THE STRUGGLE FOR MODERNITY: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism

Emilio Gentile

PRAEGER

THE STRUGGLE FOR MODERNITY

Recent Titles in
Italian and Italian American Studies

The Hunchback's Tailor: Giovanni Giolitti and Liberal Italy from the Challenge of Mass Politics to the Rise of Fascism, 1882–1922
Alexander De Grand

Anita Garibaldi: A Biography
Anthony Valerio

Gaetano Salvemini: A Biography
Charles Killinger

Politics in a Museum: Governing Postwar Florence
James Edward Miller

The Poet and the Dictator: Lauro de Bosis Resists Fascism in Italy and America
Jean McClure Mudge

Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology
Mary Gibson

Making Liberalism Work: The Italian Experience, 1860–1914
Susan A. Ashley

THE STRUGGLE FOR MODERNITY

Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism

Emilio Gentile

Foreword by Stanley G. Payne

Italian and Italian American Studies
Spencer M. Di Scala, Series Adviser

PRAEGER

Westport, Connecticut
London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gentile, Emilio, 1946–
The struggle for modernity : nationalism, futurism, and fascism / Emilio Gentile ; foreword by Stanley G. Payne
p. cm.—(Italian and Italian American studies, ISSN 1530–7263)
Includeds bibliography references and index.
ISBN 0–275–97692–0 (alk. paper)
1. Italy—Politics and government—20th century. 2. Nationalism—Italy—History—20th century. 3. National characteristics, Italian. I. Title. II. Series.
DG568.5.G464 2003
945.091—dc21 2003042897

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2003042897
ISBN: 0-275-97692-0
ISSN: 1530-7263

First published in 2003

Praeger Publishers, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
www.praeger.com

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48-1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Series Foreword

Italian Fascism has remained the subject of perennial interest in the English-speaking world. While the movement's origins and development have frequently raised debate, a willingness to accept new ideas has not characterized the discussion. During the past twenty-five years, Italian historians have put forward fresh views of fascism that caused an uproar in that country. In general, these historians have claimed that they were applying to the study of fascism the traditional tools of historiography, that is, looking at their subject in a dispassionate manner, while their opponents charged that this method justified it. While historians writing in English have referred to the work in Italy, readers have not been able to access it directly because of the difficulties and expenses of translation or because it appeared only in specialized journals.

Emilio Gentile is the most notable Italian historian of the school that attempts to analyze fascism in a detached and serene manner. *The Struggle for Modernity* is an important work, because in it Gentile discusses Italian radical nationalism and its relationship to modernity and to the evolution of fascist totalitarianism. His analysis brings fresh perspectives in the interpretation of movements that had fundamental—if repellent—roles in the history of twentieth-century Europe.

Spencer M. Di Scala
Series Adviser
Italian and Italian American Studies

Foreword

A return to the intensive study of nationalism has been a notable feature of the final years of the twentieth century. After World War II analysts had largely relegated nationalism to a certain phase of history as a problem that had been overcome, at least in Europe. The war's mass destruction had supposedly written finis to nationalism in the west, while the nominally internationalist Soviet imperium had throttled nationalism in the east. The marked return of nationalism during the 1980s and 1990s in the form of the new "micronationalisms" of western Europe and the vigorously, often destructively, renascent nationalisms of the east surprised and shocked many observers. It produced a growing consensus that in all historical phases of modernity and in nearly all parts of the world nationalism has been the predominant radical political force.

Italy developed one of the most important nationalist movements of the modern age during the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century, creating a unified Italian state for the first time in history. This great resurgence, or Risorgimento, eventually gave its name to a whole cluster of "revivalist" nationalisms as it became a basic category for taxonomists.

It is doubtless a truism that nearly all new states find themselves in somewhat contradictory situations, but the circumstances of the united Italy of the 1860s and 1870s were particularly contradictory. Her patriots aspired to the rank of "sixth great power" of Europe but lacked the economic and technical resources to achieve that status. Her leaders quickly renounced overt and aggressive nationalism in order to concentrate on internal unity and development. The country experienced a spurt of industrialization, first in the late nineteenth century and then in the decade before World War I, but this achievement only accentuated the contradictions of a modernization still far from complete. By the era of World War I Italy had achieved a unique, still contradictory, status as the most

advanced of the still primarily agricultural countries of Europe, at the same time that it could be considered the weakest of those states that had developed a minimal level of modern industrialization.

During the generation prior to World War I, a new wave of radical nationalist agitation swept northern Italy, bent on more rapid modernization and also on aggressive expansion. Whereas Risorgimento nationalism had been predominantly liberal in political orientation, the new twentieth-century nationalism was sometimes liberal and sometimes authoritarian. It arose from both the left and right sectors, and became stronger and more aggressive with the onset of World War I. Elements of this radical nationalism coalesced in creation of a new form of nationalism immediately after the war, giving birth to fascism in 1919. Eventually this type of movement would be recognized as the most destructive form of nationalism yet seen.

Fascism was the only completely new type of revolutionary movement of the twentieth century. The other major revolutionary political forces—communism, socialism, anarchism, and nationalism—all had clear nineteenth-century precedents, whereas fascism was novel and, by comparison, difficult to understand. Something of its nature had not been included in futurist scenarios by either liberals or Marxists, and early assessments revealed bewilderment, often varying widely. Forms of fascism quickly spread from Italy into other countries, while a different though parallel movement grew simultaneously in Hitler's German National Socialism. After 1933 what scholars would later term "generic fascism" became a major epochal phenomenon in Europe, leading to World War II and an era of unparalleled destructiveness.

The first writing about fascism, during the 1920s and 1930s, was largely political and usually journalistic in character and did not improve in quality during the war itself. After 1945 the primary interest among scholars was simply to create accurate narratives of what had happened, particularly in the cases of Germany and Italy, and there was little attempt at a higher level of analysis or comparative study. Only with the emergence of the international "fascism debate" during the mid-1960s—a broad scholarly discussion that went on for a decade or more—was there serious consideration within the scholarly community of the historical macrophenomenmon of comparative fascism. And even then fascism was often used as a synonym for German National Socialism, its most important generic manifestation.

Fascism nonetheless emerged as a significant force first in Italy during 1919–1921, and the Italian Fascism[1] of Benito Mussolini was for years considered its most important manifestation. The term *fascismo* is derived from the standard Italian term *fascio,* meaning a bundle or union, or, as applied to radical (usually left-wing) political movements from the late nineteenth-century on, a sort of league. Though Italian Fascism and German National Socialism had many generic features in common, it was increasingly realized by some scholars, particularly in Italy but also in the United States, that the original or "paradigmatic"

Fascism of Italy was a highly complex and often influential phenomenon that required careful attention in its own right.

The study of Italian Fascism entered a new dimension in 1965 with the publication of the first volume of the massive eight-volume biography of Mussolini by Renzo De Felice. Formerly a specialist in early modern history and Italian Jacobinism, De Felice approached the study of Italian Fascism at an unparalleled depth of research and attention to detail combined with a detachment and objectivity of treatment that had rarely been equaled. Prior to his death in 1997 he also produced a series of other works, particularly on foreign policy and on the interpretations of Fascism, and in the process raised research on Fascism to a new level. Before De Felice much of the study of fascism had been in the hands of Marxist scholars, and the political left often accused De Felice of being, if not pro-fascist, at least anti-anti-fascist. After 1941 and the end of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the demonization of fascism was an article of faith for leftist scholars, but their highly ideological and politicized approach often got in the way of sound scholarship.

With the passing of De Felice, the mantle of leadership in the investigation and interpretation of Italian Fascism has clearly passed to Emilio Gentile. Born in 1946, Gentile began his work in the field of nineteenth-century liberalism and then claimed major attention in 1975 with the publication of his first key work, *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista* (The Origins of Fascist Ideology). This study appeared during the later phase of the "fascism debate," at a time when the character or even the existence of fascist ideology generally was still under the most perplexed discussion. Because fascist movements stressed activism and lacked any background of commonly agreed upon sacred writ such as the writings of Karl Marx, it had long been held that fascism lacked very specific or coherent doctrine, that any ideology it might have merely rested on a "revolution of nihilism."

Though by that point serious scholars had indeed begun to conclude that fascism and National Socialism did have ideologies of their own, Gentile's pristine work revealed to the reader for the first time the full range and character of early Italian Fascist doctrines. He demonstrated that they were eclectic in the extreme, drawn from diverse elements of left and right (and occasionally even from the nationalist center), and that, though early fascism did not have a fully formed ideology prior to the early 1930s, it harbored a variety of diverse and sometimes conflicting ideological currents. This perspective was sharpened in a revised and expanded edition of the book published in 1996.

The leftist roots of fascist thinking lay in revolutionary syndicalism and socialism and in forms of progressivist and leftist nationalism. Those sectors of the left drawn to fascism were, however, those not attracted to strict materialist philosophy, but who had emphasized well before 1919 the importance of political faith, mystique, and ideals and who came more and more to associate nationalism with a kind of secular religion. Gentile draws attention to some of these currents,

which existed before fascism, in his chapter on Italian progressivist reaction to the Dreyfus Affair in France.

Pre-Fascist Italian modernist nationalism assumed diverse forms and often sharply differing emphases. Two of its main expressions are examined in Gentile's chapter "Conflicting Modernisms: *La Voce*, Futurism, and the Myth of the New Italy." Futurism was totally modernist, embracing industrialism and machine culture with a vengeance. It often glorified war and exhibited a nihilist and destructive attitude toward earlier culture. The modernist nationalists that grouped around the journal *La Voce*, by contrast, gave voice to a more spiritualist and idealist form of modernist nationalism and exhibited a more careful and ordered approach to traditional culture. As Gentile emphasizes, these forms of modernist nationalism can only be understood in their own terms and not as an early form of fascism first of all because fascism did not exist before World War I and even more because not all the members of these movements later became fascists—some even emerged as energetic anti-Fascists.

How modernist nationalism carried over into fascism is explained more directly in "The Conquest of Modernity: From Modernist Nationalism to Fascism." Once the Italian Fascist regime had been established, the leaders of the new order had to develop a concept of modernity that also embraced national tradition and history, to meld a sense of *Romanità* that would include the old Rome and the new. This was intended to become the *Nuova Civiltà*, which would form the basis of the national pedagogy to be inculcated by fascism. Like many other nationalist movements, Italian Fascism projected what Roger Griffin has termed a "palingenetic myth," a rebirth of the nation that would revivify what was perceived to be stagnant and degenerate.

The initial means of achieving this regeneration was to have been the movement itself, which was transformed to the National Fascist Party (PNF) in 1921, recognized five years later by the subsequent dictatorship as Italy's sole political party. Even so, the party in the Italian regime did not directly control the state, and therefore for years the party as an institution received comparatively little attention from historians, who focused their work on the biography of the Duce, on foreign affairs, on high-level political history, and on World War II. Thus it was left to Gentile to begin a systematic history of the Fascist Party, which he initiated with his *Storia del partito fascista 1919–1922* (History of the Fascist Party), which upon its publication in 1989 stood out as the first full and direct treatment of the origins and early development of the party as an institution. This immediately became an indispensable source for understanding the rise of fascism.

Paradoxically, there always existed a "problem of the party" in Fascist Italy, which did not exist in Nazi Germany or in Communist regimes. This stemmed first from the fact that Mussolini had not created the party so much as it had grown up around him, and for years its leaders and activists retained a certain activism and independence that was not easily controlled. It stemmed secondly from the very hesitations and uncertainty of the Duce himself, who had much

less of a preconceived model in mind than either Lenin or Hitler, and in whose thinking the full form of the new system and of Fascist doctrine was not molded for a decade or so. Though a major cult of the Duce later developed, Mussolini did not enjoy the same degree of unquestioned authority as the German Fuehrer, and thus a certain tension between leader and party always remained. Mussolini therefore gave the party only limited authority, and even when it was assigned new tasks in the 1930s the contradictions between latent and expressed party ambitions on the one hand and its restricted power on the other still remained. Gentile's chapter, "The Problem of the Party," distills the essence of this tension and provides a brief analytical introduction to the evolving role of the party in the new system.

Leaders of the party at varying times had their own ambitions, though in time all these projects were in varying ways cut down by Mussolini. One ambition lay in the area of foreign affairs and in the development of the "Fasci all'Estero" (Fasci Abroad), the party organization among the numerous Italian emigrants in other lands. In the early years of the Mussolini government some of the party leaders hoped to develop a major, in part autonomous, sector of the party abroad, both as an extension of party power and as a means of influencing the international arena. Here as in other areas, the resulting tension eventually prompted Mussolini to control such activities completely. The story of the frustrated effort to develop a Fascist Party abroad is lucidly explained in "I Fasci Italiani all'Estero: The 'Foreign Policy' of the Fascist Party."

In mature fascist doctrine, the concrete means of achieving rebirth and greatness was the national State. The idea of the state was weak to nonexistent in the first expressions of Fascism in 1919, but later began to play an increasingly prominent role. After the dictatorship was established, Mussolini privileged the role of the state over that of the party itself, so that by the late 1920s Fascism was becoming known abroad as a doctrine of statism par excellence. In the process the tension between state and party persisted. Mussolini's own ambivalence toward his party was fundamental, as the Capo di Governo himself determined that the Fascist regime would never become a party-state, such as, for example, the contemporary Soviet Union. Gentile's second major book, *Il mito dello stato nuovo dall' antigiolittismo al fascismo* (The Myth of the New State from Anti-Giolittianism to Fascism), published in 1982, provided the first full treatment of the growth of the doctrine of the state in Fascism and of the essentially mythic role that it assumed.

Though the fascist doctrine of the state eventually led to a considerable growth of bureaucracy, the political culture of fascism was always based on the ideas of activism and spirit. While fascism has—not inaccurately—the general image among both scholars and the public of a politics based on physical force, fascist doctrine always emphasized idealism and spiritual and emotional values, sternly rejecting philosophical materialism as typical of communism and decadent liberalism. In its early years, Fascism never claimed to be a religion per se and the Mussolini regime reached a functional modus vivendi with the Roman

Catholic Church, but it sought to build a new sense of spiritual metapolitics, based on faith, obedience, and total personal and emotional commitment.

After examining this sense of a purely immanent spirituality, which transcended the individual but not the secular sphere per se, political analysts abroad began to find common claims and religious demands in all the revolutionary new dictatorships. The first scholar to elaborate the analysis of this sort of political religion was the Austrian philosopher Erich Voegelin, who published a work entitled *Politische Religionen* in Vienna at the beginning of 1938, just before Hitler's troops entered Austria. Already by 1932 Mussolini had affirmed that Fascism is a religious concept of life, and the regime had developed an elaborate liturgical calendar, with a structure of symbolism, ceremony, and martyrology analogous to a church. The most trenchant analysis of this aspect of the Mussolini regime will be found in Gentile's book *Il culto del Littorio: La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (1993), which has been published in English as *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (1996).

Fascism claimed to be an altogether new force because it allegedly appealed to the totality of man in a way in which more materialistic movements could not. Its leaders had grasped early on that people may be mobilized by emotion and that collectivities need to be presented with formative ideals or myths. The centrality and use of myth as motivating idealism thus became fundamental to Fascism. It was not that all Fascist myth was necessarily seen as empirically real, but rather as a goal or aspiration with which to motivate the masses. In the process, of course, Fascism developed not merely a politics of political ideals but a politics of myth-making, as Gentile points out.

The greatest of all Fascist myths, aside perhaps from that of the Italian nation, was the myth of the Duce himself. Gentile shows that this was not originally created by Fascism, for the personal charisma of Mussolini had already been recognized to a certain degree during his youthful leadership in the Socialist Party. Under Fascism a veritable cult of the Duce developed, though it was not fully formed until the early 1930s. The cult came to play a greater role in Fascist Italy than in some dictatorships because of the extreme emphasis on elitism and on command, with the supreme commander elevated to the status of grand myth, as Gentile shows in "Mussolini's Charisma." This became, in Mussolini's own eyes, a necessary counterpart to his distrust of and frequent disgust with his own party. Limitation of the status and role of other party leaders was compensated by the exaltation of Mussolini. This would have been less destructive had Mussolini had a greater sense of self-criticism or of political prudence, but by the 1930s Mussolini had come to believe more in the cult of the Duce himself than in any of the other Fascist myths, and this helps in part to explain the politics of grandeur and of foreign expansion that he adopted in 1935, and which in turn led to his downfall.

During the 1990s the aspects of Italian Fascism that have most interested scholars, aside from the standard political ones, have been its culture, art, and public staging. Some critics, mainly on the left, have complained that the resulting work on art, theater, and public spectacle under fascism have diverted schol-

arship into merely examining so-called fascist show as distinct from grimmer and historically more important aspects of fascism. This trend is, however, representative of a broader movement toward cultural studies generally and, when well done as in the work of some of its leading practitioners, can lead to new understanding and insights. At the same time, there exists a danger of reducing fascism to mere spectacle and theatrics.

In the chapter "The Theater of Politics in Fascist Italy," Gentile provides a very useful example of how to combine the investigation of spectacle with serious political analysis. In its roots, Fascist theatricality derived first from the choreography of the *squadre* militia and their solemn but elaborate rites for the dead, whence developed an elaborate liturgy for public ceremonies. Italian Fascism was, needless to say, not alone in this, but was, together with Russian Bolshevism, one of the two principal inventors of the genre. These ceremonies, with their elaborate rites, symbols, festivals, parades, and initiation ceremonies, reached their greatest extent only during the 1930s, with the expansion of empire and the endlessly growing ambition of the regime.

All scholars are nonetheless agreed on the importance of liturgy and choreography to Italian Fascism (and for that matter to other major dictatorships), but other major issues remain more controversial. Among the latter is the question of totalitarianism, a word invented originally in Italy in 1924. Coined by an opposition leader to indicate the severity of the new dictatorship that was dawning, within a year this pejorative had been adopted as a positive term by Mussolini, who began to employ it as an adjective to refer to the strength and aspirations of the new regime. By the 1930s totalitarianism was a term used by journalists and scholars to describe the major new dictatorships, though it was never adopted by the Soviet Union—arguably the most total dictatorship—and Hitler's Germany never went beyond invoking what it called *der totale Staat* (the total state).

When comparing Fascist Italy with the Soviet Union and the Third Reich, historians and subsequent commentators have expressed frequent doubt that the Mussolini regime—which rested on a semi-pluralist compromise with the monarchy, the Church, big business, and the military—was ever really *total* in the Stalinist or even the Hitlerian sense. In her influential book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt concluded that the institutional reality of Fascist Italy did not really merit the term, and most other researchers have tended to agree.

Emilio Gentile has questioned this conclusion in one of his most important books, *La via italiana al totalitarismo: Il partito e lo Stato nel regime fascista* (The Italian Path to Totalitarianism: Party and State in the Fascist Regime, 1995). This study focuses on the 1930s, the years of the radicalization of the regime, in which the German alliance began. Gentile does not challenge directly the standard interpretation of the institutional balance of Fascist Italy during the 1920s, but analyzes the expanded role and activity of the party during the mid- and late-1930s, and of the initiation of new plans to expand both the party and the role of the state during these years. He presents an impressive amount of evidence to

bolster his conclusion that during the second half of the 1930s the Italian regime was undergoing a process of totalitarianization, even though that process was not institutionally complete by the time of Mussolini's downfall in 1943.

The relative consensus within Italy—in which the regime was accepted or at least not opposed by the great majority of the Italian people, while opposition activity was weak to nonexistent—continued into 1942, and only melted away during the final six months of the regime. The loss of support (or at least of relative acceptance) among most Italians stemmed above all from catastrophic military defeat abroad and enemy aerial bombardment at home, rather than from internal political mobilization. Like all major established dictatorships, the Italian regime was overthrown in that sense more from without than within, or at least from the effects of military defeat.

Before he turned to an aggressive military policy in 1935, Mussolini had enjoyed surprisingly good press abroad. Italian foreign policy had been active but relatively peaceful and in large measure acquiescent in the status quo. The Fascist regime was generally accepted not as something that was necessarily desirable for other countries but as something that was effective for Italians and which fit into the international community. It had the advantage of making trains run on time.

This attitude was fairly widespread in the United States as well, a country that many Italians—and many Fascists, including Mussolini—admired, at least up to a point. The attitude of Italian Fascists is captured very insightfully in "Impending Modernity: Fascism and the Ambivalent Image of the United States." Gentile shows the extent to which by the early 1930s the United States and its economy and culture had become a metaphor of modernity in Italy, all the more fascinating because Fascism insisted that one of its main goals was the modernization of Italy. As was typical of him on several key issues, Mussolini's own evaluation of the country that he called absurd, strange, unique in the world was ambivalent and contradictory. In 1933 very friendly relations were built with the new Roosevelt administration, whose incumbent was in turn quite interested in Mussolini.

