, that is, preserving and making the record accessible in an appropriate way, should be part and parcel of the professional ethics of any scholar, but it also represents a pact of solidarity between generations of researchers — the foundation of a scientific community.[83]

Historian Manlio Calegari has raised more radical objections, questioning the very usefulness of leaving his research archive on the Genoese partisans to others. How can anyone truly understand the interviews he conducted for 20 years without having taken part in them, without having contributed to the building of a relationship of trust and even friendship, hence not knowing everything that the interviewees and interviewer had in common, which is

[80] See the conference proceedings *Imparare dagli errori. Difficoltà, complicazioni, ripensamenti nella storia orale*, "Acta Histriae", 2023, vol. 31, n. 3, pp. 363–522: https://zdjp.si/it/acta-histriae-31-2023-3/.

[81] An emblematic case is that described by Giovanni Rinaldi, who — together with Paola Sobrero — recorded numerous oral sources in Puglia in the 1970s: see Giorgia Gallo, *La storia orale di… Giovanni Rinaldi, Foggia*, "Storia orale. Notiziario dell'Aiso", n. 7, February–April 2020, www.aisoitalia.org/la-storia-orale-di-giovanni-rinaldi-foggia/#_ftn5.

[82] Raphael Samuel, *Perils of the Transcript*, "Oral History", 1972, vol. 1, n. 2, pp. 19–22.

[83] This is also what AISO's 'Good Practices for Oral History' suggest: www.aisoitalia.org/buone-pratiche/.

precisely why it was *not* said or recorded?[84] These are epistemological questions that touch on one of the defining features of oral sources, which are greatly influenced by the context, the historical and even biological moment of the speaker and the presence of the person asking the questions. Oral sources are not data that can always be extracted from a repository in the same way. They are the result of at least two processes: memory (oriented towards the present) and dialogue (in which it is the listener that guides the narrative). In other words, they are intersubjective, relational and open-ended sources.[85] Recordings are traces of a journey that transforms the subjects during the interview process, in which memories are repositioned, narratives evolve and even the questions asked by the researcher can change, especially if the interviews are prolonged or repeated over time, as in Calegari's case. Finding them fixed on magnetic tape or in an audio file, or perhaps transcribed in a text, gives the illusion of objectivity, but without a thorough understanding of the context and process in which they were formed, they are very difficult to interpret.

Conclusion

The questions raised in this article have been addressed by scholars from the Italian Oral History Association and the National institute Ferruccio Parri,[86] who tested them against an important theme in national history: the anti-fascist Resistance. A conference held in Padua in May 2025 offered an opportunity to relaunch the relationship between 'general' historiography and research more attentive to oral sources. It did so both by investigating the contribution — extensive and essential, in my opinion — that the latter have made to understanding aspects of the history, lived experience and memory of the war fought between 1943 and 1945, and by recognising that oral history research on the Resistance has helped to refine the theoretical and methodological tools of those who work with oral sources in other fields as well.

A more experimental session is planned for the future, namely an empirical verification of the possibility of scientifically re-examining archival oral sources on the Resistance. This implies testing the two opposing theses of Santo Peli and Fabio Dei. The former has argued that partisan anthropology

[84] Manlio Calegari, *Tra detto e non detto: l'ultimo partigiano. Con un questionario e un post-scriptum*, published on the blog storiAmestre, 10 November 2013: https://storiamestre.it/ultimopartigiano/.

[85] On the various implications of the link between oral history and intersubjectivity, see Luisa Passerini, *Memoria e utopia. Il primato dell'intersoggettività,* Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 2003; Adriana Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti. Filosofia della narrazione*, Rome, Castelvecchi, 2022 (1st ed. Milan, Feltrinelli, 1997).

[86] Bruno Bonomo, Alessandro Casellato, Greta Fedele, Filippo Focardi, Metella Montanari, Sara Zanisi and Giulia Zitelli Conti.

can only be studied by listening again to the interviews collected by institutes for the history of the Resistance over several decades. The latter has written that these interviews are largely useless because they are almost always rhetorical reworkings of canonised memories.[87] However, even if this were the case, there will still be ways to explore the multiple levels at which these voice archives can be studied: by listening again to the subjects who were at the centre of the investigations at the time; by asking new questions that historiography has brought to the fore, or that other disciplines — such as linguistics — can advance; by studying how the social frameworks of memory have changed, when it is possible to listen to different interviews with the same people or communities but recorded at different times, or when it is possible to compare them with other narratives produced outside those contexts; and by studying the research itself, as well as the people who wanted, imagined and conducted it, with different intentions and questions, and in different periods.

Finally, there will be an opportunity to listen to the voices that will find — and already have found — a second life beyond historiography: in the public arena, on the airwaves and online, in education and art. Who knows? Perhaps Clio will be listening.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

[87] Santo Peli, *Memorie partigiane, storie della Resistenza, identità nazionale: intersezioni*, in Filippo Focardi (ed.), *Le vittime italiane del nazifascismo. Le memorie dei sopravvissuti tra testimonianza e ricerca storica*, Rome, Viella, 2021, pp. 239–252; Fabio Dei, *Un monumento della memoria. Memoria scritta e orale sulla Resistenza*, "Primapersona", 2005, n. 15, pp. 49–54.

The ancient world.
Interpretations and public uses of antiquity in Fascist Italy

Massimo Baioni*

This review of recent Italian publications on the public use of antiquity in post-unification Italy pays particular attention to the myths of *romanità* during the Fascist era. Significant changes in the historiographical debate in recent decades are highlighted, including the fact that the study of antiquity has become a privileged means of understanding broader political, cultural and social processes relating to the legitimisation of power, the role of images and exhibitions, urban space and the importance attributed to architecture, archaeology and art. The discussion on the public uses of antiquity and the myths of *romanità* reveals the many complexities of this issue, from the protagonists via the tools used to transmit history to the lines of continuity and rupture between liberal Italy, Fascist Italy and republican Italy.
Key words: Fascism, myths of Rome, public use of antiquity, historiography

A new cycle of studies

In recent years, a growing number of scholars have become interested in the recurrence of antiquity in the history of post-unification Italy, particularly during the Fascist *ventennio.* The extensive dialogue between classical and contemporary scholars, which is enriched by the specific expertise of historians of architecture, art, archaeology and law, is reflected in the large number of publications on this subject.[1] The centenary of the March on Rome is likely to have prompted several research projects focusing on these issues, primarily

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[1] This article will focus on the following four publications: Elvira Migliario, Gianni Santucci (eds.), «*Noi figli di Roma». Fascismo e mito della romanità*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2022; Fabrizio Oppedisano, Paola S. Salvatori, Federico Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia. Miti di Roma e fascismo*, Rome, Viella, 2023; Sergio Brillante, «*Anche là è Roma». Antico e antichisti nel colonialismo italiano*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2023; Andrea Avalli, *Il mito della prima Italia. L'uso politico degli Etruschi tra fascismo e dopoguerra*, Rome, Viella, 2024. Other recent books are cited throughout the article.

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concerning the myth of Rome and *romanità* ('Romanness').[2] Although anniversaries can provide important opportunities for wide-ranging projects, the multidisciplinary approach mentioned above should not be reduced to a mere commemoration. This approach, which dates back at least to the 1970s, is the result of both the natural development of the disciplines involved and the demands of the rapidly changing field of historiography.

Initially focused on propaganda and the extent to which intellectuals and institutions adhered to nationalism, studies on the role of the ancient world in recent Italian history gained momentum at the beginning of the new century, 'emerging as a significant aspect for interpretating the relationship between culture, propaganda and politics in the Fascist era'.[3] They gradually intersected with research on Fascism as a political religion, which reconstructed the regime's ideological and cultural dimension, and the decisive role of art historians and archaeologists in mediating the Fascist concept of *romanità*.[4] More generally, and also with regard to the history of contemporary Italy, these issues are important because they demonstrate how Italianness was imposed and the methods used to nationalise the masses. The relationship with the past could not be ignored, as it was an integral part of the legitimisation of Risorgimento nationalism and, subsequently, of the different ways in which Italy was conceived after 1861.[5] The result is an invaluable observatory that can shed light not only on the evolution of historiography, but also on the troubled effort of patriotic pedagogy, which involved the ruling classes, political parties and intellectual protagonists in the various stages of unified Italy — albeit with varying methods and results.