Fascist commentary included considerable criticism of America, normally without originality and based on standard European stereotypes. The main opposition to the United States was not geostrategic or military—there were no points of contention between the two countries—but moralistic and cultural, because of the perceived danger of corruption by the materialism, mechanization, and hedonism of Americanism and its degraded popular culture. This attitude was not at all uniquely Fascist but common to much of the Italian and European intelligentsias as a whole. At the same time, what was admired was the American sense of patriotism, the orientation toward the future, abundant energy and activism, emphasis on youth and sports, adventurousness, and willingness to experiment—all qualities that Fascism in general sought to emulate in Italy. The negatives only clearly outweighed the positives in the Fascist evaluation with the coming of an adversarial relationship with America in World War

II. An understanding of Fascist attitudes toward the United States, Gentile concludes, is important in understanding the Fascist concept of modernity itself.

It has sometimes been observed that the study of fascism tends to neglect anti-fascism, and though similar criticism may be made of almost any body of scholarly literature, there is nonetheless some truth to this. Gentile has gone far to remedy this situation in his most recent major study, *Fascismo e antifascismo: I partiti italiani fra le due guerre* (Fascism and Anti-Fascism: Italian Parties Between the Two Wars, 2000). This is a unique work in the historiography of the fascist era, for it is the first study of any country to combine treatment of a ruling fascist party and the opposition parties at a high level of systematic scholarship. Gentile analyzes the nature of political parties after World War I, extends his own study of the PNF through the 1930s, and also treats the major anti-fascist parties with equivalent thoroughness. The book is enriched by numerous telling quotations in sidebars and even more by a massive hundred-page appendix containing a mine of information on the composition and leadership of all the parties, results of all the elections, and composition of the Fascist corporative parliaments. Such a wealth of material in one volume makes this an indispensable guide to the Italian parties of the interwar period.

Gentile's work has also included the study of Fascism within a broader context, particularly as the debate about the unity of Italy has expanded during the 1990s. A major contribution to this debate has been his volume *La grande Italia. Ascesa e declino di un mito nazionale nel ventesimo secolo* (Great Italy. The Rise and Fall of a National Myth in the Twentieth Century, 1997). This presents a broad examination of the rise of the myth of a grand Italy from the nineteenth century, its temporary incarnation in Fascist doctrine and policy, and its decline during the second half of the twentieth century. It is a significant contribution to the discussion of the nation and nationalism that has attracted growing attention from scholars in the final decade of the century.

De Felice and Gentile have thus raised the historiography of Italian Fascism to new heights, accompanied by the energetic efforts of other Italian historians, as well as that of scholars abroad. The importance of innovative, systematic, and politically dispassionate investigation would have seemed obvious to many, yet their labors have always encountered opposition on the left, where not a few seem to remain convinced that the important thing is to attack fascism politically and ideologically, rather than to try to study and understand it.

In his recent monumental thousand-page biography of *Mussolini* (1999), Pierre Milza has referred to the controversy that earlier surrounded the work of De Felice, and the manifold charges that he was merely rehabilitating fascism rather than condemning it. Milza noted that twenty-five years later, the original controversy seems surrealist, and that many of the major conclusions and interpretations of De Felice have passed into acceptance by mainstream historiography.

At the end of the century, the distinguished work of Emilio Gentile has also sometimes come under similar attack, most recently in the English-speaking world by the Australian Italianist R. J. B. Bosworth. In his historiographic study

The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism (1998), Bosworth takes Gentile to task for allegedly failing to demonstrate adequate anti-fascist zeal. Because Gentile's work, similar to that of De Felice, corrects the mistakes and exaggerations of politicized leftist historiography and journalism and maintains an appropriate level of political detachment for scholarly purposes, Bosworth has accused him of being a "neo-Rankean anti-anti-Fascist" who allegedly has defined "the historian's task as the simple one of a 'continuous acquisition' of facts." Gentile's work is further distorted by the charge that he has claimed "that the Italian 'people' had, to a considerable degree, become Fascist true believers."[2]

Such political diatribes remind one of classic Stalinist terminology, which generated pejorative categories such as as "socialfascism" for socialism and "archival fetishism" for data-based scholarship. Bosworth berates Gentile for treating the texts and documents of Fascism "very seriously," as if there were some other way for scholars to approach them, and finds it equally sinister that the so-called anti-anti-Fascists were also anticommunists—this latter apparently also a pejorative appellation. Equally troubling and subversive for Bosworth is what the latter perceives as "the curious alliance between the De Feliceans, and especially Emilio Gentile, and American cultural and intellectual historians," who constitute a faction supposedly sympathetic to fascism.[3]

These diatribes, laughable enough in themselves, would not merit mention if they did not reflect a mind-set still very common among left-wing scholars who seek to politicize scholarly activity, rely on the most dubious ad hominem arguments, and in the style of the best Stalinist propaganda establish arbitrary political categories to serve as scholarly interpretations rather than formulating the latter in professional and empirical terms. This is accompanied by a tendency to distort the research and conclusions of those with whom they disagree. The real problem is that the inventors of the so-called category of "anti-anti-Fascism" are themselves anti-intellectual. Bosworth, for example, tends to work on the foundation of an empirical database deliberately foreshortened by political diatribe.

Political denigration is of little danger to the work of Emilio Gentile, which rests on its own very substantial scholarly merit. It has accomplished more than that of any other living historian to illuminate the empirical history of Italian Fascism, to render understandable its political ideology and the multiple currents which formed it, to explore the relation of Fascism to modernity, to explain more concretely the role of the party and of its political cult and ceremony, and the character of and limitations of the radicalization of Fascism in its later years. Gentile has also been the first scholar to incorporate the investigation of historical anti-fascism into major work on Italian Fascism. His investigations not merely mark a new plateau in fascist studies, but more broadly illuminate the history of Italy in the first half of the twentieth century and are of equal importance to historians and social scientists. This volume of selected articles translated into English will serve to make his work more broadly known to the international scholarly community and also advance dialogue between Italian scholarship and

the English-speaking world. Research scholars and students alike will find it useful. Thanks are therefore also due to Praeger for its willingness to make these studies available to a broader audience. The scholarly-reading public of the early twenty-first century will be in their debt.

Stanley G. Payne

NOTES

1. In this introduction fascism will be used in the lower case to refer to generic fascism in general, and in upper to refer specifically to Italian Fascism.

2. R. J. B. Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (London: Arnold, 1998), 23, 21, 131.

3. Ibid., 23, 127.

Introduction: Italian Nationalism and Modernity

Italy had a number of regrettable political records in the twentieth century. It was the first European country, after World War I, where a mass militia-party of revolutionary nationalism achieved power and abolished parliamentary democracy while aiming at building a totalitarian State. It was also the first country in western Europe to institutionalize the sacralization of politics, and to celebrate officially the cult of the leader as a demigod. All this was not the result of accidental circumstances. Italian nationalism, dating from the beginning of the twentieth century, fostered one of the strongest movements of European right-wing radicalism.

At the turn of the century, Italy was questioning its destiny as a nation in an era of disturbing changes produced by modernization. Radical nationalism was the driving force of the political modernism that accompanied the dynamic of modernization in Italy. By *political modernism* I mean those ideologies and political movements that arose in connection with modernization and tried to make human beings capable of mastering the processes of modernization in order not to be overwhelmed by the vortex of modernity. The confrontation between nationalism and modernity is one of the main clues to understanding the permutations of Italian radical nationalism from modernist avant-gardes to the fascist regime. In Italy this confrontation gave birth to a new brand of radical nationalism, which includes varieties of cultural and political movements such as the group *La Voce*, futurism, and the Nationalist Association, that existed until the fascist totalitarian experiment.

This book analyzes the ideological undercurrents and cultural myths that unite all these movements, though they are not outright identical in ideas, organization, and politics. Before World War I these movements gave birth to a radical critique of parliamentary democracy, one in which alternative visions of the

myth of the nation, nationalism, and modernity were aligned in a common front against rationalist, liberal, and bourgeois modernity. In this book, fascism is regarded as a manifestation of political modernism and as a new permutation of Italian nationalism.

I would like to explain the definition of the nation as a myth and the use of the term *nationalism*. By *myth*, I mean a set of beliefs and ideas, ideals and values, which are condensed in a symbolic image that is capable of mobilizing the individual as well as the masses because it stirs up faith, enthusiasm, and action.

The nation as myth is a symbolic construction and mainly the creation of intellectuals. However, to say this is not to deny the existence of the nation as a human entity, even if all scholars do not agree about the elements necessary to define this entity, which is characterized by objective historical, ethnic, and cultural features. It is possible, as some scholars argue, that a nation is only an intellectual invention, bereft of any objective reality. But even those who deny the existence of a nation cannot deny the existence of the myth of the nation, which has powerful influence over human reality. In this sense, it is not contradictory to maintain that the nation is a reality because it is a myth. Even if one denies the existence of the nation, one cannot deny the existence of nationalism as one of the most powerful forces that has helped to shape the modern world and which today continues to posses extraordinary and alarming vitality.

By *nationalism* I mean any cultural and political movement that bases itself on the myth of the nation and that aims to affirm the superiority of the nation. In this case, *nation* means that collective entity that takes form in the organization of a national State. In this context the term *nation-State* refers not only to an institution that governs a given territory but also includes those sentiments, myths, and ideas that give the State and the Nation a fundamental value in the collective civic conscience and that identifies patriotism with loyalty to the nation-State. Nationalism, as with national patriotism, is essentially a modern phenomenon whose main goal is to integrate the masses into a nation-State, which is deemed to be the highest form of organization in the modern world.

I would like to point out also that in my definition, the idea of nationalism is not conditioned by a positive or negative evaluation. I do not believe that it is theoretically valid to make a distinction between "evil" nationalism and "good" nationalism as expressions of two genetically different phenomena. In my view, nationalism can be either good or evil depending on the historical circumstances in which it develops and above all depending upon the ideologies with which it is mixed, for example liberalism, socialism, authoritarianism, racism, totalitarianism, and so on.[1]

Italian nationalism in the twentieth century provides many elements that verify the validity of this opinion. For example, from a common concept of the nation, varieties of nationalism have evolved that have offered contrasting and opposing solutions to the problem of national identity and the relationship between the citizen and the nation-State. I mention just one example, but a very significant one. Two prestigious Italian intellectuals of this century, Benedetto

Croce and Giovanni Gentile, were both imbued with the liberal nationalism of the Risorgimento and shared the concept of the nation as a spiritual entity, dependent on self-determination and the will of the people. Nevertheless, from the same concept of the nation, they formed two opposing ideologies in regard to the relationship between the individual and the nation-State: Gentile was to become the proponent of a totalitarian State while Croce was to become the defender of a liberal State.

For almost a century, from the unification of Italy up to the early years of the Italian republic, the public education of the Italian population was inspired by the national myth. Patriotism was seen as loyalty to the nation-State; it was the civil ethic of the citizen. Philosophy, historiography, literature, and the arts were all inspired and conditioned by nationalism. Historians, political scientists, philosophers, musicians, painters, poets, and novelists as well as politicians felt it was their duty to promote national consciousness.

For all the afore-mentioned reasons, the Italian case may result in being particularly interesting regarding the evolution of nationalism and the attitudes of intellectuals toward the myth of the nation and the nation-State. As a matter of fact, since the period of the Risorgimento and for the greater part of the 1900s, Italy was one of the most active laboratories for modern nationalism. Various generations of Italian intellectuals, mixing the national myth with different ideologies, produced a wide range of definitions for nationalism corresponding to the types of nationalism that greatly influenced humanity's destiny during the twentieth century.

The originating nucleus of Italian nationalism arose at the beginning of the 1800s owing to the influence of the French Revolution. During the Risorgimento, the nationalist movement was the product of a small number of intellectuals who wanted to modernize Italian society, after centuries of backwardness and servitude, to promote the national awakening of the Italian people and to bring a united and independent Italy to the same level as more advanced European nation-States. These intellectuals looked to France and England as models and exemplars of political and cultural modernity.

Political freedom was considered an essential condition for arousing national consciousness in Italians, who for over fourteen hundred years, that is to say since the fall of the Roman Empire, had been living in a variety of states. Thus, political freedom was considered necessary to make Italy a nation of self-conscious citizens who were masters of their own destiny. Risorgimento nationalism, which was the ideology of the new Italian State, while extolling the emancipatory role of the nation-State, asserted that individual freedom and equality of rights guaranteed by the law were the basic foundations for modern citizenship.

The blending of the idea of the nation and the universal human ideals of liberty was the core of Italian nationalism from the Risorgimento to fascism. The first intellectuals to develop the myth of Italian nationalism, even if they had differing ideologies (for example, Mazzini and Cavour) shared a common ideal of man's dignity as a rational and a free individual person. In their opinion, this

ideal could be realized only within a national State, which had to be independent and sovereign. Cavour, one of the founding fathers of the Italian State, affirmed that no population can reach a high level of self-consciousness, intelligence, and morality if it has not first strongly developed the feeling of its own nationality: "a people which cannot feel proud of its nationality, will surely not have even the feeling of personal dignity, which is the basis for morality and modern civilization."[2] The myth of regeneration inspired Italian nationalism, which, in all its manifestations, assigned a palingenetic function to both culture and politics as important means to realize a national revolution.

As with all forms of cultural nationalism, liberal nationalism also thrived on the myth of greatness but this myth was formulated in terms of cultural and spiritual *primato* rather than in terms of power and the conquering of new territories. The new greatness of a united Italian nation was considered compatible with the vision of humanity as a family of free nations, bound to one another by the ties of brotherhood. Each nation, indeed, had its own preeminence and a mission to carry out in the common progress of humankind. The principle of freedom, according to Risorgimento nationalism, also had to regulate relations between nations in the international community. Not even the greatness of one's nation, stated Mazzini, could demand the occupation and the humiliation of other nations. The creation of the Italian national State was closely related to the affirmation of liberty and independence for all nations on the basis of self-determination. Pasquale Stanislao Mancini, a jurist and later minister, was the first theoretician of the principle of nationality, asserting the right of each nation to have an independent and sovereign State. A nation, according to the concepts of liberal nationalism, is not conceived as a predator that longs to conquer and subject other nations.[3]

The voluntary and spiritual elements were mainly concerned with this concept of the nation; they were the main factor that united all the other factors composing a nation, that is to say language, traditions, customs, religion, and territory. On the contrary, race and ethnicity were not considered decisive elements. Nationality did not depend upon race but was the result of a historical process. The nation was a spiritual creation that reached its highest point with the affirmation of national sovereignty and the organization of the country into one independent State, based upon the free will of the citizens.

This type of humanistic nationalism inspired the leaders and supporters of the national revolution in Italy and the political ruling class of the liberal State. The founding fathers of the Italian State aimed at building a nation-State that would be a common homeland for all Italians without religious, ethnic, or social discrimination. Obviously, this dealt with an ideal that would not obtain an immediate and complete realization in the actual life of the Italian State. The myth of the nation, patriotism, and loyalty to the nation-State remained for a long period the patrimony of a limited numbers of Italians. Nevertheless, in spite of their at times authoritarian policies, the liberal political ruling classes promoted national consciousness without repudiating their allegiance to the ideals of liberty. In

spite of its oligarchic origins, the liberal State also provided its major enemies, such as the Catholics and the socialists, with the conditions to freely organize and grow and develop as political movements and later to become, after the Great War, the dominant parties in the political arena. Even Gaetano Salvemini, although a socialist, a federalist, and a severe critic of the political ruling classes, acknowledged that during the first 50 years after unification Italy had been a democracy in the making.[4]

This liberal nationalism faced a crisis on the eve of the Great War because of the influence of imperialism and also because of the consequences of deep social and political changes such as industrialization and mass mobilization. The intellectuals who aimed at rejuvenating the tradition of Risorgimento nationalism tried to deal with these phenomena by renewing their faith in liberty and rationality as factors necessary for the modernization of Italy. However, these very phenomena had a decisive role in hindering the progress of liberal nationalism and paved the way for the birth of fascism.

The conquest of Libya in 1912, the intervention in the First World War, and the crisis of the Liberal State following the war are the main events that decisively contributed to the decline of liberal nationalism and gave birth to new types of nationalism. The decade from 1912 to 1922 is particularly important in the evolution of Italian nationalism. In order to highlight the importance of this decade, we must keep in mind that the majority of the political movements in the Italian political arena, almost up to the 1990s, originated precisely between 1912 and 1922. All of these movements, in one way or another, had to confront the "national question" in order to define their policies. We must also remember that in the decade from 1912 to 1922 a radicalization of political struggle took place, which deeply divided Italians and seriously split the foundations of a common national conscience. The political antagonism between those Italians who had different ideologies erupted during this decade into a civil war between interventionist and neutralists at the time of the Great War and later on between fascists and anti-fascists.

Young intellectuals played a key role in developing new forms of radical nationalism, that is, they substituted the myth of expansionism and the grandeur of the nation for the ideal of liberty and the principle of nationality. An aggressive nationalism spread, in particular among the young militants involved in avant-garde movements, for example, Futurism and the intellectuals who contributed to the Associazione Nazionalista Italiana (the Italian Nationalist Association, ANI), a nationalist political movement founded in 1910. The belief in the myth of a Greater Italy that had to become a protagonist in the modern civilization of the twentieth century inflamed these movements. In order to achieve this goal, they proclaimed that a cultural revolution was necessary to obtain the regeneration of the Italians and the creation of a "New State" and a "New Man."

This myth became the dominant cause of what I have called "modernist nationalism." With this term, I am not referring to a specific cultural or political movement, but to a common state of mind, to an attitude toward life and moder-

nity. Modernist nationalism was the product of the myth of a Greater Italy and of the enthusiasm for modernity. These nationalists perceived modernity as an epoch of social and technical transformations dominated by the struggle between nations for the conquest of world supremacy. Modernist nationalism was essentially the expression of a generational revolt. It reflected the aspirations of the young intellectuals who belonged to the middle class and who wanted to have a major role as protagonist in national politics and in the governing of the country during a period in which the rise of the organized working classes on the one hand and the mobilization of the Catholics on the other called into question the myth of the nation and the nation-State.

For many modernist intellectuals, liberal nationalism seemed outdated. They advocated a radical transformation of the existing State in order to build a new State capable of nationalizing the masses and carrying out the task of creating a Greater Italy. However, the political projects of those modernist intellectuals were confusing and contradictory. The case of futurism is typical. While extolling the primacy of the nation and imperialism, futurism claimed to be individualistic, libertarian, and cosmopolitan, while mixing the idea of a militaristic nation-State with the ideal of an individualistic society. Among the intellectuals of *La Voce* was the dominating aim to reconcile nationalism with cosmopolitanism and individual liberty with the authority of the national State. When D'Annunzio became a political leader after the Great War, he developed a plan for a new State inspired by libertarian syndicalism.

Actually, the only plan for an authoritarian State was elaborated by the Nationalist Association, a movement of imperialist intellectuals who rejected, on principle, Risorgimento nationalism and claimed that liberal democracy was incompatible with modernity and the need for expansionism. They held the ideals of a *Stato forte* (a strong State) and idolized the nation. At the root of this imperialistic nationalism was the belief that humans were like predators. Their concept of the nation was similar to that of racism, conceiving of the nation as a primordial, natural organism independent of the will of the individual, and living with other nations in constant struggle, regulated by the law of the strongest. Those imperialistic intellectuals were convinced that modernity required new forms of authoritarianism for the masses and they looked to Germany and Japan, instead of France and England, as models and exemplars of authoritarian modernity.

The Great War created the conditions for new ideological syntheses regarding the myth of the nation. The most important of these was a new type of revolutionary nationalism, stemming from the fusion of the myth of the nation with the myth of the revolution through interventionism and the war experience. One important example of this fusion was the conversion of socialist revolutionary Mussolini, and of many revolutionary syndicalists, to nationalism. This conversion occurred without them ever abandoning their belief in the myth of the revolution as a radical transformation of the existing State and society. They

elaborated the concept of a revolution as a process of national palingenesis, which was to radically innovate not only the political and social order, but also the character of the Italians, in order to create a New Man. They believed that taking part in the war would mark the beginning of a new Italian revolution for the transformation of the Liberal State, the creation of a New State, and the regeneration of the Italian nation. A large number of these national revolutionaries, repudiating their socialist and internationalist militancy during the Great War, joined the fascist movement and participated in elaborating its totalitarian ideology. Fascism enjoyed a great consensus among intellectuals and mainly among modernist intellectuals and artists who not only adhered to fascism but also actively contributed to elaborating its cultural politics. In fascism, modernist intellectuals, such as the futurists, saw a weapon for realizing the cultural revolution they dreamed of in order to regenerate the nation and to create a new Italian civilization.

Even though fascism had descended from various nationalistic currents, and mainly from modernist nationalism, it was a new ideological movement originating from a fusion between the myth of the national revolution and the myth of the war experience. The main novelty that characterized fascist nationalism was totalitarianism, the identification of fascism with the nation, the militarization of the nation-State, the sacralization of politics, the mobilization of intellectuals, and the plan for what I have defined as an "anthropological revolution," which aimed at regenerating the "character of the Italians" and creating a new Italian race.

Fascists also maintained the necessity to subjugate other countries in order to promote Italy's expansion as a great power and to create a new civilization based on the principles and institutions of fascist totalitarianism.

Fascism gave the most powerful impetus to what I have called the ideologization of the nation—the process of an ideological monopolization of the myth of the nation and the nation-State. Ideologization of the nation is the tendency of a political movement to identify the concept of the nation with its own ideology while considering those who oppose this ideology enemies of the nation even if they sustain national patriotism. From its very beginning fascism demanded a monopoly of the national myth and to be the sole legitimate movement to represent the nation, that is, the only party entitled to rule the country and to bring the nation-State under control. Any other movement, which did not subject itself to fascism and did not adhere to its myths, values, and norms was considered an enemy of the nation. In this way, the liberal nationalist ideal of the nation-State as a homeland for all Italians without ideological, religious, or ethnic discrimination was rejected and replaced by the ideal of a totalitarian State, a State, in other words, where only those who were fascist were considered true Italians and could be granted complete citizenship. Those who did not swear allegiance to the fascist State ceased to be a part of the Italian nation. They were treated as traitors of the nation and banned from public life.

The model of the new Italian that the fascist party was trying to create was not a citizen who wanted to enhance their national consciousness through the means of an educational process that aimed at the formation of a rational and knowing individual. Instead, the fascist citizen was bred in mass conformity through the means of dogmatic indoctrination and the use of military discipline. In order to create this type of so-called soldier-citizen, fascism wanted to achieve a complete anthropological revolution, which was to change the character of the Italians. The fascist myth of regenerating the nation paved the way to racism and anti-Semitism. Important steps of this anthropological revolution were campaigns aimed at reforming customs, anti-bourgeois struggle, and above all accepting racism and anti-Semitism as ideologies of the State.

Fascist nationalism also gave a powerful impulse to the sacralization of politics. Fascism was a political religion and it idolized the State as well as the fatherland. Each citizen had no other goal in their life except that of dedicating themself body and soul to the fatherland. The fascist citizen had to obey blindly the commandments of the Fascist religion, loyally identifying with the Duce, the charismatic leader who embodied the nation and thus was venerated as a demigod.

Fascism pointed to totalitarianism as the only modern formula for building a new mass civilization able to face and overcome the challenges of modernity. Through totalitarianism, fascism believed it could revise modernity, destroying its perverse tendencies and taming its positive strengths in order to place them at the service of the nation. Fascists perceived the totalitarian State as the new order capable of solving the economic, social, and spiritual problems of the masses and the State in modern society, of reconciling order and change and of achieving a dynamic synthesis between tradition and modernity. In the totalitarian State men and women, who had been brought up in the ethics of sacrifice and dedication to the national community, were to be sheltered from the corrupting temptations of hedonistic materialism and from the nervousness and alienation of modern life.

However, by subjecting the nation to the myth of the totalitarian State, fascism actually contributed to the decay of feelings in the collective conscience of the Italians of national identity and loyalty to the nation-State. The decline of national patriotism almost started unknowingly during fascism and through the means of fascism, from the moment the fascist party conquered the monopoly on patriotism, identifying "Italian-ness" with its own ideology and claiming to make the nation an instrument of obtaining the ambitions of a totalitarian party. Eventually, totalitarian nationalism discredited patriotism and the authority of the nation-State in the souls of the Italians, transforming Italy into a despotic and arbitrary party-State.

Many intellectuals who had been brought up believing in patriotism and loyalty to one's nation in all circumstances, especially during a war, no longer felt the duty of allegiance to the nation-State in reaction to the fascist dictatorship and they wished the defeat of their own country in hopes of ridding themselves of fascism.

NOTES

1. I have developed this argument in E. Gentile, *La Grande Italia. Ascesa e declino del mito della nazione nel ventesimo secolo* (Milano: Mondadori, 1997).

2. C. Benso di Cavour, *Le strade ferrate in Italia,* edited by A. Salvestrini (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1976), 69.

3. P. S. Mancini, *Saggi sulla nazionalità,* edited by F. Lopez de Onate (Roma: Sestante, 1944).

4. G. Salvemini, *Le origini del fascismo in Italia. Lezioni di Harvard,* edited by R.Vivarelli (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1979), 60–73.

Chapter 1

The Struggle for Modernity: Echoes of the Dreyfus Affair in Italian Political Culture, 1898–1912

During the last two years of the nineteenth century, Italy underwent a serious economic, social and political crisis, which seemed to threaten the existence and progress of a liberal democracy in the making. In spring 1898, while Italian public opinion was deeply immersed in the Dreyfus affair, the government used military force to suppress widespread popular protest which culminated in violent rioting, during which more than a hundred demonstrators died. Politicians and journalists—both extreme left-wing democrats and right-wing Catholics—who were considered to have instigated the agitation, were arrested and given severe sentences. The Conservatives thought that in this way they would halt the progress of democracy, in order to defend the state from the potential danger of a socialist revolution and a reaction from the Church. In 1899, the government, led by General Luigi Pelloux, a member of the liberal left, tried to introduce reforms to limit constitutional liberties in the name of the Reason of State, but the parliamentary opposition of socialists, radicals and left-wing liberals caused his plans for the restoration of an authoritarian régime to fail.

At the very beginning of the twentieth century, Italy renewed its march towards democracy, while in France the victory of Dreyfus's supporters ushered in an era of radical government. In Italy, also, a new period of liberal politics began, characterized by the parliamentary hegemony of Giovanni Giolitti, who was head of government, with only short breaks, from 1903 to 1914. The so-called 'Giolitti era' represented an epoch of economic progress, civil modernization, cultural renewal and democratic reforms that favoured the ascent of the popular classes and the formation of a modern and productive bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, to many contemporaries and especially to the young, Giolitti's long parliamentary supremacy was a reflection of political corruption, a crisis of state, a weakening of the nation and serious moral decay of individual and collective conscience.[1]

Giolitti's policy gave rise in Italian political culture, on both the right and the left, to sentimental and ideological reactions very similar to those produced by the French radical government's policy during the same period among Dreyfus supporters such as Georges Sorel, Daniel Halevy and Charles Péguy. Like these French intellectuals, the young Italian intellectual of the Florentine avant-garde deemed necessary the regeneration of national politics through a spiritual revolution which would give to the individual and to the masses a religious national conscience based upon the dignity and liberty of citizens brought up to worship the nation as well as humanity.

What I have briefly highlighted is the historical background to an investigation into the echoes of the Dreyfus case and its effects on Italian political culture. Events in Italy influenced the way in which the Dreyfus case and the so-called 'Dreyfusard Revolution' were perceived by Italian intellectuals, while events in France influenced the way in which some sectors of Italian political culture interpreted the crisis at the end of the century, and the clash between authoritarian conservatism and democratic liberalism.[2] The French situation and the Italian situation were regarded as very similar: in both cases there was a conflict between reactionary and democratic forces; a duel between the champions of the Reason of State and those of the Rights of Man. Actually, the crisis in the two nations had little in common, but the tendency to look for analogies inspired most comments on the Dreyfus case.[3]

My investigation concerns those sectors of political culture that recognized in the French Revolution the beginning of a civil and political humanism, considered the very essence of modernity. As we shall see, the myth of modernity was the main theme that, either directly or indirectly, was at the centre of the considerations of Italian political culture regarding the Dreyfus case. The French crisis was interpreted as a global conflict between opposing concepts of man and politics, a conflict in which were at stake not only one man's fate but also the destiny of humanity during a period of rapid changes that were threatening to shatter the pillars of traditional society, dragged through the vortex of modernity.

For many Italian intellectuals, France was a laboratory of political experiences which reflected or anticipated the tendencies and processes of modern civilization. From this perspective, the Dreyfus Affair was considered an event destined to influence all aspects of European life.[4] The pacifist and democratic magazine, *La Vita internazionale*, edited by the Nobel Peace Prize winner Teodoro Moneta, commented in 1899 that 'by studying the Dreyfus case, one can study the spirit of our times and its essential problems'.[5] It is necessary to point out that this was mainly the viewpoint of intellectuals and politicians among left-wing liberals and democrats who considered the Dreyfus case a great challenge to all democratic nations and a struggle for modernity against reaction and militarism. Other supporters of the Dreyfus cause, such as the conservative Florentine magazine, *Nuova Antologia*, held quite a different view, and requested Italians not to interfere in internal French affairs.[6]

This tendency to confine the Dreyfus Affair to France prevailed among the Italian 'anti-Dreyfusards'. According to sociologist Mario Morasso, one of the main ideologists of the dawning imperialistic Italian nationalism, the reasons for justice and truth invoked by the supporters of Dreyfus were merely an excuse for 'the worst members of society, who were plotting to destroy the classes representing authority and national strength'.[7]

The theory regarding the existence of a 'Dreyfusard conspiracy' was most radically formulated in the Jesuits' journal, *La Civiltà Cattolica*.[8] This journal stated that the Dreyfus case was a plot devised by the 'Jewish race'. According to this anti-Semitic theory, the protest against what the Catholic journal defined as a 'legitimate sentence' condemning Captain Dreyfus as traitor was actually the plot of an 'obscure power' that had thrown France into upheaval in order to humiliate the guardians of the nation. In this way, the Dreyfus case was interpreted as part of 'an important conspiracy against Catholic and French interests' devised by the Jewish plutocracy together with Freemasons, Protestants, socialists and anarchists. The Jesuits' journal attributed to the 'Hebrews' the ambition of wanting to dominate the world. Their political and financial omnipotence, wrote the journal, had already conquered France, thus transforming Paris into a 'citadel of international Judaism'. And the blame for all of this, the journal added, lay with France, because the Revolution had liberated the Jews, thus opening up for them the roads to power. To counter the conspiracy, *La Civiltà cattolica* suggested that all the states ought to come to an agreement to establish a fundamental law that would consider the Jews as foreigners and thus treat them as guests and not as citizens.

This extreme anti-Semitic reaction of the Catholic journal was, however, not an isolated case in the echoes of the Dreyfus Affair in Italy. It must not be forgotten that before 1898 even the Socialists had believed that Dreyfus was a traitor. The socialist newspaper, *Avanti!* had swallowed the theory that the Dreyfus Affair was the result of a plot hatched by rich French Jews. But this opinion changed with Zola's letter and when Jaurès took an active part in the campaign for a new trial.[9] For Italian socialists as well as liberals, radicals and republicans, the Dreyfus Affair became an issue of truth and justice that concerned not only France, but all of humanity.

From the beginning of 1898, the Dreyfusard campaign in Italy for a new trial took on a symbolic aspect, representing a battle for modern civilization against the forces of reaction, such as clericalism, militarism, authoritarianism and chauvinism, that were trying to halt the progress of humanism and democracy.[10] Therefore, according to Italian Dreyfusards, the Dreyfus case inevitably went beyond the borders of France. *La Vita internazionale* claimed that

> . . . the case has lost its transient characteristics of time and place, to take on the importance of a human matter of the greatest consequence for humanity. The Dreyfus problem as it is presented today to the public conscience is crucial for the future of our civilization: it really features among the chief issues of present-day history.[11]

The consequence of this interpretation was the transformation of the Dreyfus case into an ideological drama in which the main characters were not made of flesh and bones, but were conflicting concepts of man and politics. Beyond the newspaper accounts covering the new trial of Alfred Dreyfus at Rennes, there was an inclination in Italian political culture to turn the trial into a symbolic drama. Under the name of Dreyfus, wrote *La Vita internazionale*

> . . . the most varied tendencies of our time have found themselves gathered together in order to struggle among themselves, and are represented by different types of human beings, who at the same time are profoundly expressive symbols and a living reality.[12]

Consequently, the human beings involved in the affair were transmuted into symbolic champions of a duel to the death, in which was at stake not only the destiny of one individual but the future of mankind. There were those who affirmed that this transmutation was necessary in order 'to gather from all these transient figures as many symbols of the historic period we are living through'.[13] In the Dreyfusards' representation the main characters of the drama, more than Dreyfus himself, were 'the men of thought and education' who had abandoned the serenity of meditation and by throwing themselves into the conflict had challenged the fury of the mob imbued with anti-Semitic hate, chauvinism and superstitious devotion to the army as the sole sacred guardian of the nation. Zola, wrote *Il Marzocco,* an influential cultural magazine, was a 'real hero of modernity'[14] and an example for forthcoming generations because he did not hesitate to put his fame and fortune at risk to fight against the racial prejudices and fanaticism of the masses. The confrontation between the rationality of the individual and the irrationality of the crowd was a very important part of the drama.[15]

The inclination to transform the Dreyfus case into a symbol dehumanized Captain Dreyfus himself. The Dreyfus case, remarked Ermanno Jarach, a radical democratic lawyer who later joined the fascist movement, had become 'the greatest drama of the century' in which

> . . . the wretched figure of the convict seems to disappear from the stage on which a narrow-minded and blind spirit of caste, the cowardice of the ruling class, the ignorance and the irresponsibility of the masses are fighting against the noble boldness of those who defend the principle of truth and justice by condemning all prejudices, falsehood and all violence.[16]

The figure of the condemned man lost its human essence to become a symbolic sacrificial victim. Dreyfus, wrote one of his supporters, was 'only one of those victims humanity has had need of, from time to time, in order to take a decisive step towards civilization and without these victims that step could not be taken'.[17] Therefore, it mattered little by now if Alfred Dreyfus were considered guilty or innocent: 'The fate of one man is nothing when compared to the destiny of mankind. What matters, for everyone's good, is to win another battle for liberty.'[18]

In most comments, the dramatization of the case often took precedence over any realistic and rational analysis of the event and the French crisis. However, this was due not only to the theatrical aspect which the Dreyfus case had assumed in popular representation, but also to the ideological interpretation given to it by Italian political culture. Beyond the facts and the real people, there were principles, values and ideals involved. Besides, the tragedy of an individual unfairly condemned had taken on an 'epic worldwide dimension', precisely because it posed a question that 'deeply interests all the world: do institutions serve man or does man serve institutions?'.[19] In fact, in the conflict between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards, beyond the rhetorical emphasis on the symbolic dramatization of the affair, the fundamental issues of political modernity were at stake: the confrontation between liberty and authority, between man's rights and the Reason of State, between the individual and the masses, between nationalism and humanism. It is this confrontation evoked by the Dreyfus case which makes it appear as a 'tremendous historic crisis', in which everyone was involved.[20] As a result, the rhetorical dramatization was animated by a real feeling of anguish, by the fear of a mortal danger that hovered over the destiny of democracy and modern civilization.

> The conflict that will be fought in Rennes is a conflict between the old man and the new man; it is the struggle of ancient regimes founded on authoritarianism and tyranny, which have sought shelter in the strength of the army, while in the past they sought shelter in churches and convents—against the very new spirit of human dignity that no longer tolerates the annihilation of the individual due to social ranking, and claims justice for all common people and powerful age-old institutions.[21]

For most Italian commentators, the fact that the Dreyfus case had exploded in France helped strengthen the perception of the extreme seriousness of the ideological war that had transformed the protests against the judicial error and the campaign for revision into a battle for modern civilization. 'The fierce battle', wrote the republican sociologist Napoleone Colajanni, 'had exploded in France because France was the first important modern nation to march with long strides towards democracy'.[22] In order to explain the origin of the Dreyfus Affair, there were some who fell back upon the theory of a conspiracy. According to *La Vita internazionale*, the anti-Semitic campaign had been organized by a 'band of reactionary and clerical crooks' led by Drumont and Rochefort in order to set up a military dictatorship and take advantage of 'the hungry and ravishing anti-semitism of the mindless masses' who would hurl themselves 'like a ferocious beast against the Hebrews and Dreyfus's supporters'.[23] Many Italian commentators considered anti-Semitism one of the main reasons for the Dreyfus Affair.[24] The revolutionary syndicalist Arturo Labriola, who was living in France during the Affair, spoke about an anti-Semitic conspiracy and judged the anti-Dreyfus campaign to be a 'cunning expedient designed by the Catholics' to get rid of those who traditionally represented the enemies of the Roman Catholic Church,

thus inciting the crowd imbued with anti-Semitic prejudices against the Jews, going from 'the thought of antisemitism' to 'antisemitism in action'.[25] The anti-Dreyfusards had succeeded in rousing the masses, because, as Labriola explained, all French society was permeated with anti-Semitism; the most tragic aspect of the Rennes sentence was not its content, but the fact that it had been approved and hailed by 'a remarkable part of the French nation'.

Although most Italian commentators denounced the rebirth of anti-Semitism in France as an aberration from the path to modernity, there was no investigation into the nature of anti-Semitism, and some of the commentators were not immune to anti-Semitic stereotypes. In fact, some observers went further in their analysis of the origins of the anti-Dreyfus campaign and its success with the masses by looking for other reasons. Besides anti-Semitism, there were also widespread anti-capitalistic prejudices that identified capitalism with the Jewish financial world; there was the tarnished national pride hurt by the 1870 defeat, there was a 'blind and jealous' patriotism, as Moneta defined it,[26] and above all, there was the degeneration of politics due to militarism and reactionary authoritarianism, that had perverted the conscience of the majority of the French, taking advantage of nationalistic rhetoric, anti-Semitic propaganda and the veneration of the army as the symbolic incarnation of the nation.[27]

Therefore, the myth of France as the mother and homeland of modern civilization began to waver among Italian democrats. Many spoke about the decline of France, about the degeneration of political conscience of the French, that, possessed by anti-Semitic rage and by chauvinism, seemed to be ready to deny the principles of liberty, truth and justice, thus repudiating the revolutionary tradition of the modern French nation. The socialist journal *Critica sociale* affirmed at the beginning of 1898:

> The collective epilepsy of our neighbours has done nothing but increase with the inevitable continuation of raving madness. The mother of all revolutions has bowed down to military uniforms, intoxicated with the idea of the inquisition, affected by the idiocy of antisemitism, falling backwards towards Napoleonism, towards brutal violence. The revolutionary idealism of the French is dead.[28]

In Rennes, echoed the writer Giuseppe Gargano,

> . . . France has covered itself with infamy and disgrace. I have sadly watched during these days the fading-away of the conscience of a nation. I have been a witness, with a tormented spirit, to the perversion of each ideal of justice in her enormous heart that once had palpitated passionately and I asked myself if this was the end, the shameful end of a nation that had lived to spread the most noble and the most innovative and daring ideas all over the world.[29]

In one of the best analyses of the French crisis, Guglielmo Ferrero pointed out that the Dreyfus Affair was the climax of 'an immense spiritual movement that for fifteen years has tried to take France back to the *ancien régime*, and has suc-

ceeded in perverting the moral conscience of the French'.[30] That 'unforgettable horror that will go down through the centuries as the Dreyfus case', Ferrero affirmed, was the most serious symptom of 'an immense national disease'. It was the result of a slow and deep intellectual, moral and economic decay that tormented the French middle class and made it the easy prey of military, chauvinistic, anti-democratic and anti-Semitic propaganda with 'its coarse superstitions soaked in frenzy and fanaticism' that stirred up the irrationality of the masses. Ferrero enumerated the causes of the French disease, which was at the same time both the cause and symptom of the degeneration of politics that threatened all the European nations, a degeneration Ferrero attributed to what I define briefly as *the fear of modernity*. He wrote:

> The fear of espionage and treason, the admiration of the army and its chiefs, the contempt for parliamentary institutions, the hatred of financial capitalism that were said to protect Dreyfus, and nationalistic fanaticism, have turned a small judiciary matter into a terrible chasm, into which everything threatens to collapse.