The internal reasons for this renewed interest of scholars and the broadening of sources and research approaches confirm that the 'double journey' into the past has been an important achievement in the recent historiographical debate. The attention given to the public uses of history has provided long-term perspectives based on how historical moments, issues and figures around which

[2] See, for example, the special issue edited by Brad Bouley and Richard Wittman *Italy and the Eternal City: Rome in History, Memory, and Imagination*, "California Italian Studies", 2024, 13, 1, permalink https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6wv730sn (last accessed 15 March 2025).

[3] Paola S. Salvatori, *Fascismo e romanità*, "Studi Storici", 2014, n. 1, pp. 227–239, here p. 234, which offers a concise reconstruction of the Italian debate, starting with the well-known studies by Luciano Canfora and Mariella Cagnetta. See also Alessandra Tarquini, *Il mito di Roma nella cultura e nella politica del regime fascista: dalla diffusione del fascio littorio alla costruzione di una nuova città (1922-1943)*, "Cahiers de la Méditerranée", 2017, n. 95, pp. 139–150; Giovanni Belardelli, *Il mito fascista della romanità*, in Fernanda Roscetti (ed.), *Il classico nella Roma contemporanea. Mito, modelli, memoria*, Rome, Istituto nazionale di studi romani, 2002, pp. 327–358.

[4] Cfr. P.S. Salvatori, *Fascismo e romanità*, cit., pp. 236 and ff.

[5] Cfr. Francesco Benigno and E. Igor. Mineo (eds.), *L'Italia come storia. Primato, decadenza, eccezione*, Rome, Viella, 2020.

ambitious political operations have taken shape — each time linked to changes in the means of transmitting and circulating historical knowledge — have been projected into the present. The development of mass communication — which exploded after the First World War — gave a new, pervasive imprint to interactions between the past and the present, especially in the decades between the two world wars, and not only in Italy.[6] This has provided a rich opportunity for reflection, where the objective of historical research to dismantle falsifications does not contradict the equally powerful need to understand — following Bloch — the impact of myths, collective beliefs or even distorted uses of the past, in order to grasp the cultural universe of the societies in which they assert themselves. As Andrea Giardina suggested, we could even contend 'that the strength and vitality of a political myth can sometimes be directly proportional to the degree of manipulation of the past: retrospective imagination is also part of political creativity'.[7]

The ancient world and, in particular, *romanità* continue to lie at the heart of these intertwining paths of history and memory, in all their various expressions. When questions are raised about representations and their public use, and their meaning is questioned, those paths become precious litmus tests for escaping the necessary but insufficient interpretation that highlights only their deviant and propagandistic nature.

Given the extent of the investment that the Fascist regime made in the past and its political, ideological and symbolic implications, it is not surprising that it continues to attract interest and attention.[8] When historians began to examine Fascism's claim to 'remake' Italians, a systematic research effort was devoted to the collection of myths, rituals and symbols, taking the discussion beyond the boundaries of 'classical' interpretations. In 1985, in what was a relatively innovative book at the time, Pier Giorgio Zunino described the rich debate within Fascist culture as follows: given its various 'souls', the relationship with the past was a decisive card to legitimise itself and assert its idea of the present and future.[9] Discussing this view of history, Zunino believed that Fascism had shown a 'need' rather than a 'desire' for the past. He thus wanted to emphasise the 'constructive' tension projected towards the future and the privileged link with more recent periods of the national past, above all the Great War, which was considered the 'steel pivot around which the entire process of remembrance revolved'.[10]

[6] Cfr. Nicola Gallerano (ed.), *L'uso pubblico della storia*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1995.

[7] Andrea Giardina, *Roma antica sui mari. Mussolini e la costruzione di un mito*, in E. Migliario, G. Santucci (eds.), *«Noi figli di Roma»*, cit., p. 61. In general, see Id., *Ritorno al futuro: la romanità fascista*, in Andrea Giardina, André Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma da Carlo Magno a Mussolini*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2008, pp. 212–297.

[8] One of the most recent publications on the Fascist regime is Paola S. Salvatori (ed.), *Il fascismo e la storia*, Pisa, Edizioni della Normale, 2020.

[9] Pier Giorgio Zunino, *L'ideologia del fascismo. Miti, credenze e valori nella stabilizzazione del regime*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1985.

[10] Ivi, p. 100.

In fact, the regime's relationship with modernity has been at the centre of a rich and controversial debate to which English-language studies have made a notable contribution. In turn, these studies have paid particular attention to representations of the past, political aesthetics and the symbolic dimension of politics.[11] In this regard, Zunino downplayed the significance of the myth of Rome, arguing that its excessive instrumental uses had ended up making it 'inanimate'.[12] Even Renzo De Felice's biography of Mussolini gave very little space to the subject, despite acknowledging that the image of Rome was a 'historical myth around which to try to bring together and unify the various national traditions and cultures, and which can be used to give the masses a national consciousness'.[13]

It is no coincidence that later research has consistently revised this interpretation. Without denying its propagandistic essence and rhetorical apparatus, which cannot be ignored if we want to understand the regime's cultural policy,[14] the myth of *romanità* is increasingly studied as a symbolic axis around which the Fascist imagination revolves, even in its relations with modernity. The latter was the result of 'a vast operation of decomposition and recomposition of the past', which gave rise to a 'fictitious but highly effective fusion due to the totalising form of the myth of Rome', and it looked to the Roman Republic for 'certain ethical models embodied by austere citizens deeply involved in the life of the state'. It also drew on the Principate — starting with the Augustan age — for 'the celebration of the chief architect of great legal structures', 'calm and satisfied' imperial power and the 'splendour of architecture and urbanism'.[15] The myth of *romanità* thus becomes an effective means of exploring the complexities of the Fascist concept of historical time, as well as measuring the aims and outcomes of a politics of memory and totalitarian pedagogy that pervaded many areas of public life. In doing so, it left a legacy that extends beyond the most immediately visible aspects of urban design.[16]

[11] Of the many existing publications, the following are worth mentioning: Marla S. Stone, *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998; Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy*, Toronto-Buffalo-London, Toronto University Press, 2003; Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, London, Palgrave, 2007.

[12] P.G. Zunino, *L'ideologia del fascismo*, cit., p. 71.

[13] Cfr. Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il duce, II. Lo Stato totalitario 1936-1940*, Turin, Einaudi, 1981, p. 268.

[14] See the essays by Mario Isnenghi collected in *L'Italia del fascio*, Florence, Giunti, 1996.

[15] A. Giardina, *Roma antica sui mari*, cit., p. 61.

[16] Among Emilio Gentile's many works, it is worth mentioning *Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1993; *Fascismo di pietra*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2008.

Periodisation and directions of research

A detailed analysis of the individual essays included in the books under review is beyond the scope of this article. Instead, it will focus on a few key points and thematic connections. The books explore not only the activity of the scholars involved in the scientific debate, but also — and more importantly, in my view — cultural institutions and their initiatives, some major political and cultural events (e.g. the 1937 Augustan Exhibition), the architectural reorganisation of urban spaces and the importance attributed to art and archaeology. A first point worth mentioning is the decision of some authors to extend the chronological scope beyond the Fascist *ventennio.* In doing so, they adopt a broad periodisation that covers the situation at the turn of the century and extends the view beyond the Second World War, allowing us to identify breaks and continuities with representations of the ancient world.