The present scandal, Ferrero explained, 'is nothing but a short-lived prelude to a social conflict, whose outcome it is difficult to predict' because 'it is the most serious sign to appear up to now of a political, intellectual and social decline which one must hope France finds in herself the powerful energy to combat'.

In fact, the Italian sociologist did not have much faith in the regeneration of France, because the perversion of the French conscience, he believed, had deep roots. It had its origins in the social and cultural crisis of the French middle classes, who were prepared neither 'in education nor in culture to grasp the important phenomena of modern life', because they lacked 'a superior knowledge with which they could have been aware of the complex realities of contemporary history'. This, continued Ferrero, had led the French people to believe in 'absurd concepts regarding society and life' such as anti-Semitism, and to look for answers to problems concerning modernity in 'gross explanations that stirred the imagination and very brutal feelings', such as the myth of Jewish international capitalism whose aim was world dominion, explanations that were furnished with 'a social and political philosophy made up of bits from all the great theories of the century mixed and kneaded with feelings of persecution and hate'. In Ferrero's opinion, the most serious sign of the French disease and the threat of its contagion spreading throughout all Europe, was precisely 'the collective belief in this type of fairytale' that had pushed the French into 'admiration of despotism and dictatorship'. Ferrero concluded: 'Actually, the anti-Dreyfusard propaganda, under the guise of a crusade in the name of the defence of the nation and against the crimes of capitalism and the tyranny of gold', aimed at a wider and more ambitious objective:

> To fight against modern civilization and everything in French society that is the heritage of the Revolution; to fight against the spirit of international solidarity, religious tolerance,

intellectual, political and economic liberty, parliamentary institutions, science and philosophical thought free from any religious tie.

For the Italian democratic conscience, the Dreyfus case was a real nightmare. The fact that reactionary forces appeared so powerful in the homeland of modern democracy, where they had succeeded in mobilizing the masses with anti-Semitic hate and nationalistic fanaticism, had turned the nightmare into a dangerous threat. The attempts at authoritarian reaction that were being made in Italy during the same period confirmed the seriousness of the danger and the European dimension of the reactionary onslaught on modernity.[31] Modern civilization now found itself at a decisive point. The Dreyfus case had given the reactionary forces the opportunity to make a final assault against modernity. It was not by chance that the forces of anti-modernity had decided to attack democracy and human rights in the home of the French Revolution: their victory in the homeland of modern democracy would have marked the decline of democracy and human rights all over Europe and for all humanity. The Italian democrats were certain that the victory of anti-Dreyfusards in France would have meant 'the ruin of the great French Revolution, of which we are all children'; it would have been 'the destruction of the whole complex of institutions and ideas that the French Revolution had spread in almost all of Europe';[32] in brief, it would have been the liquidation of modernity, since modernity meant the French Revolution and its heritage, the Rights of Man, and the progress of reason, liberty and democracy. Dreyfus supporters in France and the opponents of authoritarian politics in Italy were fighting a common struggle for modernity.

Italian democrats tried to learn from the French experience in order to overcome the Italian crisis. They believed that the cause of these crisis was the state's claim to subject justice to its will and to tread upon human rights in the name of the nation. And this claim was a permanent threat to the progress of democracy. The supremacy of the Reason of State showed itself in a modern form composed of 'terrorist patriotism and antisemitism',[33] which contributed to the degeneration of politics and to the corruption of the moral conscience of the masses. In a modern civilization, affirmed *La Vita internazionale*, the state had

> . . . to limit its actions to the fulfilment of its duty, the oldest and most elementary, which is to administer justice and guarantee the rights of each individual. In fact, the basic mission of the state was solely that of enforcing and securing the protection of rights, thus eliminating from the administration of justice the influence of its arch enemy: politics.[34]

As far as the confrontation between the individual and the state was concerned, the Italian Dreyfusards were not in favour of whatever nationalism valued the importance of the nation in terms of territorial conquests, and demanded the sacrifice of the life and rights of the individual to it. As pointed out by the liberal Edoardo Giretti, the ideal of 'true and holy patriotism' had to have as its main aim 'to re-establish the correct and normal functioning of corrupted civic insti-

tutions'.[35] Even the pacifist Moneta defended the 'cult of the nation', but only if patriotism were neither an 'offence against citizens' rights, nor an obstacle towards progress'.[36] This democratic nationalism considered it possible to reconcile the rights of man and the interests of nation, nationalism and civic humanism, provided that 'the national conscience was not in opposition to the universal conscience, but interpreted and enforced it'.

From the victory of the Dreyfusards and the triumph of the radical republic in France, the Italian democrats drew a glimmer of hope for the regeneration of politics and the progress of modern civilization, while Italy was back on the road towards democracy. The heterogeneous forces—liberals, radicals and socialists—that had joined together to defend human rights and parliamentary democracy, now wanted to regain their own political individuality and to continue the struggle for the progress of modern civilization, according to their different concepts of political modernity. From the abstract symbolism of the battle of principles embodied in the Dreyfus case, those parties had to return to the political reality of divisions and differences. Commenting upon the debate provoked by the Dreyfus and Millerand cases in the international socialist movement concerning the participation of the socialists in defending bourgeois democracy, the socialist journal *Critica sociale* affirmed on 1 October 1899: 'We hope that the affair is over, that the symbols that represented the affair disappear and that problems revert to manifesting themselves in the ordinary political form of their exact being.'[37]

For democratic culture, by the beginning of 1900 the Dreyfus case was closed.[38] And when, in 1903, Jaurès tried to re-open the case, it was the republican journal *Rivista popolare* that protested, 'trying to revive this matter is an evil act, and those who want to revive it cannot be but those who want to extol themselves, even at the risk of harming the interests and wellbeing of an entire nation'.[39]

In fact, in Italian political culture, the echoes of the Dreyfus Affair had not died down.[40] Even during the Giolitti era, the debate about the fundamental questions continued and the controversy concerning Captain Dreyfus himself had not been resolved.[41] Now, the main protagonists of the debate about the confrontation between humanism and nationalism were the young intellectuals—i.e. those who contributed to Giuseppe Prezzolini's *La Voce,* the main and most influential journal of the Italian avant-garde in the Giolitti era.[42]

Many of these intellectuals admired France as a second spiritual homeland. Henri Bergson, Romain Rolland, Georges Sorel and Charles Péguy were among their inspirers and spiritual guides.[43] Péguy was one model to whom Prezzolini looked, in his fight for the intellectual and moral reform of the Italians and the regeneration of politics.[44] According to *La Voce,* Péguy was 'the great sacred preacher of modern secularism'.[45] Prezzolini hailed revolutionary France as the cradle of modernity. With the French Revolution, according to Prezzolini, had begun a new era of 'integral humanism', as he defined it, which would lead to the total regeneration and liberation of modern man from every type of spiritual and political servitude.[46]

From 1908 to 1913, there were frequent echoes of the Dreyfus Affair in *La Voce*. 'Regarding the Dreyfus case', wrote Prezzolini in 1910, 'we talked too much in Italy when it was only an "affair". . . . Today we speak little about it though it has taken on the aspect and the features of an important national revolution.'[47] In this statement, Prezzolini intended to refer to the longstanding effect of the Dreyfus case on the politics and moral conscience of the French. He gave a sociological rather than an ideological or idealistic explanation of this national revolution.[48] Prezzolini defined the social and political effects of the Dreyfusards' victory and their accession to power as a 'conservative revolution'.[49] It was a revolution carried out by the bourgeoisie to avoid an attack from the proletariat, mobilizing it against the Church, and becoming part of a political compromise that aimed at conserving bourgeois society, trying to extinguish through its hedonism, anti-religious propaganda and populist demagogy, every revolutionary impulse of renewal and regeneration that sprang from the new generation and the working class. The Dreyfusards' campaign had been one of those revolutionary impulses, which was still present in the struggle led by the 'true Dreyfusards' such as Péguy, Sorel and Halevy. They had created the concept of Dreyfusism as a lay religion whose task it was to regenerate politics and the nation, while, in their opinion, the politics of the Dreyfusards in power corrupted politics and the nation. It debased patriotism with unrealistic concepts of internationalism and pacifism; it destroyed the feelings of religiosity with vulgar and intolerant anticlericalism; it lowered the cultural level by employing egalitarian demagogy; it weakened the principle of social discipline by preaching anarchical individualism, corrupting the conscience of the masses with hedonism and greed for wealth.

Prezzolini, however, appreciated the fact that the Dreyfusard revolution had brought about the separation of church and state, which he considered 'the fundamental result' and 'the best realized deed' of republican politics in France after the Dreyfus Affair that resumed and continued the democratic movement of emancipation and liberation of humankind started by the French Revolution.[50] Democracy, stated Prezzolini, has always carried out important experiments to improve the liberalization and the autonomy of the individual. He wrote:

> As of today, France has resumed contacts with the tradition of the French Revolution; it has confirmed its action and has ended a 30-year-old anti-clerical conflict with an act that goes far beyond the matter of clericalism versus anti-clericalism, that goes beyond France and has touched the whole world.[51]

The 'Dreyfusard revolution' had been, therefore, a new step towards the realization of modern democracy, but this democracy, warned Prezzolini, echoing Péguy's concept of mysticism, could not have had a solid foundation if it lacked faith in its own values and ideals. Without any form of mysticism, democracy declined into demagogic and materialistic politics ruled only by the cult of money.

According to Prezzolini and most of his collaborators, modernity did not mean an absolute lack of faith and religion in the conscience of modern man. They agreed with Benedetto Croce's statement that 'all of the contemporary world is again looking for some type of religion'.[52] A modern democracy without any type of collective faith in its values, shared by the masses, was a false and fragile democracy, a cause of corruption and decadence in a nation. Modern democracy had to be 'pervaded by an ethical and religious spirit, that nourishes in each single individual the consciousness of its responsibility and gives absolute value to each human personality'.[53] The mysticism of modern democracy had to be a lay religion based upon a new synthesis between humanism and nationalism, between the needs of liberty and social discipline.

The intellectuals of *La Voce* were convinced that the Giolittian government, like the radical government in France, was a false democracy, because it lacked ideas and faith, thus contributing to political corruption and to the decay of the national conscience. They felt disgust for politics without principles and a sense of morality; they were strong supporters of the Rights of Man but they also claimed the need for patriotism without fanaticism; they were anti-clerical but considered a civic religion necessary to regenerate politics through an intellectual and moral redemption led by the cultural avant-garde, rather than through political actions. 'The regeneration of a state', affirmed *La Voce*, 'cannot be carried out if we do not change the soul of the people.'[54] However, in contrast to Péguy, Prezzolini and the '*vociani*' did not consider 'mystique' and 'politique' to be radically opposed to each other. A follower of the political realism of Mosca, Pareto and Croce, Prezzolini thought that politics was necessary in order to realize the ideals of mysticism. *La Voce* wanted to give Italy a modern political culture, based on a new synthesis between humanism and nationalism, in order to build up a modern democracy imbued with a 'mystique'. In Italy, the influence of Péguy's concept of mysticism was also seen in the philosophy of the young revolutionary socialist, Benito Mussolini, and in his 'religious concept of socialism', as he defined it.[55] It was not by chance that Mussolini, leader of revolutionary socialism, at the fourteenth congress of the Socialist Party (Ancona 1914), mentioned the fate of the Dreyfus case, 'an important revolution exploited by the Freemasons' demagogy', in his struggle against the alliance of the Socialist Party with radical democracy and Freemasonry.[56] Mussolini, himself a contributor to *La Voce* and a reader of Péguy's works, thought of the socialist revolution as a regeneration of politics through the creation of new moral or artistic or social values to give an aim to life and 'to create a *homo novus* who can live in a new society'.[57]

With its spiritual revolution, *La Voce* wanted to reform the nation using the doctrine of liberty, thus reducing the state's tasks to defence, education and justice. These intellectuals refused to accept the concept of politics based exclusively upon the idea of the Reason of State and national interests. Their campaign for the regeneration of politics was aimed at modernizing the nation and the state by reconciling nationalism and humanism, patriotism and interna-

tionalism. Nationalism, expressed by the writers of *La Voce*, was radically different from imperialistic and authoritarian nationalism, which Prezzolini labeled 'repugnant and narrow-minded'.[58] What distinguished this nationalism and made it modernist was its intention to reconcile modernist culture—understood here generically as the supremacy of culture in individual and collective life—with modernization and democracy. Scipio Slataper, Triestine writer and contributor to *La Voce*, wrote:

> We believe that the life of a nation is impossible if it is not founded upon principles which are human and idealistic, and above all based upon respect for other nations and feelings of solidarity with oppressed nations, where there is a force of growth and civilization, a hope for liberty.[59]

The idea of liberty was the cornerstone of civic humanism which Prezzolini had elaborated as the new secular religion of a modern democracy, the modern creed of a new man, and a vision of history as a never-ending process of fulfilling liberty. 'Liberty for each individual, liberty for humanity. Conceive progress as a revelation of liberty, as a conquest of liberty, as approaching always closer and faster to liberty.'[60]

In the nationalism of *La Voce*, the myth of the regeneration of politics was not associated with the myth of the supremacy of the state, nation and race, in contrast with human dignity and the universal moral conscience. *La Voce* often paid attention to the French nationalism of Charles Maurras, but it considered his theories of political reaction and monarchical myth mistaken, unrealistic and anachronistic.[61] Prezzolini condemned racism, saying that the concept of race was 'a naturalist abstract that had no influence on one's spirit'.[62] In this way he also condemned anti-Semitism, defining it as a 'beastly and vile thrust that preached hatred of races',[63] whereas he affirmed that 'the Jewish people are a great people. . . . They are the salt of the earth.'[64]

The '*vociani*' wanted national regeneration through civic humanism and the faith of a secular religion that could educate the moral conscience of the modern 'new Italian', harmonizing the need for a strong sense of national identity with the aspiration of attaining a higher universal conscience, above and beyond that of nationalism. Although within the ideology of the '*vociani*', criticism against Enlightenment tradition, rationalism and individualism was widely diffused, this critique, as well as the myth of the regeneration of politics, did not necessarily result in the rejection of democracy. If we consider the attitude of these young intellectuals towards the fundamental problems raised by the Dreyfus Affair, we find that they were not eager to sacrifice the Rights of Man to the Reason of State. In fact, the myth of the regeneration of politics ideally linked *La Voce* and its struggle for modernity to the humanism of those intellectuals who had fought for Dreyfus in the name of modernity as the civilization of liberty and human rights.

NOTES

1. R. Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, MA 1979), 160–7; E. Gentile, 'From the Cultural Revolt of the Giolittian Era to the Ideology of Fascism' in F.J. Coppa (ed.), *Studies in Modern Italian History from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (New York 1984), 103–11.

2. B. Croce, *Storia d'Italia* (Bari 1966), 224.

3. M. Baumont, 'L'affaire Dreyfus et l'opinion italienne d'après les archives diplomatiques', *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento* (July–September 1964), 345–50; P. Milza, *Français et Italiens à la fin du XIX Siècle* (Rome 1981), II, 797–815; L. La Puma, 'L'affaire Dreyfus dans la presse salentine (Italie meridionale, région des Pouilles)' in G. Leroy (ed.), *Les écrivains et l'affaire Dreyfus* (Paris 1983), 47–55; L. Mangoni, *Una crisi di fine secolo. La cultura italiana e la Francia fra Otto e Novecento* (Torino 1985).

4. A. Morandotti, 'Il male della repubblica', *Critica sociale*, 1 February 1898, 39–40; E.T. Moneta, 'Il sentimento europeo nella questione Zola-Dreyfus', *La Vita internazionale*, 29 February 1898, 98–9; NOI, 'In Francia e in Italia', *Rivista popolare di politica lettere e scienze sociali*, 15 June 1899, 441–3; A. Labriola. 'Un socialista al potere', *Critica sociale*, 16 July 1899, 162–4; A. Tassoni, 'Ciò che insegna la Francia', *La Vita internazionale*, 5 September 1899, 155–6.

5. V. Franchi, 'Politica e giustizia', *La Vita internazionale*, 20 September 1899, 170.

6. 'La condanna di Dreyfus', *Nuova Antologia*, 16 June 1899, 366–8; also 'Note e commenti', *Nuova Antologia*. 15 September 1899, 365–70.

7. M. Morasso, 'Non per l'egoismo ma per l'Egocrazia', *Il Marzocco*, 11 September 1898.

8. 'Il caso di Alfredo Dreyfus', *La Civiltà cattolica*, 5 February 1898, 273–87. See A. Prontera, '*La Civiltà Cattolica* et l'affaire Dreyfus' in *Les écrivains et l'affaire Dreyfus*, op. cit., 58–64.

9. See G. Tortorelli, 'L'affare Dreyfus e i socialisti italiani', *Società e storia* (January–March 1986), 105–32.

10. E.T. Moneta, 'Un secolo dopo', *La Vita internazionale*, 5 February 1898; idem, 'Lettera a Zola', *La Vita internazionale*, 29 February 1898; A. Morandotti, 'Intorno al processo Zola', *Rivista popolare di politica lettere e scienze sociali*, 15 February 1898; Critica Sociale, 'La dégringolade', *Critica sociale*, 16 January 1898.

11. A. Tassoni, 'Note politico-sociali. L'incubo Dreyfus', *La Vita internazionale*, 20 January 1898, 60–2.

12. Franchi, 'Politica e giustizia', op. cit., 170–3.

13. A. Tassoni, 'Il processo di Rennes', *La Vita internazionale*, 20 August 1899, 124–5.

14. L. Zuccoli, 'Emilio Zola', *Il Marzocco*, 23 January 1898.

15. Tassoni, 'Ciò che insegna la Francia', op. cit., 155–6; see also S. Sighele, *Mentre il secolo muore* (Milano 1899), 90–4, 126–35.

16. E. Jarach, 'Impressioni dreyfusiane', *La Vita internazionale*, 5 August 1899, 69–72.

17. A. Martinazzoli, 'Il significato della condanna di Dreyfus', *La Vita internazionale*, 5 October 1899, 198–9.

18. Tassoni, 'Note politico-sociali. L'incubo Dreyfus', op.cit., 60.

19. Martinazzoli, 'Il significato della condanna di Dreyfus', op.cit., 199.

20. A. Bertolini, 'L'imminente crisi storica', *La Vita internazionale*, 5 October 1899, 201–2.

21. Tassoni, 'Il processo di Rennes', op.cit., 124–5.

22. 'Civiltà e militarismo. Il Grande duello', *Rivista popolare di politica lettere e scienze sociali*, 30 August 1899, 63.

23. G. Ciancarella, 'Attorno alle Assise della Senna', *La Vita internazionale*, 20 February 1898.

24. See M. Toscano, 'L'eguaglianza senza diversità: Stato, società e questione ebraica nell'Italia liberale' in M. Toscano (ed.), *Integrazione e identità. L'esperienza ebraica in Germania e Italia dall'Illuminismo al fascismo* (Milano 1997), 224–8.

25. A. Labriola, 'Israele e Gesù', *Critica sociale*, 1 September 1899, 216–18.

26. Moneta, 'Un secolo dopo', op. cit., 64–7.

27. G. Ferrero, *Militarismo* (Milano 1898), 269–326.

28. 'La dégringolade', *Critica sociale*, 16 January 1898, 17–18.

29. G.S. Gargano, 'La coscienza d'una nazione', *Il Marzocco*, 17 September 1899.

30. G. Ferrero, 'La crisi sociale della Francia', *Nuova Antologia*, 16 September 1899, 325–47.

31. G. Ferrero, 'Critici e critiche di Militarismo', *La Vita internazionale*, 5 November 1898, 264–5.

32. Tassoni, 'Il processo di Rennes', op.cit., 125.

33. A. Morandotti, 'Dreyfus-Esterhazy', *Critica sociale*, 16 January 1898, 18–19.

34. Franchi, 'Politica e Giustizia', op.cit., 171.

35. E. Giretti, 'Vero e falso patriottismo', *La Vita internazionale*, 20 January 1898, 55–62.

36. E.T. Moneta, 'La sentenza di Rennes e la coscienza universale', *La Vita internazionale*, 20 September 1899, 161–3.

37. 'Un consulto internazionale', *Critica sociale*, 1 October 1899, 248–50.

38. G. Sorel, 'Lo spirito pubblico in Francia', *Rivista popolare di politica, lettere e scienze sociali*, 5 December 1899, 206–10; P. Dramas, 'La situazione politica generale e l'opera di Millerand', *Rivista popolare di politica, lettere e scienze sociali*, 15 March 1900, 89–91; 15 April 1900, 126–9; 30 May 1900, 152–5.