This long time span is evident in Sergio Brillante's monograph. Split equally between the Liberal and Fascist periods, the book describes the role of the ancient world in colonial narratives, showing that *romanità* was central not only during the *ventennio*, but also between the end of the nineteenth century and the First World War. The defeat of the Italian soldiers at Dogali in 1887 and the military campaign to conquer Libya are the focal point of the analysis of the role of classical scholars, who tried to justify Italy's aspiration to overseas expansion by invoking the 'superior' civilisation inherited from Greek and Roman classicism.[17] Brillante describes the positions — which were far from unanimous — of some of the protagonists of the debate, beginning with Ruggero Bonghi, Giosuè Carducci and Arcangelo Ghisleri. The subsequent phase was that culminating in the 1911–12 biennium, dominated by Giovanni Pascoli (to whom the book's title refers), the nationalist Enrico Corradini and, above all, Gaetano Salvemini. The latter argued against nationalist interventionism and the 'fabrication of facts about Tripoli' in ancient texts, but Brillante dismisses this criticism as sterile because it was based on the flawed idea that the target was not so much 'the colonial enterprise itself, but the moral decline of public debate'. Among the 'professors', Achille Coen was one of the few to denounce both Italy's colonial policy and the 'tendentious interpretations of classical texts' used to justify it, although he remained isolated and was not very influential. Writing articles based on rigorous knowledge, Coen participated in the public debate, effectively assuming the role of a 'true intellectual'. The positions of opponents of the Libyan war, such as Felice Ramorino and Ettore Ciccotti, are also described as 'structurally ineffective'.

[17] In view of the extensive coverage given to the myth of Dogali, it would have been fitting to include a reference to Alfredo Oriani, whose *Fino a Dogali* (1889) became a key text in nationalist and subsequently Fascist circles: cfr. Vincenzo Pesante, *Il problema Oriani. Il pensiero storico-politico. Le interpretazioni storiografiche*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1996.

During the Fascist era, Ciccotti was one of the very few who distanced himself from the celebratory tones of the Augustan myth — the only 'shadow' among 'so much light of enthusiasm', according to the young Etruscologist Massimo Pallottino (to whom I will return).[18]

Some useful chronological expansions can also be found in *Costruire la nuova Italia*, which aims to shed light on the relationship between politics and archaeology between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (including the Ostia excavations),[19] but also on legacies and influences in the post-war period. The examples are not limited to Italy or the Fascist era; there are chapters on Franco's Spain,[20] the geopolitical implications in the debate of the 1950s,[21] and the persistence of images of Fascist *romanità* in certain contemporary contexts.[22] The book's novelty lies in its focus on the 'visual' dimension of *romanità*, which is reconstructed through surveys of urban, iconographic and artistic aspects. Destined to materialise Fascism's ability to 'last' and to project the 'universal mission' inherited from the past into the future, spaces and 'places' are at the centre of an original work in progress, which intersects research and public discourse, as demonstrated by recent controversies over the permanence of symbolic traces of the *ventennio* and their weight in present-day Italy.[23]

The regime's monumental policy took the form of an urgent confrontation with *romanità*. In addition to the spectacular case of the Italian capital, the strategic importance of *romanità* in the urban fabric was also exploited in cities elevated to the status of 'sentinels of the homeland', such as Bolzano,[24] although the demolition in Trieste to recover Roman remains on the eastern border would have deserved a mention. *Romanità* represented a powerful symbolic resource, but it could also be perceived as limiting the full, autonomous expansion of contemporary trends. Whether it concerned the Case del Fascio, the headquarters of the Opera Nazionale Balilla (a Fascist youth organisation),[25] exhibitions or displays, modernist or vaguely 'revolutionary'

[18] S. Brillante, *"Anche là è Roma"*, cit., pp. 70, 90, 79, 192.

[19] Grégoire Mainet, *La promozione degli scavi di Ostia Antica da parte del Comitato Nazionale Pro Roma Marittima (1904-1914)*, in F. Oppedisano, P.S. Salvatori, F. Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia*, cit., pp. 47–70.

[20] Antonio Duplà-Ansuategui, *Fascism and Classical Architecture in Spain 1938-1956: Some Exemples*, ivi, pp. 311–334.

[21] Giovanni Costenaro, *Un impero "Euro-Africano"? Geopolitica coloniale e mito di Roma dalla crisi del '29 agli anni Cinquanta*, ivi, pp. 335–359.

[22] Joshua Arthurs, *How Often Do You Think of the Roman Empire? Lesson from the Study of* Romanità, ivi, pp. 361–372.

[23] See Giulia Albanese and Lucia Ceci (eds.), I *luoghi del fascismo. Memoria, politica, rimozione*, Rome, Viella, 2023. A key text in this area remains Vittorio Vidotto, *Roma contemporanea*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2001.

[24] Cfr. Elvira Migliario, Hannes Obermair, *Roma sulle sponde del Talvera*, in E. Migliario, G. Santucci (eds.), «*Noi figli di Roma*», cit., pp. 135–159.

[25] Some examples can be found in Orietta Lanzarini, *Due allestimenti di Luigi Moretti. Il Padiglione dell'Opera Nazionale Balilla (1937) e la Rassegna dell'edilizia della Gioventù*

influences never disappeared.[26] However, following the conquest of Ethiopia, gigantism inspired by classical vestiges became prevalent as it was considered more suited to the political needs of militarising society and culture.[27]

A notable example is the never-completed project for the construction of the Palazzo del Littorio, which is analysed by Giorgio Lucaroni. The reference — in the competition brief — to the need for 'continuity with the tradition of Rome' revealed possible interpretations of the link between past and present, reflecting the tensions arising from 'an artistic atmosphere marked by crisis and internal feuds, based not on conflict but on balance'. The shift in focus to the 'values' of that tradition, understood as constantly moving and renewing itself, made it possible to find a point of reconciliation between the different stylistic trends visible in the projects. According to Lucaroni, this explains the decisive — and political — significance assumed by a 'discursive space' centred on the categories of imperialism (later also translated into terms of race), Latin culture and Mediterraneanism. The competition brief thus invited architects to favour an approach to Fascist *romanità* that, on an architectural level (but monuments and street names could also be considered), was not limited to capturing the end result. Equally important were the 'narratives, contexts, institutions and subjects' that led one to treat 'Italian architectural culture as a true "intellectual field" participating in the ideological evolution of the regime and, consequently, in its continuous reworking of the myth of *romanità*'.[28]

Lucaroni further explores this concept in his concise yet comprehensive monograph, which portrays the city as a setting for a patriotic pedagogy that also speaks through places and urban geometries. Through the analysis of 'three different but complementary documentary sources: schools, intellectual circulation and competitive and exhibition production', architectural culture is turned into the ideal terrain for exploring 'the concepts and images that inform the "Fascist era", the roots and horizons constructed by a regime of historicity that claims to bend not only art and culture but also historical discourse to the needs of politics'.[29]

Italiana del Littorio (1942), in F. Oppedisano, P.S. Salvatori, F. Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia*, cit., pp. 115–140.

[26] On the ephemeral arches used by the regime, see Pier Luigi Tucci: *"The Novelty of Eternity". The Legacy of the Roman Arch in Fascist Italy*, ivi, pp. 19–45.

[27] See, among others, Paolo Nicoloso, *Mussolini architetto. Propaganda e paesaggio urbano nell'Italia fascista*, Turin, Einaudi, 2011.

[28] Giorgio Lucaroni, *"Navigare necesse". Il concorso per il Palazzo Littorio e i tanti volti della romanità*, in F. Oppedisano, P.S. Salvatori, F. Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia*, cit., pp. 99–114: here pp. 103, 114.

[29] Giorgio Lucaroni, *Architetture di storia. Fascismo, storicità, cultura architettonica italiana*, Rome, Viella, 2022, pp. 23, 20. See also Alessandro Sebastiani, *Roma antica e l'ideologia nazionale italiana. Trasformazioni di una città dal Risorgimento al fascismo*, Rome, Carocci, 2024.

Another area of considerable interest is archaeology. After all, as Cristiana Volpi observes with regard to Rome, both architecture and archaeology were part of a project that aimed to reshape the urban fabric in order to enhance its many resources, including its 'spectacular' ones.[30] Simona Troilo returns to the theme of her important monograph, *Pietre d'oltremare*, in two chapters on the use of Roman artefacts in Fascist Libya.[31] In that monograph, she showed how archaeological excavations had been a fundamental component of the Italian government's strategies since the beginning of the century, as they had been for other European countries. These excavations were motivated by strictly scientific reasons, linked as they were to the political demands of a form of nationalism that seemed ever more distant from the nineteenth-century interpretations of the ancient world.[32] During the *ventennio*, the regime built a strategy with multiple implications around the 'staging' of sites in its colonial possessions, taking advantage of previous excavations. This strategy found a vast sounding board in Italy's participation in various colonial exhibitions abroad.[33]

These aspects are also examined in the second part of Brillante's book. Thanks to the joint efforts of politicians and scholars (including Giuseppe Volpi, Roberto Paribeni and Renato Bartoccini), conferences and archaeological excavations contributed to the promotion of tourism in the colonial territories, which had explicit political implications. The aim was to illustrate the now complete continuity between the civilising role of ancient Rome, which had gradually ousted other powers in the Mediterranean area (notably Carthage, a recurrent theme in historiography and public discourse), and Fascist Italy's achievements in the present. Although the 'Mediterraneanist' interpretation centred on the 'mare nostrum' rhetoric emerged early on, it only fully established itself in the 1930s. Mussolini himself, whose political biography was far from consistent in its treatment of Rome and *romanità*, initially adopted a more cautious stance towards the Mediterranean,[34] before being celebrated as the heir to Caesar's military genius and then to the Augustan policy of imperial pacification.

[30] Cfr. Cristiana Volpi, *Il fascismo e l'architettura. Il mito della romanità e il ritorno all'antico nella Roma di Mussolini*, in E. Migliario, G. Santucci (eds.), «*Noi figli di Roma*», cit., pp. 111–134.

[31] Simona Troilo, *Touring the Ruins. Roman Antiquity and Whiteness in Fascist Libya*, in F. Oppedisano, P.S. Salvatori, F. Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia*, cit., pp. 165–188: Ead., *Roma in colonia. Resti e reperti della romanità nella Libia fascista*, in E. Migliario, G. Santucci (eds.), «*Noi figli di Roma*», cit., pp. 85–110.

[32] Simona Troilo, *Pietre d'oltremare. Scavare, conservare, immaginare l'Impero (1899-1940)*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2021.

[33] For an up-to-date bibliography, see Beatrice Falcucci, *L'impero nei musei. Storie di collezioni coloniali italiane*, Pisa, Pacini, 2025.

[34] Cfr. Paola S. Salvatori, *Mussolini e la storia. Dal socialismo al fascismo (1900-1922)*, Rome, Viella, 2016. On the contexts in which the terms *mare nostrum* and *nostrum mare* were used, mainly by the Romans, see A. Giardina, *Roma antica sui mari*, cit. pp. 64 and ff., which draws on previous work by Luciano Canfora.

Accompanied on visits to the excavations, foreign guests could see 'the modern layout given to the Libyan territory' and spread Italy's positive image once they returned home.[35] In this sense, the visit to Cyrenaica by the renowned classical scholar Wilamowitz was widely exploited. However, Cyrenaica was a more complicated territory than Tripolitania, given the deep roots of the resistance movements and, in this specific case, an archaeological heritage linked mainly to the Greek tradition.[36]

In fact, the Greek legacy was another important issue in the Fascist regime's relationship with the past, with controversial results. Rome's emphasis on synthesis through the integration of the conquests of Greek civilisation was gradually replaced by an insistence on the superiority of the Roman model, into which the peninsula's various cultures were eventually absorbed. In his work on Magna Graecia, Emanuele Ciaceri — a student of Ettore Pais — downplayed the importance of colonisation and emphasised the role of indigenous culture. The civilisation of Magna Graecia was thus recognised as having 'developed independently of Greece thanks to its fusion with pre-existing Italic civilisations'. In 1933, Ciaceri put his knowledge at the service of a pronounced 'nationalist vocation' and made a comparison 'between the opulent and decadent Greekness of the East and the innovative and creative Italian Greekness', with the aim of 'tracing the characteristics of a clearly recognisable Italianness, of which Rome [was] the moment of greatest splendour, while Mussolini's Fascism [became] its confirmation and renewal'.[37] The introduction of racial laws and the aggression against Greece of October 1940 exacerbated the divide, while Giuseppe Sergi's 'Mediterraneanist' theories — which had previously been well received — were put aside. The goal was now to cast the Greeks off as a people 'tragically' doomed to decline because of their inability to preserve the purity of their racial identity, making Rome the sole and authentic guardian of Western civilisation.[38]

[35] S. Brillante, *"Anche là è Roma"*, cit., p. 103.

[36] Ivi, pp. 120–136. In reality, despite the formal tribute to the country that had hosted him, Wilamowitz also introduced various 'distinctions'. However, these were too subtle to reduce the impact of his public comments, which — all things considered — corresponded to Italian intentions.

[37] Claudio Schiano, *Romanità e ideologia coloniale in Emanuele Ciaceri: una visione fascista dei rapporti fra culture?*, in F. Oppedisano, P.S. Salvatori, F. Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia*, cit., pp. 245–263: here pp. 247, 256. See also Amedeo Visconti, *Letture della grecità d'Occidente nella storiografia d'epoca fascista: Emanuele Ciaceri e la "Storia della Magna Grecia"*, in Marco Cuzzi, Laura Mecella e Paolo Zanini (eds.), *Letture dell'antico, mito di Roma e retoriche antisemite in epoca fascista*, Milan, Milano University Press, 2024, pp. 167–192.

[38] Cfr. Paola S. Salvatori, *Aquile sul Partenone. Grecia e Roma nel razzismo fascista*, in E. Migliario, G. Santucci (eds.), «*Noi figli di Roma*», cit., pp. 307–326; Gustavo Corni, *Modelli dell'antichità classica. Volk e razzismo*, ivi, pp. 283–306; Alessandra Coppola, *La storia greca, antica e moderna, in età fascista*, in P.S. Salvatori (ed.), *Il fascismo e la storia*, cit., pp. 15–30.

The idea of civil and 'spiritual' supremacy rooted in the myth of Rome and Latin culture affected the relations with Nazi Germany, where references to ancient Greece were widely emphasised.[39] Tensions were most frequent in border areas, particularly when the political-military alliance undermined the idea that the territory had Roman origins and destabilised the more recent memory of irredentism.[40] Historians of Law made negative comments about Roman law, and hostility towards its 'supposed individualistic character' united the Germanist, socialist and anti-Jewish elements of Nazism.[41] Finally, recent studies have highlighted how the German Reich's relationship with the past followed different lines from the 'historicist' canon that remained dominant in Italian Fascism (and Soviet communism). In Hitler's Germany, events designed to 'stage' the past (e.g. museums, exhibitions) ended up subordinating history to the energy that emanated primarily from the 'timeless' memory of the nation.[42]

The Institute of Roman Studies and the Augustan bimillenary celebrations: *romanità* on display

Founded in 1925 by Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, the Institute of Roman Studies established itself as a key contributor to Fascist policies aimed at promoting studies and activities that conveyed the narrative of ancient remains to the present in an 'analogical' key. This cultural institution effectively combined initiatives related to the strictly scientific side (i.e. conferences, publications, the *Roma* journal) with the commitment to popular dissemination. There are many essays about the Institute, whose history has already been explored,[43] including by some authors who have contributed to the books under review here.[44] Although these provide interesting insights into its activities, such as the

[39] Cfr. Johann Chapoutot, *Il nazismo e l'antichità*, Turin, Einaudi, 2017.

[40] Cfr. E. Migliario, H. Obermair, *Roma sulle sponde del Talvera*, cit.

[41] Cfr. Gianni Santucci, *L'ostilità nazionalsocialista al diritto romano*, in E. Migliario, G. Santucci (eds.), «*Noi figli di Roma*», cit., pp. 263–282: 267.

[42] See, in particular, Christopher Clark, *I tempi del potere. Concezioni della storia dalla Guerra dei Trent'anni al Terzo Reich*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2022.