39. 'La rivelazione di Jaurès su l'affare Dreyfus', *Rivista popolare di politica, lettere e scienze sociali*, 15 April 1903, 177–8.

40. G. Romano-Catania, 'La decadenza delle Nazioni latine', *Rivista popolare di politica, lettere e scienze sociali*, 15 May 1901, 170–4; G. Sorel, 'La ripresa dell'affare Dreyfus', *Rivista popolare di politica, lettere e scienze sociali*, 15 May 1903, 231–2; 'Il progresso laico in Francia', *Rivista popolare di politica, lettere e scienze sociali*, 30 July 1905, 408–9.

41. U. Ojetti, 'Riflessi letterarii dell'affare Dreyfus', *Il Marzocco*, 22 July 1906.

42. See Walter L. Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence. From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge, MA 1993), 103–52.

43. See H. Giordan (ed.), *Romain Rolland et le mouvement florentin de 'La Voce'* (Paris 1966); B. Sommalvico, 'Lettere di Georges Sorel a Giuseppe Prezzolini' in D. Rüesch and B. Sommalvico (eds.), *La Voce e l'Europa* (Roma n.d.), 551–752.

44. G. Prezzolini, 'Charles Péguy e i *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*', *Il Commento*, 20 April 1910; see also M. Cantelmo and L. Magi, 'Péguy in Italia: la mediazione di Prezzolini' in *Péguy oggi* (Lecce 1977), 636–57; R. Dedola, '*La Voce* e i *Cahiers de la Quinzaine:* una messa a punto', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 156, 496 (1979), 548–63.

45. 'Peguy', *La Voce*, 26 October 1911.

46. See E. Gentile, 'The Myth of National Regeneration in Italy: From Modernism Avant-Garde to Fascism' in M. Affron and M. Antliff, *Fascist Visions* (Princeton 1997), 25–45.

47. G. Prezzolini, '*I Cahiers de la Quinzaine*', *La Voce*, 5 May and 8 August 1910; A. Gargiulo, 'Georges Sorel', *La Voce*, 10 June 1910 (a review of G. Sorel, *La Révolution Dreyfusienne* [Paris 1909]).

48. See E. Decleva, 'Il bilancio di una democrazia: la Francia prima del 1914 nelle impressioni di Giuseppe Prezzolini' in E. Decleva and P. Milza, *Italia e Francia: i nazionalismi a confronto* (Milano 1993), 72–100.

49. G. Prezzolini, *La Francia e i Francesi nel secolo XX* (Milano 1913), 202–9.

50. Ibid., 179.

51. Ibid., 180.

52. B. Croce, 'Per la rinascita dell'idealismo' in *Cultura e vita morale* (Bari 1955), 36.

53. A. Anzilotti, *La crisi spirituale della democrazia* (Faenza 1912), 47. Anzilotti was one of the main collaborators of *La Voce*.

54. Viriato, 'Gli albori di una repubblica', *La Voce*, 21 November 1912.

55. B. Mussolini to G. Prezzolini, 20 July 1912 in E. Gentile (ed.), *Mussolini e 'La Voce'* (Firenze 1976), 56.

56. B. Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, edited by E. and D. Susmel (Florence 1951–63), VI, 172.

57. Ibid., III, 270. *La Voce* had a decisive influence upon Mussolini's cultural formation. Several elements of the new political culture of *La Voce* later became components of fascist culture. Some intellectuals of the Florentine avant-garde, who joined fascism, contributed to the formation of fascist ideology. However, the culture of *La Voce* cannot be considered as 'proto-fascist' because it led to new constellations of ideas quite different from fascist ones and opposed to them. Suffice to recall that among the main contributors to *La Voce* were Gaetano Salvemini and Giovanni Amendola, the future leader of the parliamentary anti-fascist opposition.

58. G. Prezzolini, 'Il liberismo come azione morale', *La Voce*, 3 July 1913.

59. S. Slataper, 'Gli Slavi meridionali d'oggi', *La Voce*, 13 April 1911.

60. G. Prezzolini, 'Educazione idealistica', *La Voce*, 28 August 1913.

61. A. Anzilotti, 'Monarchia storica e monarchia ideale', *La Voce*, 15 June 1911.

62. G. Prezzolini, *La Francia*, op. cit., 292.

63. Ibid., 294.

64. G. Prezzolini, 'Il compito degli Ebrei', *Il Resto del Carlino*, 6 February 1912.

Chapter 2

Conflicting Modernisms: *La Voce* against Futurism

In the first part of the twentieth century the Italian Avant-Gardes were characterized by a series of conflicting modernisms that were all fighting for the leading role in the creation of the modern consciousness of a New Italy. The modernists centered around the journal *La Voce* and the futurists were the principal contenders. Both were convinced that their formula could best elaborate a modern national culture, regenerate the nation, and prepare Italians to take on the challenges of the modem world; both contended for the privilege of being the creators and spiritual guides of the New Italy.[1]

The principal goal of the comparison between *La Voce* and futurism that I propose is to indicate the specificity of the different components of Italian Modernism. Thus I shall emphasize the distinctions between *La Voce* and futurism, and in doing so I shall indicate a series of motifs that cannot be minimized without altering the historical reality of both movements, the role that each movement had in the development of Italian Modernism and, crucially, the relationship between each of these movements and politics. The different fates of these two avant-gardes are relevant here: if *La Voce* could claim to be the elder, if only by a little, futurism could surely boast of a longer vitality. The Great War marked the beginning of a new season for futurism with its transformation into a political party[2] and its successive metarmorphoses during the fascist era, whereas the experience of *La Voce* was already exhausted at the beginning of the hostilities. Moreover, their different fates were not only due to contingent reasons but were also the consequence of their diverse natures.

In reconstructing the history of the Italian avant-gardes in the first years of the twentieth century, historians and critics have often tended to attenuate the differences between them in order to accentuate their similarities, especially as regards their relationship to politics or the political consequences of their ideas.

In general this happens when fascism is the reference point of the discussion. *La Voce* and futurism are often associated as precursors of fascism.

It is necessary to study the relationship between the modernist avant-gardes and fascism in order to understand the cultural roots of fascist ideology. It is not wrong to claim that Florence was one of the most important cultural centers where the ideological matrix of fascism was formed; at the same time it was the principal capital of Italian Modernism, where for a few years a rich variety of avant-garde journals flourished, such as *Leonardo, La Voce, Lacerba,* and *Italia Futurista,* to cite only the most influential. After all Mussolini, when he was still a socialist revolutionary, was a reader and collaborator for *La Voce*,[3] and the journal had a decisive influence, much greater than Futurism's, on the formation of his culture and personality. Fascist ideology was born from the myth of the New Italy, and in fact it inherited the various elaborations on this myth that had been developed by the modernist avant-gardes before the Great War, integrating them with its own myths in an original synthesis.

Undoubtedly many cultural themes derived from the modernism of *La Voce* and from the modernism of the futurists were brought together in fascism. However this should not lead us to claim that these themes are in themselves forms of protofascism or prefascism. This is a thesis that I do not support, not only because there were also anti-fascist stands that derived from the modernism of *La Voce* and from futurism, but also because this thesis is based on a drastic simplification of the historical reality of a very complex phenomenon: such a simplification forces opinions and ideological stands that were in fact deeply in conflict to coincide, even though it is true that *La Voce* and futurism had a some basic presuppositions in common that cannot be ignored if we are to understand the nature of Italian modernism and its relationship to nationalism. Much more so than in other European modernisms, the issue of the Nation—in our case the myth of the New Italy—was central to the Italian modernist avant-gardes, and was a great influence on their cultural, artistical and political positions. One could even go so far as to claim that the myth of the New Italy was at the very origin of Italian modernism, and gave it a decisive impulse, that was more or less immediate in its result, toward political action. The connection between modernism and politics in Italy took place principally under the aegis of a new radical nationalism that however eventually gave way to different political orientations.

Let, us begin, then, with the elements these Italian modernisms have in common. At the origin of this project of renewal, for the modernists of *La Voce* or *vociani,* as well as for the futurists, there was a perception of modernity as a great explosion of human energy, an intensification of life, a transformation of sensibility and consciousness. Modernity was a time of crisis and transformation of values, whence were born both the aspiration toward a new faith, a new religion for modern man, and the need for a new national ideology that would be adequate to the problems and challenges of modern life, such as the crisis of the traditional State, the mobilization of the masses, and global competition between national powers.

La Voce and futurism are, furthermore, the expression of the rebellion of a generation—that is, principally, a rebellion of a young new elite against the liberal bourgeois tradition that the younger generation considered inadequate as a national culture for a country that had already entered a new phase of modernization. The *vociani* and the futurists share a myth of the *Risorgimento*—the unification of Italy—as an incomplete revolution because political unification had not in fact produced the moral unification of Italians; and they also share a common disdain for the ruling class that guided the country during unification. Further, they share an aversion for positivistic democratic culture, hostility toward international socialism and hatred for Giovanni Giolitti, the "parliamentary dictator" who, for the *vociani* and the futurists incarnated the worst form of corruption and degeneration of national life.[4]

The projects of renewal that both avant-gardes undertook, also share certain similar traits, in that both wished to realize a profound revision of values, of ideals, of customs, and of life styles, whence the modern consciousness of a New Italy destined to have a leading role in modern civilization was to emerge. *Italianism*, that is, the faith in the primacy and the mission of the New Italy in the modern world, is certainly a characteristic that joins *La Voce* and futurism just as they are joined by another element that is connected to *Italianism*, that is the project of making the culture, the consciousness, and the politics of the nation adequate to the new social reality created by industrialization and modernization *La Voce* and futurism want to create a new cultural synthesis between nationalism and modernity; but they also want to concretely realize this synthesis through a total spiritual revolution that must begin from culture and invest and radically renew politics and society, and the very character of the Italians, in order to insure the birth of the new modern Italian. Finally, as they faced the Great War, the *vociani* and the futurists found themselves taking the side of interventionism, although for different reasons. Both the *vociani* and the futurists believed in the ethical grounds for the war and attributed to it a regenerative power that would forge the character of the new Italian and cement the spiritual unity of the nation.

However the common points between *La Voce* and futurism do not go beyond these general themes, which cannot be adduced as proof of a substantial agreement of ideas, of projects or of purpose. Within the scope of the two modernisms, each of these themes was in fact interpreted and elaborated in completely different terms, to the point that they became quite opposite in the context of the concrete activity of these two groups who were thus engaged in a bitter polemic from their very birth.

From the beginning, futurism did not garner the sympathy of *La Voce*. Among the reasons for this initial aversion we must probably not underestimate the *vociani's* apprehension at seeing a new avant-garde enter the scene only a few months after the birth of their own; and a louder avant-garde at that, which also presented itself as a spiritual guide for the New Italy. Prezzolini's *La Voce* refused to consider futurism a serious movement that would be able to contribute effec-

tively to the regeneration of the nation In an essay written in 1912 about the cultural renewal of Italy in the first decade of the century, Prezzolini did not even mention the futurists. On their side, the futurists reacted with a punitive expedition against Soffici[5] who had ridiculed them on *La Voce*, although Marinetti also did not hesitate to try to garner the sympathies of some of *La Voce's* collaborators. The conversion of Soffici and Papini to futurism in 1913, with the foundation of the new futurist review *Lacerba*, embittered the conflict between *La Voce* and futurism, even though Prezzolini was sympathetic to individual futurists.

These facts document a deep and unbridgeable rift between the two modernisms: a rift that was not caused by a difference in temperaments and tastes, but by a contrast in values, principles, ideals, and objectives, that derived from different ways of actualizing the regeneration of the nation, a different ideal New Italy, and a different conception of the new Italian.

In 1909, *La Voce* welcomed the birth of futurism, without naming it explicitly, with a little caricatural note by Soffici, eloquently entitled "La ricetta di Ribi buffone," or "The Recipe of Ribi the buffoon:"

> Here we go: Grab a kilo of Verhaeren, two-hundred grams of Alfred Jarry, one-hundred of Laforgue, thirty of Laurent Tailhade, five of Viélé-Griffin, a handful of Morasso—yes, even some Morasso—a pinch of Pascoli, a little phial of Nunzian water. Grab again: fifteen cars, seven planes, four trains, two steamships and two bicycles, various electrical generators, a few red-bot boiler engines: add your best flower of impotence and pomposity; blend it all into a lake of grey matter and aphrodisiac dribble, bring the mixture to a boil in the emptiness of your soul, over the fire of American charlatanism and then offer it over as drink for the Italian public.[6]

From the recipe emerges a caricature where "a few scarecrow literati, prurient for originality," "reunited in a dark comer, wrote a manifesto that you may know very well indeed, sagacious reader." Soffici's parody contained the germs of *La Voce's* anti-futurist polemic to come: insincerity, artificiality, histrionics, charlatanism, Americanism, duplicity and spiritual emptiness. This polemic did not acquire a more substantive critical analysis with time, but rather repeated the same accusations as the years went by.

We find the same motifs in Scipio Slataper's anti-futurist polemics, with a greater emphasis on futurism's insincerity as proof of its lack of moral and cultural seriousness.[7] Slataper did not accord futurism any role, not even a purely historical one. The futurists were a group of people that emerged from nothing more than a personal desire for self-promotion, disguised "with rags that they have agreed to call 'Futurist faith'." The futurists thought that they could produce spiritual awakening through commercial means, and they imagined they could "renew Italian poetry with an accumulation of manifestos and ridiculous theatrical productions." In reality, according to Slataper, the futurist movement lacked "a true spiritual content," an "intimate sense of vision," and authentic "interior dram," so that all the activity of the Futurists was nothing more than "an empty

fiction," the expression of a "Romantic decadence" masked by "a professed love for modern reality." The Triestine writer attacked the heart of futurism when he claimed that while futurism pretended to be "a movement that would free the spirit from the Romantic myths of the past" the futurists did not in any way know how to create "new myths for the new reality" because their vision of modernity was not born from "the interior drama" of modem man, but stopped short, seeing only "the exterior appearance" of modernity, that is "the hurry, the accelerated consumption of energy, the Americanism, etc."

Soffici returned to the theme of Americanism and histrionics when he responded to a message from the futurists.[8] He appreciated their energy of "revolutionary youth, inflamed by hatred for the despotism of the past and by a passion for all that is alive, palpitating with free vitality around us and within us," but he continued to be repulsed by "their lust for American self-promotion that makes these poets, these painters dance like scarecrows daubed with white and red lead . . . that makes the earth resound with charlatan screams." As to futurist painting, Soffici's rejection was even more drastic: "I truly believe that never under the moon—he wrote after having visited the Futurist Exhibition of 1911 in Milan—was accumulated such a pile of shoddy and obscene goods, so filthy and lamentable."[9] Paintings such as *The Laugh* by Boccioni and *The Funerals of the Anarchist* by Carrà were defined as "mere baffooneries," "stupid and ugly swaggerings of a few scrupulous *messieurs*" who saw the world darkly "with the eyes of the most pachidermic American pig-farmer." Their "lust for novelty and modernity" was "rather an exterior pose than a profound need of their spirit, anxious to be incarnated in original creations."

Soffici's anti-futurist virulence was attenuated during the year 1912 and his change of tone was a prelude to his change, with Papini, into a militant Futurist.[10] While he still continued to see futurism as "three-quarters made up of a pile of foreign and national outdated stuff that has been fried and refried" with a theory that was "full of bestiality," Soffici was willing to recognize, after he visited the Futurism Exhibition of 1912 in Paris, that futurism was nonetheless a *movement,* and as such, it was "life," because beyond its particular character, means, and ends, any movement produces renewal because it "incites, provokes battles, rouses enthusiasms."[11] As a movement futurism thus contributed to shaking, also abroad, the image of "an Italy dead and buried" under academic conservatism. Soffici tempered his polemic against futurism (a polemic that was actually rather at odds with his personality that tended to idolize modernity) in the name of Italianism. Futurism could thus be an ally in the fight for the renewal of Italy: "a futurist rampage" was always preferable to sage thoughts, grand words, culture, reason, literary integrity, classicism, seriousness. With this, though, Soffici left the spirit of *La Voce* behind, since it had made of these very values of culture, integrity, and seriousness, the bedrock of the regeneration of Italy, and had interpreted modernity and the myth of the New Italy through them.

The polemic of *La Voce* toward futurism originated in a different vision of modernity, and of the problems the nation faced with respect to modern life. It

also resulted from different conceptions of the role, means, and ends, of a cultural avant-garde movement. Finally, it certainly also depended on the different personalities of the main promoters and organizers of the two movements, Prezzolini and Marinetti.

Before he founded *La Voce*, Prezzolini had been one of the main collaborators of *Leonardo*, the theoretician of irrationalism, dilettantism, mysticism, extreme individualism, and anti-democratic nationalism. After a profound moral crisis he had found an answer to his restlessness in his conversion to Croce's rational idealism, a conversion that gave him a renewed faith in the progress of humanity and in the progression of history as the actualization of the rational spirit. His conversion to Croce's philosophy led him to realize the value of democratic movements, and thus to go beyond nationalism with a conception of the nation as part of the larger human community; finally it also led him to participate in a common effort toward the regeneration of culture and society through the study of reality and its concrete problems.[12]

La Voce valued the rationality and the sociability of man, and adopted a positive method of analysis of reality as an effective campaign tool for national renewal. The general orientation of the florentine movement was antithetical to Futurism, even in its original constitutive spirit. In fact *La Voce* presented itself to the public in December 1908 with a *promise* not with a *program*, and in the course of its life it never published a *manifesto* of principles and objectives. And this promise resounds, in advance, with a tone that is altogether antithetical to the programatic assault on the world announced by the futurist *manifesto* of 20 February 1909:

> We don't promise be geniuses—Prezzolini announced—nor do we promise to untangle the mystery of the world and determine the precise and daily menu of actions that must be accomplished in order to become great men. But we promise to be honest and sincere . . . We believe that Italy has more need of character, sincerity, openness, seriousness, than of intelligence and spirit.[13]

Without wanting to deny the creative power of individual genius, *La Voce* attributed greater value, in the process of renewal, to the constant and patient cooperation of scholars who applied themselves to the methodical reflection and realistic analysis of the cultural, social, and political life of the country:

> We propose—Prezzolini explained—to consider all practical questions that have consequences for the intellectual, religious, and artistic world; to react to the rhetoric of Italians by forcing them to look closely at their social reality; to educate ourselves in resolving small issues and small problems, so as to find ourselves better prepared for larger ones.[14]

Art and literature also had their place within this project, but in a position that was subordinated to the regenerative function attributed to the study and analysis of the concrete problems of daily life. *La Voce* gave a great amount of space to the study of national problems, such as the southern question and the question of education, and led battles for centralization, for the universal right to

vote, against protectionist policies against the politics of Giolitti which were considered corrupt and a corrupting influence.

The original formula, devised by Prezzolini to direct the journal, was not the technical expedient of a cultural impresario who was deprived of his own personal ideas, and therefore willing to be the mediator and vulgarizer for the ones of others. Rather, it reflected precise philosophical convictions that Prezzolini had derived from Crocean historicism, even though he never, until 1914, demanded an allegiance to a specific religious, philosophic, aesthetic, or political credo from his collaborators.

Unlike the futurists, who formed a sort of *artistic communion,* united by their militant group identity and Marinetti's charismatic leadership, the *vociani* did not constitute a real movement, with communal characteristics, because their activity always lacked a true unity and identity of purpose, defined by common feelings and a common plan of action. The journal defined itself as "a symposium of intelligent and honest people with differing ideas." Their agreement, always tormented by dissent, was however not casual, since it depended in large part on the personality of the founder and director of the journal. Prezzolini did not aim to be the leader of a movement, and was not, by formation and character, adapted to a charismatic role, as was the head of Futurism. If there was a "Futurist faith," there certainly never was a "*vociano* faith," that is a unitary *credo* that all the collaborators adhered to. Even *Italianism,* that was for the Futurists an dogmatic and totalizing faith, to which even freedom was subordinated, was for the *vociani* a myth that had to reconciled with other humanistic and religious myths, which were not all subordinated to it.