[43] Cfr. Antonio La Penna, *Il culto della romanità nel periodo fascista. La rivista "Roma" e l'Istituto di Studi Romani*, "Italia contemporanea", 1999, n. 217, pp. 605–630; Albertina Vittoria, *L'Istituto di Studi Romani e il suo fondatore Carlo Galassi Paluzzi. Dal 1925 al 1944*, in F. Roscetti (ed.), *Il classico nella Roma contemporanea*, cit., pp. 507–537.

[44] Jan Nelis has summarised his many works in two essays: *"Ianus redivivus": l'Istituto di Studi Romani e il doppio volto del mito della romanità*, in E. Migliario, G. Santucci (eds.), *«Noi figli di Roma»*, cit., pp. 161–180; and *Imperialismo romano e fascismo, tra aderenza ideologica e opposizione alla costruzione di un mito. L'Istituto di Studi Romani e la critica augustea*, in Massimiliano Ghilardi and Laura Mecella (eds.), *Augusto e il fascismo. Studi intorno al bimillenario del 1937-1938*, Città di Castello (Pg), LuoghInteriori / Istituto Nazionale di Studi Romani, 2023, pp. 391–404.

Augustan bimillenary celebrations,[45] the overall picture is inevitably shaped by overlapping themes and issues. Perhaps more than elsewhere, what is lacking is a specialist book that concisely reconstructs its history and function during the Fascist *ventennio*, the type of initiatives it undertook, the profound implications of its historiographical, political and cultural commitment, and its attempts to converge with the new context of republican Italy.

The Royal Institute for Ancient History, chaired by Pietro De Francisci, has received less scholarly attention. It resulted from the regime's extensive reorganisation of the entire historical sector between 1933 and 1935,[46] which involved the coordination of activities across the four major national institutes by the newly formed Central Council for Historical Studies, led by Cesare Maria De Vecchi. It is no coincidence that the Savoy-Fascist interpretation of the Risorgimento promoted by the quadrumvir (minister of national education in 1935–36) saw the state, authority and military discipline inherited from Rome as the basis of Piedmontese 'primacy', which was at the origins of the Risorgimento.[47] Other than emphasising the difference with the situation handed down by liberal Italy, the state's involvement in modernising research and its role of direction and control — in terms of historical schools, journals, book series, publications, conferences, international contacts and so on — defined some key features of Fascism's relationship with history.[48]

The Institute of Roman Studies also played a very active role in the celebrations marking the bimillenary anniversary of Augustus' birth. In the wake of the anniversaries of Virgil (1930) and Horace (1936), this was the 'acme of the first phase of the Institute's life'.[49] It was probably also the culmination — in terms of mobilisation and success — of the introduction of *romanità* into Fascist Italy and the exaltation of Mussolini as the modern incarnation of the imperial *auctoritas*.[50] To mark the occasion, the Institute launched *Storia*

[45] The Institute of Roman Studies is at the centre of the entire second section of the book edited by M. Ghilardi and L. Mecella (eds.), *Augusto e il fascismo*, cit.

[46] Cfr. Leandro Polverini, *La riorganizzazione fascista degli studi storici e l'Istituto italiano per la storia antica*, "Studi storici", 2016, n. 1, pp. 9–26.

[47] Cfr. Massimo Baioni, *Risorgimento in camicia nera. Studi, istituzioni, musei nell'Italia fascista*, Rome-Turin, Carocci - Comitato di Torino dell'Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento italiano, 2006.

[48] Cfr. Andrea Giardina and Maria Antonietta Visceglia (eds.), *L'organizzazione della ricerca storica in Italia*, Rome, Viella, 2018; Romano Ugolini, *L'organizzazione degli studi storici*, in Ester Capuzzo (ed.), *Cento anni di storiografia sul Risorgimento*, Roma, Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento italiano, 2002, pp. 83–176.

[49] Leandro Polverini, *L'Istituto di Studi Romani fra Mostra Augustea e Storia di Roma*, in M. Ghilardi and L. Mecella (eds.), *Augusto e il fascismo*, cit., pp. 201–214: here p. 213.

[50] For some reflections on the international uses and echoes of Roman culture, see Penelope J. Goodman, *Augustus and his Bimillennium in the Soft Power Strategy of the Fascist Regime*, in F. Oppedisano, P.S. Salvatori, F. Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia*, cit., pp. 285–310; Christopher Smith, *The British Reaction to the Mostra of 1937*, in M. Ghilardi and L. Mecella (eds.), *Augusto e il fascismo*, cit., pp. 503–529.

di Roma, a monumental project comprising 30 volumes to be published by Cappelli, including a 'Plan of the Work' in 1938. Finally, it made an essential contribution to the organisation of the Fifth National Congress of Roman Studies and to a conference on Augustus held at the end of the celebrations, against the scenic backdrop of the reconstructed Ara Pacis.[51]

The Augustan exhibition, in particular, has been used frequently by historians as a case study.[52] Coordinated by archaeologist Giulio Quirino Giglioli and inaugurated on 23 September 1937, it reflected the euphoric atmosphere that followed the conquest of Ethiopia, which was enshrined in the national calendar with the introduction of 9 May as a public holiday celebrating the empire. On the same day, the second edition of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution was inaugurated, following the successful 1932 edition.[53] This decision was steeped in meaning, reaffirming the link between the past and the present, the revival of the splendour of ancient Rome and its transition into the modernity embodied by Fascism. In fact, the two exhibitions are important observatories for understanding some of the specific features of a media device to which the regime entrusted an important task in representing and narrating itself. After a period of bold, modernist experimentation that reached its peak in the 1932 exhibition, and despite repeated invitations to take it as an example, subsequent exhibitions seemed to revert to a more traditionalist conception, visually restoring a model that combined strength, order and discipline.[54] On closer inspection, the Augustan exhibition was in dialogue with other contemporary projects based on the same exaltation of state power, such as the Redipuglia memorial (1938).[55]

This emphasis largely signalled the distance from previous events. The 1911 archaeological exhibition, organised to mark the 50th anniversary of unification, had acknowledged the role of the provinces in Rome's development. Under the Fascist regime, the perspective was entirely centripetal, focusing on a postulated 'historical, cultural and technical homogeneity'.[56] The 'Italian

[51] Cfr. Andrea D'Agostino, *La "necessaria solitudine" di due monumenti. L'Ara Pacis e il Mausoleo di Augusto sotto il fascismo*, in Gian Piero Piretto (ed.), *Memorie di pietra. I monumenti delle dittature*, Milan, Raffaello Cortina, 2014, pp. 35–68.

[52] The bibliography is vast. See M. Ghilardi and L. Mecella (eds.), *Augusto e il fascismo*, cit., the third part of which focuses entirely on the exhibition.

[53] Among the many studies, it is worth citing Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Anno X. La Mostra della rivoluzione fascista del 1932*, Pisa-Rome, Istituti editoriali poligrafici internazionali, 2003, which contains a useful appendix.

[54] Cfr. Maddalena Carli, *Vedere il fascismo. Arte e politica nelle esposizioni del regime (1928-1942)*, Rome, Carocci, 2020.

[55] Cfr. Gaetano Dato, *Redipuglia: il Sacrario e la memoria della Grande guerra 1938-1993*, Trieste, Irsml, 2014.

[56] Alessandro Cavagna, *Il "benefico impulso" di Roma: la Mostra augustea della romanità e le province*, in P.S. Salvatori (ed.), *Il fascismo e la storia*, cit., pp. 51–72: here p. 63. See also Sergio Rinaldi Tufi, *Augusto e le province dell'impero nelle mostre del 1937-38 e del 2013-14*, in M. Ghilardi and L. Mecella (eds.), *Augusto e il fascismo*, cit., pp. 451–475.

civilisation exhibition', which was designed for the 1942 Rome Universal Exposition but never built because of the war, would ultimately have been — in the organisers' intentions — the most impressive 'staging' of the continuity and universality of Italian primacy.[57]

Moreover, during those years, the Fascists' use of *romanità* evolved into the construction of a 'Fascist *romanità*', integrated into totalitarian Caesarism.[58] This resulted in content and message being disseminated more quickly. The syncretic revival of Roman and Catholic universalism, which was widespread among journalists, was far from obvious at a time when Fascism's claim to sanctify itself could be perceived as a blow to religious authority. Even in the realm of *romanità*, an 'ambiguous relationship' developed,[59] characterised by periods of collaboration and encounter alternating with moments of fierce competition, depending on the regime's choices and the vicissitudes of domestic and international politics.[60] The question remains as to how the conflict was perceived beyond intellectual circles and educated minorities; perhaps the influence of moderate clerical culture in facilitating integration between the 'two religions' should be reconsidered, also through targeted documentary research. The situation was undoubtedly worsened by the introduction of racist ideology, which the regime used to legitimise its imperial ambitions and civilising mission. As is well known, the racial laws affected every sector of Italian society, including universities; in the field of *romanità*, and classical studies more broadly, the turning point of 1938 contributed to the radicalisation of pre-existing nationalism, encouraging anti-Semitic rhetoric that was prevalent in journals and circulated in various ways.[61]

[57] Cfr. Igor Melani, *Rinascimento in mostra. La civiltà italiana tra storia e ideologia all'Esposizione Universale di Roma (E42)*, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2019.

[58] Emilio Gentile, *Onde Cristo è fascista? La romanità del cesarismo totalitario*, in M. Ghilardi and L. Mecella (eds.), *Augusto e il fascismo*, cit., pp. 3–74.

[59] Cfr. Sergio Roda, *Il fascismo, i cattolici e la storia di Roma: un'ambigua relazione*, in F. Oppedisano, P.S. Salvatori, F. Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia*, cit., pp. 223–243. See also Donatello Aramini, *Il mito di Augusto e l'Istituto di Studi Romani tra fascismo e cattolicesimo*, in M. Ghilardi and L. Mecella (eds.), *Augusto e il fascismo*, cit., pp. 137–183.

[60] Cfr. Paolo Zanini, *Rivendicazioni nazional-cattoliche sul Levante, mito di Roma e spunti antisionisti e antisemiti tra anni Venti e primi anni Trenta*, in M. Cuzzi, L. Mecella and P. Zanini (eds.), *Letture dell'antico*, cit., pp. 33–46.

[61] The book cited in the previous footnote offers many examples. On the role of journals, in particular, see Marco Cuzzi, *Miti antichi, odi moderni. Il culto di Roma e l'antisemitismo nelle riviste dell'Universalismo fascista*, ivi, pp. 14–32; Emanuele Edallo, *Antisemitismo e mito di Roma nelle pagine di "Gerarchia"*, ivi, pp. 123–146; Pietro Pinna, *Il mito della Roma antica nel periodico "Il Legionario". Tra propaganda e ideologia universalista*, in F. Oppedisano, P.S. Salvatori, F. Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia*, cit., pp. 265–283.

Before Rome. Public uses of the Etruscans

Adopting an entirely Roman-centric perspective, which exalted Fascism as the culmination of a thousand-year tradition of civilisation and racial superiority, came at the expense of other ancient peoples living on the peninsula. Recent studies on the role of Etruscan culture during Fascism have examined its presence in academia, historiography and — on a more general level — public discourse, intersecting it with the cultural policies developed above all by Fascism. In 2013, Antonino De Francesco highlighted the importance of the issue, placing the 'myth of the origins of the Italian people' in a long-term context. The debate on the origins (Eastern, Mediterranean, Nordic), language and art of the Etruscans was shaped by the pressures of a rapidly changing context, which led to Etruscan history being positioned alternately within the national 'tradition'.[62] During the nineteenth century, the interpretation of the Etruscans as an emblematic case of Italianness *ante litteram* made it possible to combine the search for the nation's physiognomic traits with the recognition of persistent local identities. During the *ventennio*, this interpretation was gradually sacrificed in the name of expelling everything that did not fit the ideal type of an Italian 'family' as defined by the Romanesque canon, which in the late 1930s took an openly racial tone.[63]

Andrea Avalli's book is the result of extensive and well-documented research that 'aims to demonstrate how the Etruscan imagination was mobilised at various levels under Fascism, with repercussions for the future, to theorise Italian cultural and racial continuity from antiquity to the twentieth century, with the political purpose of legitimising the social order maintained by the dictatorship'.[64] Building on pre-fascist elements, this approach pervaded the entire *ventennio* and was mediated by historiography, exhibitions and, later, cinema. It took on explicit anti-Semitic overtones and was eventually integrated into republican Italy without undergoing significant changes. By emphasising the 'long duration of Italian scientific racism in the field of antiquity', Avalli consciously exposes himself to the 'interpretative risk' of a teleological reading.[65] Indeed, different contexts must be considered in order to understand the discursive devices that seem to be marked by an identical 'morphological' structure. The specific context of the relationship between intellectuals and Fascism was extremely complex, as is now evident from a wealth of literature.[66]

[62] Antonino De Francesco, *L'antichità della nazione. Il mito delle origini del popolo italiano dal Risorgimento al fascismo*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2017 (1st ed. Oxford University Press, 2013).

[63] See also Marie-Laurence Haack, *Crani etruschi vs crani romani? Il fascismo e l'antropologia degli etruschi*, in P.S. Salvatori (ed.), *Il fascismo e la storia*, cit., pp. 31–50.

[64] A. Avalli, *Il mito della prima Italia*, cit., p. 15.

[65] Ivi, pp. 13–14.

[66] See, among others, Gabriele Turi, *Lo Stato educatore. Politica e intellettuali nell'Italia fascista*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2002.

Combining printed sources and private papers (letters and diaries), Avalli carefully reconstructs the debates of the time, the positions of individual exponents of Etruscology and art history, and the role of universities, cultural institutions, journals, conferences and the sectors of Fascism most sensitive to the issue (e.g. the Strapaese movement). He starts with Giulio Quirino Giglioli's discovery of the statues of Veio in 1916. In addition to Giglioli and many leading academics between the two world wars, including Antonio Minto, Pericle Ducati, Carlo Anti, Alessandro Della Seta and Aldo Neppi Modona (the latter two victims of racial persecution), Avalli gives ample space to Massimo Pallottino and Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli. Their figures and interventions define the two poles around which the story of Etruscology develops from Fascism to the transition to a democratic and republican context.

Bianchi Bandinelli initially supported some of the nationalist ideas of the 1930s but then changed his position. With some wavering, he eventually denounced the most radical, racist and anti-Semitic tendencies, leading him to openly criticise, in July 1942, 'those who seek in statues not works of art but the continuity of blood'.[67] In the post-war period, he joined the Italian Communist Party and revised his theories in line with the criteria of historical materialism and Gramsci's legacy, but he remained fairly isolated in his allergy to the revival of Etruscan art. He even dismissed it outright for its lack of originality and firmly opposed the modernist approach and avant-garde languages, as evidenced by the controversy surrounding the 1955 Exhibition of Etruscan Art and Civilisation held at Villa Giulia. Avalli notes that the scholar ended up sharing 'retrospectively' — albeit for opposite reasons — the interpretation of racism 'as a form of irrationalism foreign to Italian culture', which was widespread in the intellectual circles of those years.[68]

As for Pallottino, who had inherited the role of supreme guardian of Etruscology from Giglioli, he was free to repropose his own historiographical positions after a career shaped entirely by the regime's institutions (and values). Among other things, the young scholar had curated 14 rooms of the Augustan exhibition, in which the Etruscans appeared as 'fully integrated into *romanità*'.[69] Avalli emphasises Pallottino's ability to mediate and compromise in the aftermath of the events of 25 July and 8 September 1943, when he openly distanced himself from Fascism by founding the Association for the Risorgimento of Italy and publishing articles in the journal *L'Indice dei fatti e delle idee*, inspired by monarchist, nationalist and Catholic convictions.[70] With

[67] A. Avalli, *Il mito della prima Italia*, cit., p. 195.