The *vociani's* reluctance to become a real movement, with a common program, was so lively that it caused various schisms, which spawned new journals. When Prezzolini decided in 1913 to turn the journal into the organ of his conception of militant idealism as the "religion of modern man," it was the end of the experience of *La Voce*.[15] But until then philosophers and men of letters, politicians and artists, Crocians and anti-Crocians, idealists and positivists, rationalists and irrationalists, voltairian spirits and religious spirits all cohabited in *La Voce*. What held them together was the mission of national pedagogy proposed by Prezzolini so that each contributed within the sphere of his competence and convictions to "the integral, human, education of man." All disciplines without discrimination or privilege, had therefore to collaborate.

The general tone of the collaboration was given by the search for a new culture, that was to be diffused through those informational and education activities that took place in journals and in cultural initiatives such as exhibitions and conferences, and was to be inspired by serious principles of didactic vulgarization. For the propaganda of their ideas, the *vociani* never had recourse to methods of provocation imposition or vulgar manifestations of aggression and confrontation with the public.

For almost five years, *La Voce* was a sort of lay seminary where the philosophical, religious, artistic, and moral ideas that could promote the regeneration of the

Italian character and the education of the new Italian were being elaborated. Every collaborator contributed his ideas to the seminary and from their dialectical synthesis, Prezzolini imagined, the consciousness of the New Italy would emerge. The regenerative work of the *vociani* was born from their faith in the taumaturgic efficacy of truth, of sincerity, of seriousness, of the realistic knowledge of the concreteness of life. This faith was sustained by a strong romantic sense of the religiousness of life, conceived as moral duty, internal discipline, and dedication of the individual to the national community.

With respect to modernity, the attitude of *La Voce* had nothing in common with Futurist modernolatry. Among the *vociani*, there were ambivalent attitudes toward modernity and industrial civilization. Piero Jahier, for example, decried the negative effects of industrialization that disrupted the "patriarchal life of the good old times." Giovanni Boine protested against the crisis of farming property and exalted the value of land—because "land is alive, land is sacred, the life of the land is more sacred than ours, than mine, than yours, as sacrèd as our heritage, more than our heritage"—and he also stood up in defense of the catholic tradition against lay secularization.[16] Giovanni Amendola meditated a "radical criticism of revolutionary times" in favor of "a new order made of the old and the new."[17] And if Papini praised the country,[18] Prezzolini exalted the city and its frenetic life, its crowds, its artificiality:

> Ah, the city! It is the true celebration of man, made by man, for man . . I feel like a city-dweller, that is modern and artificial . . . We cannot return to being peasants . . . I accept what I am I search for great crowds, new men, more life and more excitement . . . I gain force and confidence, in contact with a more rich and varied existence.[19]

In full coherence with this adhesion to modernity, Prezzolini elaborated a completely lay and humanistic concept of the new religion of modern man, that was anti-Christian and anti-Catholic.

From the contrast of these diverse positions, *La Voce's* orientation emerged in a sense that was not anti-modern or hostile to industrial civilization. The majority of the *vocíani* did not nourish any reactionary nostalgia for an antique order that had to be preserved against the challenge of modernity. On the contrary they accepted this challenge and wanted to prepare Italy to be a great protagonist of modern life that would contribute to the spiritual construction of a new civilization. The New Italy, Prezzolini declared, "has to be great in spirit, has to give life to modern civilization." One of the main tasks the journal undertook was indeed to study the great "social questions raised by the new forms of human coexistence that are being forged in the new industrial world." Men of culture were to be "deeply interested in the success of their nation as it contends for the world with other nations." They were also to contribute to the construction of the New Italy along with "lombard industrialists, genovese shipowners, businessmen and bankers of northern Italy."

The journal, however, did not contribute to the formation of an industrialist culture, since it remained attached to the idea of the superiority of humanistic culture, and its philosophical foundations, over the new forms of culture that were emerging from industrialization. From this perspective, among the ambivalent attitudes of the *vociani* toward modernity, there dominated the vision of a new civilization that would infuse spiritualism into industrialization, so as to control the impetus of its transformations that were disrupting society and the individual consciousness; such a spiritual infusion would anchor the nation to a new faith and promote reforms that would allow Italy to become modern without yielding to the negative effects of industrial civilization, such as materialism, hedonism, and mechanical dehumanization.

La Voce's attempt to renew politics with a new ethics and a new lay religion fell within this project of spiritualizing industrial civilization. The *vociano* intellectual wanted to take part in social life in order to "bring—as Giovanni Amendola wrote—culture into an ever-more intimate contact with politica and with practice . . . men of culture must accept the duty, in Italy, of dealing with political questions so as to enrich the political consciousness of the nation."[20] The attraction to politics, that never actually became direct participation in political action, was inherent to the civil and pedagogical function that the *vociani* assumed.

The vociani wanted to reconcile patriotism and cosmopolitanism in the formation of the national consciousness of the New Italy. At the base of the formation of the new Italian, they put the education of the man before that of the patriot in order to "shape the man within the Italian" and "develop an open and informed critical consciousness."[21] The bedrock of the education of the new Italian would be a sense of freedom united with a sense of social discipline and historical consciousness of one's national origins. With respect to the past and history, the modernism of *La Voce* was not animated by iconoclastic fury, although it also did not make a fetish of tradition: it aimed to renew national culture in depth but without denying the formative value of history as the collective memory of the nation, that was transmitted through a critical and not a hagiographic knowledge of the national past in order to give birth to a new and modern national tradition.

The ideal of the "*vociano* man" was completely different from the futurist new man. The futurist threw himself into an assault on the world armed with a destructive will, a savage aggressiveness, and the iconoclastic fury of a new barbarian, possessed by an idolatrous faith in modernity. The ideal type of the *vociano* was a serious and severe workman of the spirit: studious, intellectual, artistic, he did not exalt physical force, he did not develop a cult for sports, he did not glorify militarism and imperialism, he did not become an apologist for violence, even though he never excluded the necessity of revolution and war to the regeneration of the nation and the creation of the New Italy. The *vociani* believed in the primacy of Italy in modern society, but their *Italianism*, as I have said, was distant from the *pan-Italianism* of the futurists, because it found its own limit in the recognition that "the human values of truth, beauty, the sacred and the good, do

not have a form based on race, sex, age, or nation."[22] The "new Italian" that *La Voce* longed for needed to have a strong national consciousness but had to be devoid of nationalist pride and imperialist ambitions. "We are anti-imperialist and we think internationally,"[23] Slataper claimed as he condemned nationalist arrogance and affirmed that the *vociani* would "have preferred an intelligent German to a stupid Italian." In 1911, *La Voce* was the first to rise up against the colonial war for the conquest of Libya by documenting the rhetorical lies of nationalist propaganda, and the economic uselessness of the colony, even though the *vociani* were not pacifists and anti-colonialists as a matter of principle since they accepted the idea of the ethical value of war as an examination of the character of a nation.

I believe that the themes thus far indicated, which constitute the essential character of the modernism of *La Voce,* are sufficient to show the difference between the two avant-gardes. The culture of *La Voce,* as a whole, precluded not only the possibility of any type of agreement with Futurism, but also essentially rendered it impossible for the florentine journal to overcome its aversion to futurism with a less prejudiced critical appraisal. Given these propositions, Prezzolini's isolated truce proposal, made in the name of their common desire for renewal, could not meet with success: "The force of young Italy are not so many that we can afford to waste any. Lets attack all imitations, commonplaces, banalities, bourgeois and positivist philosophies. This is my program and I hope it will be yours."[24]

So Prezzolini wrote to Marinetti on 10 July 1913, declaring himself ready to forget, "quite willingly, the examples of imbecility," in order to remember only "the good that you could still do for art in Italy." In reality, Prezzolini was asking Marinetti for nothing less than the abjuration of futurism, which the director of *La Voce* insisted upon not recognize as a proper movement with a creative and innovative value. The transformation of Papini and Soffici into militant futurists—that was actually much more of an adoption of futurism than an adhesion to futurism—did not diminish *La Voce*'s anti-futurist polemic, even though it forced the journal to bestow a less superficial attention on futurism, and even to dedicate a special issue to it on 10 April 1913. In this issue, alongside the meditative articles on the futurist painters,[25] and on futurist music,[26] the usual themes of *La Voce*'s aversion toward Futurism were repeated by Prezzolini himself, and reinforced by an article by poet Gian Piero Lucini[27] who accused Futurism of being a new rhetoric, a new academia, dominated by Marinetti who "deviates and deforms, compress and annihilates the free personalities of the artists" who are attracted to Futurism only by the hope of a quick success. Futurism was nothing more than an "exacerbated D'Annunzianism." However Lucini's, also invested all of futurist ideology in its effects beyond the world of art:

> I do not want that under a mask of freedom the privileges of ferocity and robbery be conceded, that thanks to the fad for virility womanhood be insulted, and, that with the pretext of the nation, a Croatian-Italy be made: I deny the sophism of glory, because with it nothing other than despotism is established.[28]

In 1913 *La Voce,* by now close to the end of its experience, intensified its attacks. The futurist aesthetic, Prezzolini repeated,[29] was in part old and in part empty; Marinetti was "a man of little culture and much verbal exuberance," the futurists had not even succeeded in satisfying their principal impulse, the call for a modem Italian art. The best poets among the futurists, such as Palazzeschi, expressed a poetic world that did not in fact conform to modernist idolatry. The reduction of futurism to superficial artifice and propagandistic buffoonery left no room for other considerations. Everything, in futurism, was in contrast with the inspiration and orientation of *La Voce,* or, at least, with the conviction of the majority of its collaborators. The accusation of artificiality, and lack of seriousness and internal drama, was the gravest that *La Voce* could aim at a movement that wished to be at the vanguard of the task of regeneration of the nation.

La Voce's prejudice against futurism was originally based not only on aesthetic considerations but on moral ones. There was the conviction that futurist modernism was mere *insincerity,* that precluded it from having any originality as a movement for renewal. What was new in futurism—Prezzolini affirmed—was not original and what was original was only rhetorical artifice invented for the purposes of propaganda.[30] The substance of *La Voce*'s polemic against futurism echoed Croce's polemic against the imperialist, mystical, and aestheticizing tendencies that produced a "great industry of emptiness" and that the philosopher had already denounced in 1907, as a symptom of the unhealthy condition of the spirit, the "modern disease of histrionics and insincerity," the manifestation of a pathological modernity that had to be combatted because it was noxious to the national consciousness.[31]

In the same spirit, in 1914 and on the pages of a new *La Voce* become an organ of militant idealism, Prezzolini mounted a crusade for the defense of rationality against the assault of the "new barbarians,"[32] represented by the futurists and by his own friends from *Lacerba.* This time, the accusation concerned not the aesthetic of Futurism but its mentality, and, so to speak, the lifestyle that these "new barbarians" were offering up as a model for the New Italy. The "new barbarians" had a sectarian mentality that exalted only its own members, even if they were imbeciles; it had no sense of the differences and values of others; it killed "every distinction, every travail of thought" paying attention only to the label with a style typical of mafias and secret societies.

In Prezzolini's last anti-futurist campaign, the main target was *Lacerba.* The accusations thrown at his two friends from *La Voce* now become futurists were very heavy. He considered them, so to speak, to be futurists abusively, if not in bad faith, because whereas "Futurism turns its eyes to that part of humanity that creates new worlds, to industrial civilization, to big cities, they look instead to the country, to villas, and in effect to Arcadia." The accusation of insincerity—and thus that of amorality if not of immorality—was even more substantial against Papini and Soffici that it had been against futurism, because while the latter, as Prezzolini now conceded, "at its center is, or wants to be, a form of faith," Papini and Soffici "do not have any and fight those who do." In this way,

the two neophytes of Futurism, who pretended to be the regenerators of the nation, had in fact become its corruptors. And as such, according to Prezzolini, they had no claim to being the spiritual leaders of the New Italy, and they had no right to call for intervention in the Great War in the name of Italy:

> For two years now [Prezzolini wrote to Papini on 25 September 1914[33]] you have been spreading propaganda for this I-don't-give-a-damn attitude, for skepticism, against all discipline, authority, duty, against all the commonplaces that give strength to a nation. You have never given a damn about Italy, about this real country, as it really is, whom you are calling to war, and have cared for nothing else than your beautiful spirits, as you yourself have declared. No, one does not have the right, when one has squashed under one's heels all that forms Italy (that is, the Italian tradition, the family, moral life, authority, etc.), to say to people: go have yourself, eviscerated. One has no right, when one has done everything to disorganize the country, to claim that its heads lead it into one of those fights where only the organized win. You have constantly, obstinately derided, scorned, fought discipline, and if your word had been efficacious, Italy would be even more undisciplined . . . Compared to your empty chattering the politicians are towers of intelligence and wisdom: with you the Austrian army would have been in Milan within fifteen days.

Against the "new barbarians" of *Lacerba,* headed by Papini and Soffici, Prezzolini called forth all who felt "the necessity for order in Italy, the immense need for culture and reflection, for study, for reparation; and at the same time the terribly urgent need for a movement of modern art, that could respond to a new sensibility, to new ideas and to the social organization that the world is creating." Once the experience of *La Voce* was exhausted, its creator and organizer vindicated its value through his defense of the ideal of regeneration that the modernism of *La Voce* had represented—that very ideal that was now being opposed by his two best friends who had passed to the opposite camp.

NOTES

This chapter was originally presented as "Conflicting Modernisms: *La Voce* against Futurism" at "Futurism: A Symposium at Yale University," New Haven, Conn., 3–4 November 1995. Translated by Laura Harwood Wittman.

1. See R. Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979); W.L. Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence. From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); C. Sartiani Blum, *The Other Modernism. F.T. Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996).

2. G. Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics. Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909-1944* (Providence: Berghahn, 1996).

3. See E. Gentile, *Mussolini e* La Voce (Firenze: Sansoni, 1976).

4. See E. Gentile, "From the Cultural Revolt of the Giolitian Era to the Ideology of Fascism." In F.J. Coppa, ed., *Studies in Modern Italian History,* 103–119 (New York and Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1986).

5. See Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence,* 148–149.

6. A. Soffici, "La ricetta di Ribi buffone," *La Voce,* 1 April 1909.

[Original in Italian: *Ecco qua: Pigliate un chilo di Verhaeren, dugento grammi di Alfred larry, cento di Laforgue, trenta di Laurent Tailhade, cinque di Vielè-Griffin, una manciata di Morasso—sì anche del Morasso—un pizzico di Pascoli, una boccetta d'Acqua Nunzia. Pigliate ancora: quindici au tomobili, sette aeroplani, quattro treni, due piroscafi, due biciclette, diversi accumulatori elettrici, qualche caldaia rovente: metteteci il vostro fior d'impotenza e d'ampollosità; frullate il tutto in un lago di materia grigia e di bava afrodisiaca, fate bollir la miscela nel vuoto della vostra anima, al fuoco della ciarlataneria americana, e poi datela a bere al pubblico d'Italia.*]

7. S. Slataper, "Il futurismo," *La Voce*, 31 March 1910.
8. A. Soffici, "Risposta ai futuristi," *La Voce*, 12 May 1910.
9. A. Soffici," Arte libera e pittura futurista," *La Voce*, 22 June 1911.
10. See Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence*, 166–180.
11. A. Soffici, "Ancora sul Futurismo," *La Voce*, 4 July 1912.
12. E. Gentile, La Voce *e l'età giolittiana* (Milano: Pan 1972), 25–50; Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence*, 64–94.
13. G. Prezzolini, "La nostra promessa," La Voce, 27 December 1908

[original in Italian: *Non promettiamo di essere dei geni, di sviscerare il mistero del mondo e di determinare il preciso e quotidiano menu delle azioni che occorrono per diventare dei grandi uomini. Ma promettiamo di essere onesti e sinceri. Crediamo che l'Italia abbia più bisogno di carattere, di sincerità, di apertezza, di serietà che di intelligenza e di spirito.*]

14. [original in Italian: *Ci si propone qui di trattare tutte le questioni pratiche che hanno riflessi nel mondo intellettuale e religioso ed artistico; di reagire alla retorica degli italiani obbligandoli a vedere da vicino la loro realtà sociale; di educarci a risolvere le piccole questioni e i piccoli problemi, per trovarci più preparati un giorno a quelli grandi.*]

15. See Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence*, 181–190.
16. G. Boine, "La crisi degli ulivi in Liguria," *La Voce*, 6 July 1911.
17. G. Amendola, letter to G. Boine, 25 July 1911. In G. Amendola, *Carteggio 1910-1912* (Roma-Bari: Laterza 1987), 298.
18. G. Papini, "La campagna," *La Voce*, 5 August 1909.
19. G. Prezzolini, "La città," *La Voce*, 17 October 1912.
20. [G. Amendola], "La politica de La Voce," *La Voce*, 30 Novembre 1911

[Original in Italian: *portare la cultura a contatto sempre più intimo con la politica e con la pratica . . . gli uomini di cultura hanno il dovere, in Italia, di occuparsi di questioni politiche onde arricchire la coscienza politica della nazione*]

21. G. Prezzolini, "Relazione al Consiglio," *La Voce*, 6 March 1913
22. G. Prezzolini, "Come faremo *La Voce*," *La Voce*, 7 November 1912.
23. S. Slataper, "L'irredentismo. Oggi," *La Voce*, 15 December 1910.
24. G. Prezzolini, "Ho scritto a Marinetti," *La Voce*, 10 July 1913.

[Original in Italian: *Le forze dell'Italia giovane non sono poi molte che si possano così sprecare. Diamo addosso alle imitazioni, ai luoghi comuni, alle banalità, ai borghesismi e positivismi in filosofia. Questo è il mio programma e spero che sarà anche il suo.]*

25. See R. Longhi, "I pittori futuristi," *La Voce*, 10 April 1913.
26. G. Bastianelli, "La musica futurista," *La Voce*, 10 April 1913.
27. G.P. Lucini, "Come ho sorpassato il Futurismo," *La Voce*, 10 April 1913.
28. [Original in Italian: "*Non voglio che sotto specie di libertà si concedano i privilegi della ferocia e del brigantaggio, che colle fisime alla maggiore virilità del carattere, si insulti la donna, e, con il pretesto della patria, si faccia l'Italia croata: nego il sofisma della gloria, perché con ciò si instaura il dispotismo.*"

29. G. Prezzolini, "Alcune idee chiare intorno al futurismo," *La Voce*, 10 April 1913
30. G. Prezzolini, "Il processo a *Lacerba*," *La Voce*, 3 July 1913.
31. B. Croce, "Di un carattere della più recente letteratura italiana," *La Critica*, 1907, 177–190.
32. G. Prezzolini, "Un anno di Lacerba," *La Voce*, 28 January 1914
33. Prezzolini's letter to Papini in Archivio Fondazione Primo Conti, Fiesole

[Original in Italian: *Da due anni—Prezzolini wrote to Papíni on 25 September 1914—voi fate propaganda per il menefreghismo, lo scetticismo, contro la disciplina, l'autorità, il dovere, tutti i luoghi comuni che reggono le nazioni . . . dell'Italia, di questo paese reale, come esso è, di quello che chiamate alla guerra, voi ui siete semprefregati altamente, badando soltanto e dichiarandolo, ai vostri begli spiriti. No, non si ha il diritto, quando si è messo sotto i piedi tutto ciò che forma l'Italia (ossia, la tradizione italiana, la famiglia, la vita morale, l'autorità, ecc.) di dire alla gente: andate a sbuzzarvi. Non si ha diritto, quando si è fatto di tutto per disorganizzare il paese, di pretendere che i capi di questo paese lo conducano a una di quelle lotte nelle quali soltanto gli organizzati riescono. Tu hai costantemente, ostinatamente deriso, schernito, combattuto la disciplina, e se la tua parola avesse avuto efficacia, l'Italia sarebbe ancora più indisciplinata . . . Di fronte alle vostre chiacchiere gli uomini di governo sono dei re di intelligenza e di saggezza: con voi l'esercito austriaco si sarebbe trovato a Milano in quindici giorni.*]

Chapter 3

The Conquest of Modernity: From Modernist Nationalism to Fascism

In public Benito Mussolini seldom acknowledged his debts to the cultural movements that had contributed to fascism's formation. In private, however, he was often quite explicit in issuing generous certificates of recognition, especially to the avant-gardes of the early twentieth century, chief among them the futurist movement and the group that been centered around the journal *La Voce*. His encounter with *La Voce,* Mussolini confided to his preferred biographer, had been a revelation for him, giving him the certainty that he was a man of destiny, someone "called upon to announce a new age."[1] And with equal generosity *il duce* spoke of his debts to futurism: "I formally declare that without Futurism there would never have been a fascist revolution."[2]

Even apart from Mussolini's statements, which are hardly negligible in their own right, it is difficult to deny the participation of the avant-garde in the formation of fascist political culture. Collaborators and important readers of *La Voce* became fascist militants; the principal exponents of futurism were among the founding fathers of the fascist movement and firmly adhered to the totalitarian regime, actively collaborating in the creation of its culture and the diffusion of its ideology; and some, such as Marinetti and Sironi, remained faithful to Mussolini and fascism into the years of the Republic of Salò. Yet the overt participation of avant-garde culture in the generation and the fortunes of fascism has never sufficed to prevent the rise of a lively debate, begun already in the early 1920s, about the nature of their relation, especially in the case of Futurism. In 1923 Giuseppe Prezzolini, for example, denied that there was any ideal connection between futurism and fascism as it had come to be in power, for futurism was antitraditionalist, individualist, libertarian, antimoralist, and anti-Catholic, while fascism was classicist, hierarchic, authoritarian, moralist, and Catholic.[3] Benedetto Croce, however, writing in 1924, urged the opposite view: "To anyone

with a sense of historical connections, the ideal origins of fascism are to be found in futurism."[4] And in support of his claim the philosopher listed the futurist matrices of fascism: the cult of action, the disposition toward violence, the intolerance of dissent, desire for the new, disdain for culture and tradition, and the glorification of youth. Ironically, both Croce and Prezzolini may have been right, and, at the same time, wrong. The same might be said for many others who have continued to discuss this question in more or less the same way, sometimes accentuating the points of convergence or consensus between the two movements, sometimes emphasizing their moments of discrepancy or disagreement. Either interpretation can seem valid if one proceeds, as did Croce and Prezzolini, by isolating a single aspect or a particular moment in the relations between the two movements and using that as a basis for generalization.