[68] Ivi, p. 231.

[69] Ivi, p. 159.

[70] References to Pallottino's activities in these years can be found in Luca La Rovere, *L'eredità del fascismo. Gli intellettuali, i giovani e la transizione al postfascismo 1943-1948*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 2008, pp. 211–215.

the outbreak of the Cold War, he took advantage of the political and cultural climate of the time, which encouraged a rather indulgent attitude towards the recent past.[71] This allowed him to retain a key role in academic circles and public events. Thus, in the 1950s, his previous nationalist supremacist positions were relegitimised within the framework of a 'Europeanist and Atlanticist representation of the Etruscans',[72] whereas *romanità* could be remodelled in terms of Catholic universalism, proto-Europeanism and Western tradition.

The academic environment reflected the lack of transparency and unresolved contradictions concerning scholars' positions during the Fascist era. This was confirmed by the substantial failure of the purge, given that almost all the scholars who had supported the regime — often even the most radical ones — were swiftly reinstated, as occurred at the Institute of Etruscan Studies.

Concluding remarks: perceptions between myth and reality

This article has demonstrated the richness and vitality of the historiographical debate, which revolves around the many issues arising from the public and political use of antiquity. The recurrence of certain themes in edited books can be repetitive, and the variety of fields examined can occasionally fragment the analysis. Consequently, it is down to the reader to identify the connections between people, events, places and issues. However, these are acceptable risks, which do not undermine the important value of the books in question. It is clear that the Fascist regime's use of antiquity cannot be investigated in isolation. The persuasive and seductive power of the ancient world — and especially of 'blackshirt' *romanità* — lay precisely in its circular structure, that is, the synchronous way in which it united all channels of transmission, especially the visual ones (including cinema),[73] amplifying its messages. What has been said about classical vestiges also applies here: a dense web composed 'of continuous visual and rhetorical references, thanks to which images moved from one media outlet to another, expanding their meaning each time and allowing different audiences to engage with them'.[74]

In an attempt to take stock of the concept of *romanità*, Enzo Fimiani's rich contribution seems to question most of the studies mentioned in this article. In his opinion, the 'extraordinary pervasiveness of the political myth of ancient

[71] For a recent publication on this theme, Andrea Martini, *Fascismo immaginario. Riscrivere il passato a destra*, Bari, Laterza, 2024.

[72] A. Avalli, *Il mito della prima Italia*, cit., p. 247.

[73] Cfr. Giacomo Manzoli, *"Roma Wasn't Built in a Day". La rappresentazione della romanità nel cinema fascista*, in E. Migliario, G. Santucci (eds.), «*Noi figli di Roma*», cit., pp. 181–200. See also Gianmarco Mancosu, *Vedere l'impero. L'Istituto Luce e il colonialismo fascista*, Milan, Mimesis, 2022.

[74] S. Troilo, *Pietre d'oltremare*, cit., p. 236.

Rome' and the 'widespread diffusion of stylistic elements of Roman antiquity in Italian society' are not reflected in any 'concrete changes in the state structure'. In other words, the mythopoetic operation was not extended to the point of 'injecting a concrete dose of ancient Rome into the complex regulatory, legal and institutional system of Fascism'.[75] The gap between the 'totalitarian impulse' and its 'legislative precipitates', one of the most notable short circuits in the history of Fascism, would thus fall within the broader context of the regime's 'imperfect machine'.[76]

Fimiani's observations deserve credit for bringing the analysis back to reality. The internal contradictions between the emotional and theatrical mobilisation associated with political myth, on the one hand, and its practical impact, on the other, reveal that the Fascist regime was 'eternally oscillating between words and deeds, proclamations and concrete results, accomplished facts and norms':

> However, something else seems to emerge from the depths of the Fascist myth of ancient Rome, like a kind of reverse history of Italian Fascism. Each time a fact, often achieved through brute force, precedes a formal or normative arrangement, the regime achieves its goal. Conversely, when it attempts to transform an ideal, a propaganda slogan or mythopoeia into concrete and consequential facts, it fails or risks failure — and *romanità* that does not become a state is a striking example of this.[77]

These are important considerations that can also serve as a warning against the persistence in public discourse of positions that trivialise or even condone the Fascist *ventennio* (the infamous 'good things' of Fascism). However, there may be confusion on a strictly historiographical level. The regime failed not so much — or at least not primarily — because of its inability to give concrete expression to its totalitarian vocation. Including *romanità* in this framework does not improve our understanding of the phenomenon and its implications. On the other hand, Fimiani himself acknowledges that 'concrete effectiveness' is not 'the best parameter' for measuring 'the historical weight of a myth and the mythopoetic operation that brings it to life, affirms it and promotes it'.[78] The myth of *romanità* served another purpose:

[75] Enzo Fimiani, *"Lo Stato fascista fermo come su granito": cortocircuiti di regime tra mito di Roma antica e realtà statuale*, in E. Migliario, G. Santucci (eds.), *"Noi figli di Roma"*, cit., pp. 9–35: here pp. 25–26. See also the following chapters in the same volume, which are more relevant to the history of law: Cosimo Cascione, *Su alcuni fondamenti romani dell'ideologia fascista del Codice civile*, pp. 201–222. Mario Varvaro, *Salvatore Riccobono e l'esaltazione giusromanistica di Roma antica*, pp. 223–262. See also Simone Ciambelli, Thomas Morard, *Dalla corporazione fascista alla corporazione romana: teoria e propaganda*, in F. Oppedisano, P.S. Salvatori, F. Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia*, cit., pp. 71–98.

[76] Cfr. Guido Melis, *La macchina imperfetta. Immagine e realtà dello Stato fascista*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2018.

[77] E. Fimiani, *"Lo Stato fascista fermo come su granito"*, cit., p. 31.

[78] Ivi, p. 13.

that of defining an idealised representation and an ambition to return to imperial splendour, as well as the concept of Italianness as an aspiration to domination and power. In this guise, it presents itself as the litmus test of a project devoted to an anthropological transformation of society, which was pursued with a cultural policy careful to use the most diverse channels of transmission.

In light of this ambitious project, a more systematic exploration is needed to reconstruct the positions within the anti-fascist community. The latter was well aware that Italian history had to be freed from the monopoly of Fascist narrative, as demonstrated by the famous 1935 controversy on the Risorgimento within Giustizia e Libertà. In addition to the individual experiences of prominent scholars and intellectuals — such as Gaetano De Sanctis, Piero Treves and Arnaldo Momigliano[79] — and the circulation of Gramsci's theses,[80] it would be interesting to further explore the anti-fascist diaspora, particularly the communication strategies implemented to counter the regime's appropriation of the past and the extent to which the latter persisted among Italian communities abroad.

The invitation not to ignore the distance between aspirations and reality, between projects and results, can instead be seen as a valuable recommendation to shift the focus of research to how things were received. This is an important step towards establishing a more compelling link between the inexhaustible repertoire of images and representations of the ancient world and its assimilation into Italian society at the time, to the point of measuring how deeply it was rooted in public discourse well beyond the experience of the *ventennio*. In this sense, the school system — with its various levels and grades — is a relevant field of research whose potential does not seem to have been fully exploited, as far as school archives and 'children's writing' are concerned.[81] Interestingly, the school universe is absent from Avalli's book, even towards the end, where the author cites some interesting examples of the survival of a certain Etruscan imaginary in literature and cinema.

[79] Cfr. Massimiliano Ghilardi, *Arnaldo Momigliano, l'Istituto di Studi Romani e una mancata celebrazione Mussolini~Augusto*, in M. Ghilardi and L. Mecella (eds.), *Augusto e il fascismo*, cit., pp. 345–389; Luca Iori, *Classics against the Regime. Thucydides, Piero Gobetti, and Fascist Italy*, in Luca Iori and Ivan Matijašić (eds.), *Thucydides in the 'Age of Extremes' and Beyond. Academia and Politics*, "HCS - History of Classical Scholarship", 2022, supplementary vol. 5, pp. 143–182; Anna Magnetto (ed.), *Piero Treves. Tra storia ellenistica e storia della cultura*, Pisa, Edizioni della Normale, 2021.

[80] Cfr. Emilio Zucchetti, Anna Maria Cimino (eds.), *Antonio Gramsci and the Ancient World*, London, Routledge, 2021.

[81] Cfr. Quinto Antonelli, Egle Becchi (eds.), *Scritture bambine. Testi infantili tra passato e presente*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1995; Mariella Colin, *I bambini di Mussolini. Letteratura, libri, letture per l'infanzia sotto il fascismo*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2012.

'The ancient world at school,' one might say.[82] After all, younger pupils were those who could more easily absorb the 'continuist' vision of a history that 'flowed from the children of the she-wolf to the son of the blacksmith', thanks to 'the sense of mythical time proper to their age'.[83] As the school is the hub of all knowledge processing and transmission, and the place where our relationship with history is situated within a long chronological timeline, it also enables us to see how the 'analogical' use of the past manifests itself in different periods. In the classroom, a narrative based on the canon of the 'fundamental unity' of Italian history was circulated,[84] moving Fascism along the timeline and bending it to its contingent needs. This was to be expected and resulted in many contradictions, at a time when the confrontation with more recent eras revealed the equally strong need to build and promote a distinctive, original tradition.

Translated by Andrea Hajek

[82] Cfr. Andrea Fava, *La guerra a scuola: propaganda, memoria, rito (1915-1940)*, "Materiali di lavoro", 1986, n. 3-4, pp. 53–126. On the teaching of Latin and Greek, see: Niccolò Bettegazzi, *"Religione e patria" nei* Carmina Selecta *di Nazareno Capo. Appunti sulla storia culturale del latino durante il ventennio fascista*, in F. Oppedisano, P.S. Salvatori, F. Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia*, cit., pp. 207–221; Jacopo Bassi and Gianluca Cané (eds.), *Sulle spalle degli antichi. Eredità classica e costruzione delle identità nazionali nel Novecento*, Milan, Unicopli, 2014; Andrea Balbo, *Accogliere l'antico. Ricerche sulla ricezione della letteratura latina e sulla storia degli studi classici*, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso, 2020.

[83] Gianpasquale Santomassimo, *Saggio introduttivo*, in Massimo Baioni, *Il fascismo e Alfredo Oriani. Il mito del precursore*, Ravenna, Longo, 1988, pp. 13–27: here 15.

[84] Cfr. Arrigo Solmi, *Discorsi sulla storia d'Italia*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1935.

Table of contents 2024-2025

Studi e ricerche

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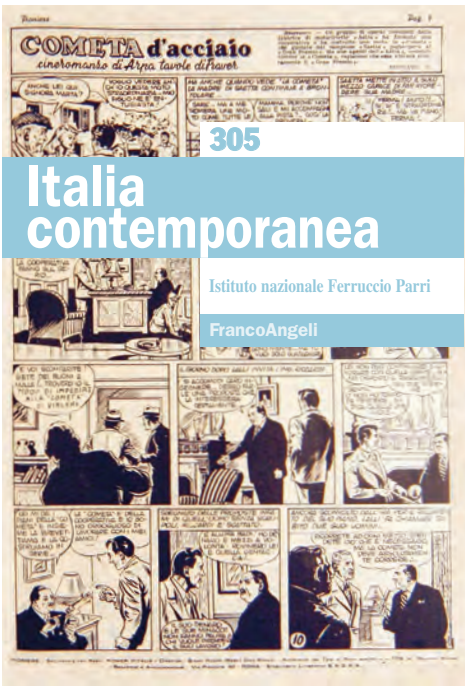

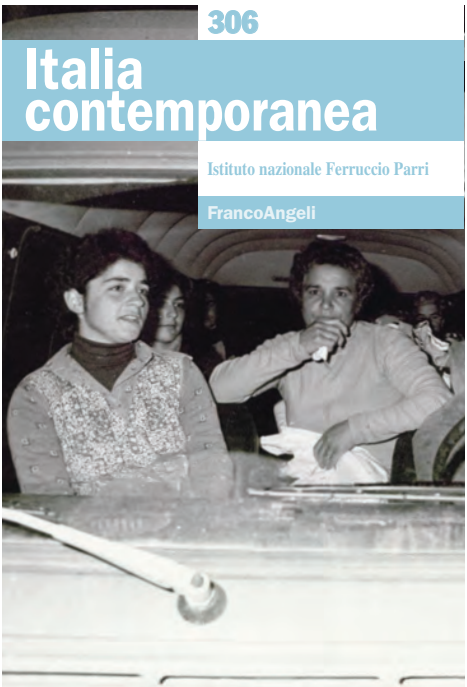

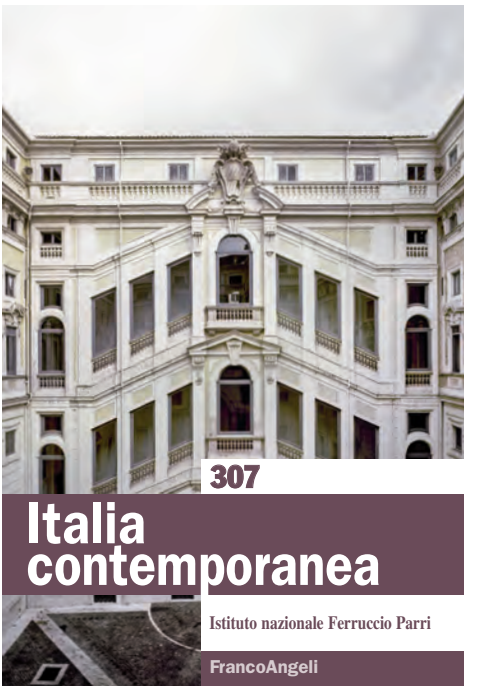

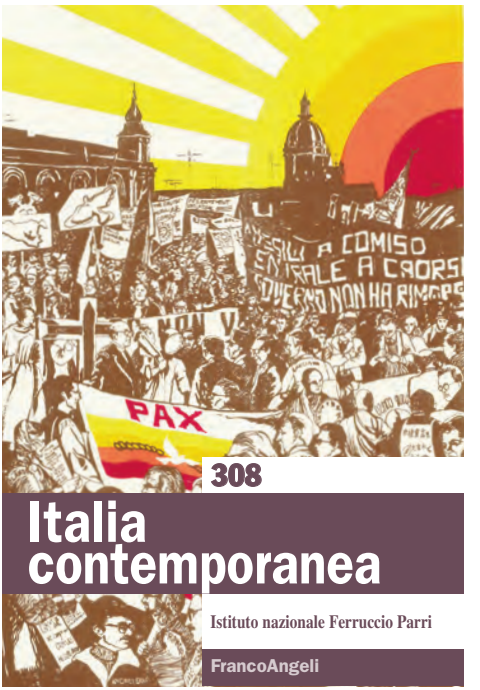

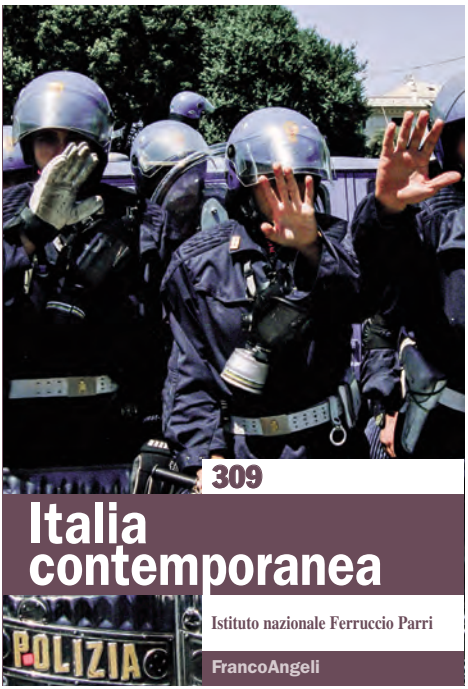

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