Analysis of the relations between fascism and futurism, however, cannot be limited to collating their doctrinal agreements or to registering, in a sort of parallel history, their record of coalition and conflict. Though certainly useful, ultimately such a procedure proves critically sterile, for in practice it merely leads to the reaffirmation of what was already self-evident to the historical protagonists themselves. We know, after all, that futurism was not identical with fascism on the historical, cultural, or political levels: any such identification was repeatedly contested by futurists who were neither fascists nor antifascists, and it conflicts with the variety of contradictory political ideologies that were lodged within futurism both before and after the arrival of fascism in power, contradictions that neither prefigured nor were ever resolved within the ideology of fascism. But this recognition does not imply that one can sustain the view, urged by apologists of futurism committed to minimizing its involvement in fascism, that the culture of futurism was of a kind that differed fundamentally in its values and its myths from fascist political culture. Nor can the collaboration of futurism and fascism be dismissed with the reductive thesis that futurist participation in fascism was merely a matter of personal inclination, an historical problem of secondary importance, one to be explained by individual opportunism or ingenuity. For at the origins of that thesis is a presupposition informing debate about the larger problem of the relations between fascism and culture, and especially the problem of fascism's attitude toward modernity and the role of modernist culture in totalitarian politics. Fascism, it was long assumed, possessed neither an ideology nor a culture of its own; it was, instead, a reactionary movement that was fundamentally antimodern, that looked nostalgically to the past and that sought to arrest the process of modernity in order to stop or turn back the movement of modernity. The modernist avant-gardes, it was likewise assumed, differed absolutely in their very essence from the politics of totalitarianism, and on the basis of these assumptions one could explain the widespread participation of important figures of Italian culture and the modernist avant-garde in both the movement and the regime of fascism solely by motives of self-interest or political naiveté. Avant-garde intellectuals who became fascists, it was often insisted, did so on the basis of a profound misapprehension of what fascism really was. Yet while personal

interest or political misunderstanding can hardly be excluded from among the motivations that informed Futurist participation in fascism, an account formulated in more properly historical terms would need to address other and more important facts: that the encounter between Futurism and fascism occurred in the period of fascism's formation, when nobody would have bet a penny on its success; and that the Futurists' participation in fascism when in power took place with a full awareness of what fascism was, and that the Futurists, though disagreeing with some decisions and some orientations of the regime, never suggested that its totalitarian politics was in conflict with their conception of culture, with their idea of modernity, or with their vision of the destiny of the nation.

More recently, study of the relations between fascism and culture has entered a new stage, one that permits us to examine the cultural, ideological, and political relations between Futurism and fascism from a new perspective.[5] Few scholars now find a fundamental incompatibility between the terms fascism and culture, or fascism and modernity; and whereas twenty years ago it was considered almost blasphemy, at least within the field of Italian historiography, to define fascism as essentially modern, today it has become common to speak of fascism as an "alternative modernism," or to use terms such as "modernist fascism" or "fascist modernism."[6] Studies in this direction have been fruitful and innovative, and increasingly studies of fascist culture have given greater attention to fascism's attitude toward modernity—a theme fundamental to understanding the very nature of fascism—even if not always with methods or results that appear wholly convincing in relation to the history of the relations between culture and politics in fascism. "Fascist modernism" has been especially studied by literary critics and historians of art, sometimes with notable results, often drawing upon the interpretation of fascism as "the aestheticization of politics" which Benjamin proposed.[7] Yet however suggestive this interpretation, it can also be misleading if it obscures fascism's other important feature, its "politicization of aesthetics," which not only inspired fascism's attitude toward avant-garde culture, but stood at the very origin of the encounter between futurism and fascism and of the participation of many modernist intellectuals in fascism. Such caution might seem obvious, but it is also necessary if we are to avoid letting emphasis on "the aestheticization of politics" lead to a kind of "aestheticization" of fascism itself, privileging only its literary, aesthetic, and symbolic aspects while losing sight of motivations and matrices that are essentially political in nature. To do so risks trivializing the fundamentally political nature of fascism, its culture, its ideology, and its symbolic universe. Even when studying strictly aesthetic manifestations of fascism, such as its political style, its liturgy for the masses, or its copious symbolic production, all of them characteristic and essential elements in the fascist mode of doing politics, it is important not to lose sight of the political dimension of fascist culture. This does not mean that one should underestimate the problem of "the aestheticization of politics," as I have argued for some time in urging that fascism's "politics of the spectacle" was the manifestation of a new

"aesthetic conception of political life."[8] Nevertheless, the aesthetic dimension cannot be analyzed separately from the totalitarian conception of politics, for it was a consequence of that very conception. The symbolic production of fascism was not an outcome of its ideological incoherence,[9] but the consequential expression of a vision of life and politics specific to a political movement that was simultaneously a new secular religion.[10] Seen from this viewpoint, "the aestheticization of politics" acquires particular significance insofar as it is a manifestation of the *sacralization of politics* that fascism undertook, a project pursued with the full consensus and active participation of modernist intellectuals and artists, who collaborated enthusiastically in the construction of the symbolic universe of fascist religion. That project, the search for a new form of secular or lay religion for modern Italy, was in turn an important aspect of various attempts to fashion a synthesis between nationalism and modernity which were pursued by the avant-gardes in early twentieth century Italy; and it was in the course of that search that most of the Futurists adhered to fascism from the beginning, viewing it as first a movement, then a regime that was capable of realizing that synthesis by instituting a political religion of the nation and creating an "Italian modernity" that would also be a model for a new European civilization.

Futurist involvement in totalitarian politics, beyond any record of discrepancies and conflicts, originated within fundamental cultural connections that can be better identified if we situate the problem of Futurism's relationship to fascism within the more ample perspective of the problem of the relations between the modernist avant-garde and the cultural origins of fascism. The most important connection concerned attitudes toward "the experience of modernity" as that was perceived, experienced, and interpreted by avant-garde culture and fascism. I will consider only the political side of modernist culture, *modernism* understood here as a vision of modernity, rather than a sociological understanding of *modernization,* even though modernization processes (industrialization, scientific discoveries, technological development, urbanization, mass society, globalization of capital, unification of the world) furnish the scenario that stands in the background of our analysis. By *political modernism*—using the definition of modernism proposed by Marshall Berman—I mean those political ideologies that arose in connection with modernization, ideologies that seek to render human beings capable of mastering the processes of modernization in order not to be overwhelmed by the "vortex of modernity," giving them "the power to change the world that is changing them, to make their own way within the vortex and to make it their own."[11] Futurism and fascism are both, in this sense, manifestations of political modernism that belong to a common cultural terrain. The "conquest of modernity," as we may call the aspiration to have the capacity and the power to master the processes of modernization, did not follow a single path. Political antagonism among the ideal alternatives of modernity has been perhaps one the most disquieting, ambiguous, and tragic features of the twentieth century. Many, and not just the Futurists, have believed that the surest and most rapid path toward the "conquest of modernity" was that proposed by totalitarian move-

ments. Perhaps we can better understand some of the motives for their choice by examining the Futurists.

NATIONALISM AND MODERNITY IN THE ITALIAN AVANT-GARDE

Fascism, as one scholar has perceptively remarked, represented the "politicization of Italian modernism."[12] Yet in reality, that politicization was already well under way long before the appearance of the fascist political movement, having been initiated by the cultural avant-garde. The affirmation of a cultural militancy that could wield political influence or engage in political action was shared across the spectrum of Italian avant-gardes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Prior to World War I these movements gave birth to a generational revolt, conducted under the banner of the creative role assigned to youth, that involved a radical contestation of parliamentary government, one in which divergent visions of modernity, even though posed as alternatives to one another, were aligned in a common front against rationalist, liberal, and bourgeois modernity. The laboratory of the modernist avant-gardes proposed a series of themes and myths of a new political and artistic culture, motifs that flowed together into fascism after the Great War and contributed to its political culture and its attitude toward modernity. This does not mean, however, that these movements can be defined as protofascist, for from the same terrain of Italian modernist culture in the early twentieth century there also developed other syntheses of the same motifs, different cultural and political movements opposed to fascism.

The avant-garde cultural movements that arose in Italy at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as Futurism and the groups that coalesced around the reviews *Leonardo* and *La Voce*, shared a common note of political nationalism which manifested itself in what I have elsewhere called "the myth of Italianism," a conviction that Italy was destined to have a role as a great protagonist and exercise a civilizing mission in the life of the twentieth century. Toward that end, all these movements believed in the necessity of a radical process of moral, cultural, and political regeneration meant to give birth to a "new Italian." Long before the birth of fascism, Futurism urged the necessity of overcoming the barriers between culture and politics by means of a symbiosis between culture and life, a symbiosis designed to reawaken the intellectual and moral energies of the Italians, to endow them with a new sense of Italianness and spur them to the conquest of new preeminences. Artists and intellectuals were to abandon the privileged isles of aristocratic individualism and immerse themselves in the impetuous flux of modern life in order to become the artificers, the spiritual guides of the New Italy.

The cultural roots of futurism and fascism intersect in the common terrain of "modernist nationalism."[13] The term, which I have used elsewhere, does not refer to a specific political or cultural movement, but defines a state of mind, a sensibility, a cultural orientation centered on the myth of the nation, a sensibil-

ity that we can find in all the avant-garde movements formed in Italy during the fifteen-year period prior to the Great War. What characterized this nationalism was essentially its attitude toward modernity, perceived as a new dimension in human history, within which the nation could grow and expand its power. Modernist nationalism was not conservative, nor did it harbor nostalgia for a preindustrial world, nor did it dream of turning back the clock of history. Its principal characteristic was the frank acceptance of modern life as an era of irreversible transformations that were affecting society, consciousness, and human sensibility, and that were preparing conditions for the rise of new forms of collective life, a new civilization. Modernist nationalism welcomed modernity as an explosion of human energies and an expansion of life without precedents in history, an enthusiasm that was united with a tragic and activist sense of existence—an "artificial optimism,"[14] to use Marinetti's words, that rejected nihilism with an exalted feeling of new plenitude and an affirmation of vitality in the life of those individuals and nations who would fling themselves into the vortex of modernity. For this particular kind of nationalism modernity was an acceleration of the rhythms of time, the invention and multiplication of technical means for the domination and exploitation of nature, an expansion of energies both human and material, an intensification of individual and collective life through struggle, a new sense of the world. In the field of politics, modernity meant a crisis of traditional aristocracies, an epoch of new masses and the rise of new elites, the predominance of collectivities over individuals, renovation of the State, and political and economic expansion. Modernist nationalism opposed neither modernization nor industrialization, processes it rather intended to promote and accelerate in order to furnish the nation with the means to compete within a global economy. Instead it wanted to master and discipline them to consolidate the cohesion of the nation and enable its participation in world politics. To modernize the nation meant not just giving it new instruments of economic and social development, but regenerating it from archaic habits born during the course of centuries of enslavement, furnishing it with a modern consciousness by means of a new culture. What distinguished this nationalism, what made it modernist, was its intention to reconcile intellectual culture, or *spiritualismo* (spiritualism)—understood here generically as the primacy of culture, ideas, and feelings—with mass industrial society, an intention that aimed at opposing and avoiding the negative effects brought in the wake of modernity, such as materialism, skepticism, hedonistic egoism, egalitarian conformity, etc.—all that modernist nationalism identified with the rationalist and individualistic tradition of the Enlightenment. Toward that end modernist nationalism argued the necessity of accompanying the industrial revolution and modernization with a "revolution of the mind" order to form the sensibility, the character, the conscience of a new Italian who could comprehend and confront the challenges of modern life, who could firmly adhere to the superiority of the mental forces that would assure unity and collective identity to the nation in the face of the development of material and technological forces. To accomplish this mental revolution, mod-

ernist nationalism appealed less to reason than to the energy of feelings and emotions; it sought to reactivate the mythopoetic faculties in order to create new and modern myths of the nation—a secular religion of the nation—to oppose the negative consequences and disgregatory effects of the crisis of traditional society. But even though modernist nationalism availed itself of the mythic use of history in order to construct new symbolic and mythic worlds in support of its religion of the nation, it never entertained a fetishistic cult of tradition, never engaged in a nostalgic pursuit of an imaginary past order of harmony and perfection. Instead it participated in the changes of modernity and projected the nation toward the future, doing so with the tragic optimism of a will to power that would affirm itself in struggle and conquest. The instrumental appeal to myths of past grandeur, adopted to spur the renovation of national pride, coexisted in modernist nationalism with new myths of future grandeurs yet to be conquered; likewise, the glorification of the nation's preeminence coexisted with an ambition to create values and principles appropriate to a modern civilization deemed to be universal; and likewise, again, belief in the primacy of intellectual culture coexisted with an exaltation of a realism based on force. For modernist nationalism, war and violence could be necessary instruments for the fulfillment of the conquest of modernity, the regeneration of the nation, and the construction of a new Italian civilization for the modern age.

"TO BE MODERNS!"

The confrontation between nationalism and modernity in Italian political culture went back to the origins of a united Italy. From the Risorgimento on, the highest aspiration of the Italian patriots had been to raise Italy to the level of the great modern nation-states, to form a national consciousness that would furnish a feeling of collective identity for the various Italian peoples who, though inhabiting the same peninsula, had remained separated from one another by profound political, social, and cultural differences virtually since the fall of the Roman empire. The founding fathers of a united Italy assigned the new State the task of liberating Italians from the habits of the "old man," of turning them into truly "modern men," as Silvio Spaventa put it.[15] They conceived the conquest of modernity as a process of civilizing the nation under the banner of a nationalism that pursued the ideal of "liberty and progress." Yet this ideal was also understood differently in the two principal movements of the Risorgimento, the liberalism of Cavour and the radicalism of Mazzini. For Mazzini, the conquest of modernity was to occur through a political and mental revolution, with the creation of a Third Italy that Mazzini conceived as a democratic theocracy founded on the faith of a people morally united in a religion of the *patria* (fatherland); this would be a country that would rapidly take its place in the vanguard of the modern nations and usher in a new era of civilization. Cavour and the liberals, who actually created modern Italy, interpreted the conquest of modernity as the nation's ascent toward conditions of freedom, civic life, and social progress, an ascent

conducted under the moderate guide of parliamentary government. The contrast between these ways of interpreting modernity survived the immediate process of unification to become a permanent and defining feature of Italian political culture in the late nineteenth century, becoming more salient as the nation experienced a growing state of disillusionment and dissatisfaction, especially among younger generations who were raised under the liberal regime. For notwithstanding the progress achieved by Italy in the social and economic fields, the conquest of modernity appeared an arduous undertaking for a nation-state constituted so recently, still so uncertain in its identity and unstable in its moral cohesion, while all the while the transformations of modernity were increasing with an accelerating rhythm. In the closing years of the nineteenth century Francesco de Sanctis, the chief educator of a united Italy, entrusted a new generation with the mission of achieving a moral and intellectual reformation that would give Italians a modern national conscience: Italians had

> to convert the modern world into *our* world, studying it, assimilating it, transforming it. . . . The great task of the nineteenth century has come to its end. We are witnessing a new fermentation of ideas, the harbinger of a new order. Already, in this century, we can see the next one forming itself. And this time we must be certain not to find ourselves at the end of the line, or in second place.[16]

Italy, at the turn of the century, was once more questioning its destiny as a nation in an era of disturbing changes produced by modernization. Humanity had entered a new stage of modernity; new forms of life and civilization were rising because of the "rapid and immense development of large industry," with its repercussions felt in every class, every society, and every nation, changes that were shattering a "thousand year old equilibrium of the world . . . not only in economics, but in politics and morals," as the sociologist Mario Morasso wrote in 1905.[17] Morasso was among the most typical representatives of modernist nationalism and he formulated many of the myths of modernolatry that would be echoed in futurism. With turgid rhetoric but clear-sighted realism, Morasso depicted the principal processes of the enormous transformation that was reshaping society in the age of imperialism. Its effects were felt in every sector of individual and collective life. Modern man was living "in a new world in which unimaginable new forces are unfolding . . . which have transformed not only the bases of international political life and the moral conduct of individuals, but the entire system of economic relations." Economic relations now had "a preponderant influence over other kinds of relations, over man's feelings and habits, over human nature, over the functions of government; they are creating a new politics and even a new consciousness. . . . " Large-scale industry was a having a

> profound repercussion . . . on the course of public and private life, on the control of our sensibility and our activities . . . human life has emerged from it entirely changed, age-old customs have been destroyed, deep-rooted habits of our soul have been cast aside . . . and the social order has been overturned to bring it into line with the new future.[18]

This was a "new modernity," and the predominant reaction to it among Italian modernists at the beginning of the twentieth century was one of unbridled enthusiasm for the new forms of expanding human life. The conquest of modernity now meant assimilating those forms that produced, as Marinetti wrote, "the complete renovation of human sensibility" and a "massive expansion of human sensation":

> acceleration of life . . . love of the new and unexpected . . . horror at the prospect of living quietly, love of danger and inclination toward a quotidian heroism . . . destruction of the sense of a *beyond* and increased value of the individual who wants to live his life . . . multiplication of human desires and ambitions and a surpassing of their previous boundaries . . . man multiplied by the machine . . . love of "records" . . . a passion for the city, the negation of distances . . . a new sense of the world . . . a need to feel oneself at the center, as the judge and motor of the infinite both explored and unexplored.[19]

Futurism glorified modern life with a Dionysian exaltation of everything generated by modernity and its continuous explosion of energies, even its most violent and brutal aspects. "For the first time," wrote Boccioni, "we Futurists are giving an example of an enthusiastic human adherence to the form of civilization that is forming itself before our eyes. . . . We are ecstatic in the face of modernity and feel the innovative delirium of our epoch."[20]

This feeling of enthusiastic adherence to modernity has often been attributed solely to Futurism. But in reality it was shared by the entire spectrum of avant-garde artists and intellectuals in Italy, even by anti-futurists, as were many of the Vocians. "To be moderns! To comprehend within oneself the vital forms that are characteristic of our age," proclaimed the Triestine writer Scipio Slataper in *La Voce*.[21] His exhortation might be considered the symbolic password of modernist nationalism. In the new cultural climate of the early twentieth century, compounded of modernism and nationalism, there was an almost unanimous effort to exhort Italy to enter the "vibrant turbine" of "the great mechanism of modern life."[22] Even nationalists whose cultural formation was essentially classicist, such as Enrico Corradini, founder of the Italian nationalist movement, were obsessed with enthusiasm for the dynamism of modern life. Corradini lauded the

> spirit of the new life . . . greater and more powerful than it has ever been . . . the beginning of a future still greater and more powerful . . . the rhythm of life is now extraordinarily violent, as quick as lightning. . . . The spirit, like a global whirlwind that is sweeping ahead the unreflexive multitudes, is the spirit of the new life. . . . [It] overwhelms everything, because we have not yet seen the rise of self-conscious men who are equal to the new life of the world and stronger than the new forces. Here is the immense tragedy of the present. The epic of the future will consist in the victory of man over the means and forces of life, more formidable than ever.[23]

The enthusiasm for modernity was also shared by a young revolutionary socialist, Benito Mussolini: "We feel ourselves attracted to a life that is multiplex, harmo-

nious, vertiginous, global."[24] For him, as for the futurists, the essence of modernity was represented by the speed of time and the pace of change: "The word that epitomizes and renders the unmistakable note of our century is 'movement'. . . . Movement everywhere, and acceleration of the rhythm of life."[25]

The groups of the modernist avant-garde in Italy that accepted the primacy of the nation as axiomatic also shared a principal objective, "to reconnect the new expectations for Italian culture with the great economic progress that we have been observing already for some years," as Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini wrote in 1906.[26] Papini and Prezzolini were founders of the journal *Leonardo* and the extremely young promoters of the first Italian avant-garde of the twentieth century, as well as militants in the recently born movement of nationalism (see *MSN,* 81–191). The intellectuals who collaborated on *La Voce* were still more explicit in urging intellectuals to unite themselves with "Lombard industrialists, Genovese shipbuilders, bankers and businessmen of northern Italy," to work together for the "success of the fatherland in the struggle among the nations that are now contesting the world."[27] Yet behind these exhortations, and behind the myth of Italianism that they embodied, there was also a disquieting conflict between faith in the innate virtues of the Italian nation, those virtues that were showing signs of rebirth and prompting the younger generation to wish to reconquer Italy's cultural primacy, and an inferiority complex that younger intellectuals felt when they compared Italy with the more advanced nations of Europe. Giovanni Amendola, the future leader of the anti-fascist opposition, observed in 1905 that Italy "has begun to take great strides and is firmly on the path to wealth, but it will not maintain its position if it does not simultaneously pursue the path of power."[28] Another writer, the future leader of fascism who was then an internationalist socialist, hailed the new Italy he saw before him in 1909; Italy was:

> . . . gradually losing the characteristics of a cemetery. Where lovers once dreamed and nightingales once sang, the factory whistles are now screaming. Italy is pulling ahead in the great stadium where the Nations are running the great Marathon of World supremacy. The heroes are giving way to producers. Having once fought, we now work. The plow is making the earth fecund and the pneumatic drill is gutting the city. Italy is preparing itself to fulfil a major role in a new epoch of human history.[29]

Very similar expressions appear in the "Manifesto of Futurist Painters" of 1910:

> In the eyes of other countries, Italy is still a land of the dead, a vast Pompei, white with sepulchres. But Italy is being reborn. Its political resurgence will be followed by a cultural resurgence. In the land inhabited by the illiterate peasant, schools will be set up; in the land where doing nothing in the sun was the only available profession, millions of machines are already roaring; in the land where traditional aesthetics reigned supreme, new flights of artistic inspiration are emerging and dazzling the world with their brilliance.[30]

The commitment to militant cultural engagement, which will gradually turn toward politics, is discernible in the avant-gardes from the beginning and derives from a determination to accelerate the process of modernization in Italy, flanking industrialization with the development of a new national culture. The modernization of society and its productive forces was to produce a modernization of culture and sensibility. That could occur only through the collective assimilation of new ideals intended to form the conscience of a "new Italian" and guide the nation in its "conquest of modernity." Alfredo Oriani, a solitary teacher of the younger generation whose works would be numbered among the canonical texts of fascism, warned that, "A Third Italy without an ideal significance in the world would be the most absurd miracle of modern history, a resurrection without life, a reappearance of an apparition that merely passes upon its way."[31]

A MODERN RELIGION FOR THE "NEW ITALIAN"

During the years that preceded the Great War the vicissitudes of Italian culture can be interpreted as a competition for the elaboration and affirmation of an ideal of modernity. The principal intellectuals and artists who gave life to the renewal of Italian culture during these years were all engaged in this competition, which soon seeped into the world of politics. Each proposed an ideal of modernity that was meant to shape the conscience of modern Italians. Giovanni Papini admitted that his greatest ambition was to become "the spiritual guide of younger Italy and the Italy of the future . . . I would like to be the spiritual reorganizer of this very old race."[32] Prezzolini created *La Voce* with the intention of achieving the moral and intellectual reformation of Italians, educating them in the cult of a "religion of modern man."[33] Marinetti and the futurists proposed themselves as the guides of a cultural revolution that would forge the modern Italian, liberating him from all devotion to the cultural heritage of the past and the myth of tradition. The same ambition to shape the Italian of the twentieth century also inspired the cultural engagement of intellectuals who were not part of the avant-garde but who enjoyed prestige and influence among the young. Benedetto Croce, with his vast work as critic, philosopher, and historian, assigned himself the task of forming "a modern Italian conscience that would be European and national."[34] Giovanni Gentile, philosopher and educational theorist, dedicated his work to the task of reforming the character of Italians in order to bring to completion the national revolution of the Risorgimento, forge the spiritual unity of the nation, and once more conduct the Italian nation into the vanguard of modernity.[35]

The idea that culture possessed a militant function, that it was intellectual activity that formed the modern conscience of a new Italian, was common to the different movements of the modernist avant-garde. In common also was the conviction that to be modern meant first of all, to say it with Croce, to possess a "culture of the whole man," which, in the consciousness of modern man, was to take over the place left empty by the crisis of traditional religion.[36] Modernity, from

this point of view, was understood as an epoch of crisis and of transition from one system of values rooted in the pre-industrial world to another that belonged to a new civilization whose construction would have to be entrusted to modern man's capacity to know how to master his own destiny and shape the future. As Prezzolini wrote:

> Modern man lives without the faith of the past and without any faith in the present and often without any faith in a faith of the future. Destined to live in a new civilization, he feels that he has been sacrificed, yet without having any self-awareness of the cause, which might render him great. He feels his own tragedy, yet cannot climb high enough intellectually to turn himself into Fate and master his own dilemma. Whence the sense of dismay, the darkness, the nihilism of so many souls. . . . The individual is no longer supported by those social barriers that separated, but also sustained, that hindered him from rising but also protected him from falling, and every day he finds himself faced with the alternative of becoming either a master of the world or the last rag of flesh that a blind force has seized to sweep the streets. Something great is being born, he senses, but the immense labor is twisting the social body with spasms of pain.[37]

The perception of living in a crisis of civilization was fundamental in the experience of modernity for the younger generation. "The collective spirit," wrote Mussolini in 1903, "is not yet entirely formed and is torn between the old and the new, between modern ideals and ancient beliefs."[38] Mixing Marx and Nietzsche, the young revolutionary understood modernity above all as an age of the transmutation of values, a change that would lead, through socialism, to an overcoming of Christian civilization and the advent of a new pagan culture guided by the will to power "which unfolds in the creation of new values, whether moral, artistic, or social," and which

> gives a purpose to life. . . . The superman is the symbol, he is the exponent of this anxious and tragic period of crisis that the European consciousness is undergoing in the search for new sources of pleasure, beauty, and the ideal. He is the confirmation of our weakness, but at the same time the hope of our redemption. He is the sunset—and he is also the sunrise. He is above all a hymn to life—to life experienced with all our energies in a continual tension that is striving to something higher, something finer, something more tempting.[39]

The problem of constructing a new civilization, even if not always treated explicitly, was at the center of the debate about the nature of modernity on the part of the avant-gardes, and it shaped their search for a new ideal of *total life*, within which the search for a new synthesis between nationalism and modernity began to assume special importance. Italy, affirmed Croce, "will not be spiritually great if it will not conquer its own religious conscience, which is at the same time a philosophical conscience."[40] Young avant-gardists would have had little difficulty agreeing, though their understanding of what the new "religious conscience" would be differed sharply. In effect, as Prezzolini wrote in 1912, all "the younger generation of Italy" felt "that a vast and serious movement . . . could not be achieved except under some total form. . . . It had to have depth, ethical or

metaphysical or in a certain religious line . . . the movement had to be *total,* which is to say it had to speak to man, to the man of today, to the Italian of today." The intuition that "something great was being born" gave a note of messianic expectation to the search for a new total vision of life, a note that was evident in the demand for a *new religion,* something that the avant-garde considered indispensable for enabling the nation to continue its pursuit of the conquest of modernity.[41]

The search for a new secular religion was an essentially modern phenomenon, and in no way represented a resurgent form of older millenarianisms or eschatological visions typical of the premodern era (see *NF,* 31). The demand sprang spontaneously, so to speak, from the same enthusiastic experience of modernity, which, it is true, might be assimilated to that state of "collective effervescence" that generates religious states of mind.[42] In part it emerged from the typically modernist demand to formulate a response to the "death of God," but in part it constituted a polemical attack against rationalist political ideologies, understood as the theoretical systems of understanding and defining the course of history which had dominated the political culture of the nineteenth century. Pragmatism, the new idealism of Croce and Gentile, the various philosophies of life formulated in the wake of Nietzsche, united in giving prestige to the experience of faith in the life of individuals and collectivities. To the culture of the avant-garde, modernity, far from having decreed the definitive decline of religion before the radiant triumph of reason, was viewed as an epoch in which the force of faith would regain its vigor. The death of God was inaugurating a new era of religious searching.[43] The problem of modernity, observed Croce in 1908, was above all a religious problem: "The entire contemporary world is searching for a religion," driven by the "need for an orientation concerning life and reality, the need for a concept of life and reality."[44] In this sense all the avant-garde movements that arose in Italy prior to fascism aspired to be religious movements, to elaborate a new sense of life and the world, to propagate it through modern myths for the education of the masses and their integration into the national State, to give them the collective conscience of the nation as a community of values and of destiny.[45] The religious problem, observed Antonio Anzilotti, a young historian who contributed to *La Voce,* was inherent in the very nature of modernity, an age that had begun with an affirmation of disbelief but now was setting off in search of a religious faith from which it could draw new energies for action: "only the religious sense of life, which identifies the realization of the common weal with the development of the better part of our personality, can give absolute value to each individual and collective act."[46] One might define the entire experiment of *La Voce* as an attempt to give modernity a new religious faith, an idealistic soul. Though they appreciated economic and industrial progress, the intellectuals centered around *La Voce* understood the "conquest of modernity" above all as an increased capacity for man to control his own destiny. And for them the search for a new faith was strictly connected with the myth of Italianism, with the ideal of a new Italy that would be a protagonist in world affairs. "Italy must be intellectually great, it must give life to

a modern civilization," proclaimed Prezzolini, the review's editor.[47] His faith in Italy was wholly shared by his colleagues, all firmly convinced that Italy was "a great nation, a nation pressed by the urgency of global competition, and it has declared that it will accept the struggle and hope in its victory."[48] The goal to which the Vocians looked was the regeneration of the Italian character that would form the "soul" of a new Italy. *La Voce* championed the model of a modern Italian, who would derive from his humanistic faith moral energy and a capacity to live within "the multiform life of his age," to feel "truly with a sense of stupor, anger, veneration, rage, and love—the life of today."[49] The Italianism of *La Voce*, nevertheless, continued to coexist with a humanist and cosmopolitan vision that emphasized "an integral and humanistic education of man" as the basis for the formation of a modern Italian conscience, because "education is one thing alone, the education of *man*. . . . One will not create good Italians if one has not first created good men."[50]

The modernism of *La Voce* did not imply a rejection of history or national tradition, but intended to avail itself of both as pedagogical tools for the formation of the modern Italian. A religion, even a secular and modern religion, had to have its own universe of myths and rites, just as the modern nation of mass society could not do without myths by which to educate the masses according to the principles and values of modern humanism, the cultural and intellectual foundation of a new mass national democracy. Only "by creating a myth for modern society, a catechism, a clergy, will it be possible to realize practical democratic reform."[51] History and tradition, for the Vocians, were sources on which to draw for constructing a secular mythology for the "modern religion," for forming the conscience of the modern Italian. Universal history could become "the true modern myth."[52] And yet the Vocians did not agree at all about which religion should be the educational foundation of the modern Italian. Prezzolini and those who were most influenced by Croce and Gentile thought they would elaborate a religion of modern man upon the foundations of neo-idealist philosophy. Others, such as Giovanni Boine, believed "that it will be Catholicism that will restore religion to the world."[53] It was this diversity of attitudes and ideals in their understanding of the religious need of modern man that prevented the Vocians from becoming a true and genuine movement, exponents of a total vision of life, of a new modern religion with myths, symbols, and rites. Others would soon fill the gap.

The militants of the nationalist movement were considerably more united and decisive. They wished to institute "a religion of the nation" that would integrate myths about the nation's past glories with myths of modern greatness still to be conquered. As a model they took Japan, which had completed a process of revolutionary modernization without sacrificing its national tradition.[54] Corradini also appealed to the experience of the French Revolution to invoke the institution of a "religion of the nation" as a spiritual force uniting the individual to the collectivity, perpetuating the sense of national identity across the successive generations through time (see *CL*, 23–30). The nation had to become the modern

divinity of a new and secular religion that was to be propagated through the institution of rites and symbols, celebrating the cult of ancestry: "we have to create symbols that can enfold a collectivity, contain the masses, synthesize countless isolated cases of individual energies . . . the crowd, the collectivity, these must be the substitutes for the hero in the regime of today."[55] The highest symbols of the "religion of the nation" in mass society were to be the monuments realized not to celebrate an individual, but as an "expression of collective and successive thought, of a social and national ideal." As Morasso had already observed, in modern times the monumental presupposes "the notion of collectivity, for it is made, to use a modern phrase, by the public and for the public; only a people can quicken it into life, and it is a people, or rather the soul of a people, that a monument must contain and represent."[56] As an aesthetic model for the modern monument, Morasso proposed the machine, the collective creation of "countless energies disciplined and directed by strong discipline and an inflexible power to one goal; here one sees a true profusion of forces in search of the optimum and the enormous."[57]

In modernist nationalism the aestheticization of politics stemmed directly from the sacralization of politics, the process of institutionalizing a secular religion necessary for the spiritual unity of a mass society that wished to confront the challenges of modernity. The futurists, too, could easily have subscribed to this project of a "religion of the nation," notwithstanding their very different attitude toward history and tradition, poles apart from that of the Vocians and the nationalists. Though they felt that the conquest of modernity required the violent destruction of the nationalists' cult, they agreed with them in wishing to place "Divina Italia" (Divine Italy) on the altar of a secular religion, in glorifying the Italian race, and in endowing it with an innate vocation for universal cultural preeminence.[58] Boccioni was tormented at seeing "the brutish state in which the aesthetic ideals of our great country have fallen, even though we have 40,000,000 inhabitants who are considered the most intelligent in the world." Yet he also firmly believed that "Italy is a young and strong country that will become great—period. In spiritual terms, everything has to be remade—and therefore, in aesthetic terms."[59] Futurism justified its furious iconoclasm of the past precisely on the grounds that it was necessary to proceed with a violent modernization of Italy, to launch it forward in the quest for new greatness. The futurists argued they were "definitely at the head of world art," living proof that "the constructive Italian spirit is returning to dominance in the art of our age."[60] The myth of Italianism was their religion, and to it they consistently remained faithful, regardless of whether their politics oscillated between the right and the revolutionary left, even during the years when fascism was already in power.[61]

THE NATION'S RITE OF INITIATION TO MODERNITY

In the search for a secular religion for modern Italy, the modernist avant-gardes inevitably entered into the realm of politics, where the antagonism

between differing ideals of modernity was more glaring and their conflict unavoidable, for interest in the question spanned the spectrum of Italian political and intellectual life. Croce, for example, sought to create an Italian conscience that would be "not socialistic and not imperialistic, but would reproduce in a new form that of the Italian Risorgimento."[62] His was a rational, liberal, bourgeois ideal of modernity that he considered fully capable of enabling Italy to address the challenges of modern life, guided by a parliamentary democracy, and from the century's beginning he had committed himself to combatting the new mentality made up of mysticism, activism, irrationalism, aestheticism, and imperialism, which he regarded as a diseased and pathological form of modernity to be identified first with decadence and later with fascism. But to most of the younger generation the liberal and bourgeois ideal of modernity, transmitted by the founding fathers of the national state, already seemed an inadequate model; and within the culture of the avant-gardes, criticisms against Enlightenment, rationalist, and individualist modernity were already widely diffused, fed by the ideas of Nietzsche, Sorel, Pareto, and Croce himself. Yet this wide-spread critique did not necessarily issue in anti-liberalism, and many continued to search for other ways of integrating the new masses into the nation and assuring the country of a system of government adapted to guide it on its path through the vortex of modern life. Even the myth of Italianism, which so conditioned the thought of the Italian avant-garde, did not always issue in authoritarian nationalism. Futurism was typical in this sense. From its origins it was averse to parliamentary democracy, an attitude that was transformed into genuine political commitment with interventionism and then, at the end of the Great War, with the foundation of the Futurist Political Party. Though glorifying nationalism and imperialism, Futurism retained a libertarian and cosmopolitan core, and remained ready to favor radical social reforms providing they were formulated with a recognition of the nation's preeminence. The principal ideological motif of the Futurist Political Party during its life from 1918 to 1920 remained the anarchistic utopia of a New State governed by futurist artists, where the maximum of individual liberty and cultural cosmopolitanism would be reconciled with an intransigent religion of the nation, with imperialism, and with a cult of violence and the glorification of war as the impetus for a perpetually revolutionary modernity, one that would impede the crystallization of traditionalist inertia and make Italians live fully within the realm of modernity, leading "an adventurous, energetic, and quotidianly heroic life."[63] Within the circles surrounding *La Voce*, too, the predominant motif was one reconciling nationalism with cosmopolitanism, the freedom of the individual with the national State. The Vocians proposed a new national democracy, but their concept of democracy remained rather vague within the diversity of understandings of it that the journal proposed, though it is also true that the review sometimes supported concrete reforms such as universal suffrage, administrative decentralization, and free trade. The apparent contradiction was inherent in the composite nature of *La Voce*, made up of an empirical reformist current and a revolutionary idealist current that conceived of the new politics as having

a missionary task to regenerate the character of the Italian people. *La Voce* dissolved before the outbreak of the Great War, but many of the Vocians entered politics in order to support, often on different grounds, Italian intervention. Many considered it the true and genuine test of modernity for the nation, the proof of its ascent to the role of a great power. Only the nationalists such as Corradini and Morasso elaborated a genuinely authoritarian paradigm of modernity. Liberal democracy, in their view, was "in contradiction with the movement of modern life,"[64] because the very process of the development of mass democracy, both in socialism and the expanding economy of capitalism, led to an affirmation of "the primacy of force and the necessity of an ever vaster and deeper dominion, renewing some of the characteristic conditions of the ancient civilizations based on domination."[65] The development of modernization, by the very nature of modernity in the age of imperialism, required new forms of authoritarianism for mass society: "Reappearing everywhere are oligarchic tendencies, military dominations, systems extolling strong aristocracies of leadership, a government that is absolute and energetic."[66] Germany and Japan were seen as models for the Italian conquest of modernity in a new age of despotism by "imperial civilization," a direction in which all the great nation-states were headed, according to Morasso.

What in political terms the militant and authoritarian nationalists of the avant-garde shared was their contestation of the "Giolitti system," which was viewed as a corrupting form of parliamentary dictatorship; and an aspiration toward the construction of a New State by means of a *"rivoluzione spirituale"* (mental revolution) meant to produce a political revolution as well. In part this aspiration expressed a generational revolt conducted under the banner of the myth of youth, youth as a force revolutionary and regenerative in itself. All the movements that contested the "Giolitti system," and the futurists above all, shared a belief in the myth of youth: the struggle of the healthy and vitalist young against the corrupt and senescent old men was a necessary phase in the conquest of modernity.[67] The young possessed particular regenerative qualities that gave them the attitudes and prerogatives suitable for a new ruling class capable of guiding the nation through the tempests of modernity. The old ruling class was a caretaker of the past; the new aristocracy was the vanguard of the new Italians who would be "builders of the future."[68] The young, whether of the right or the left, were convinced that they possessed the ethical values and moral qualities needed to bring about a mental revolution that would be the premise and condition of a political revolution, "radically changing the entire soul of man," as Papini proclaimed in 1913 when he was engaged in the futurist campaign to prepare "in Italy the advent of this new man."[69] The futurists, wrote Boccioni around the same time, wanted to give Italy

> . . . a conscience that would continually impel it to tenacious labor, to fierce conquest. Let the Italians finally experience the intoxicating joy of feeling that they can stand by themselves alone, armed, highly modernized, struggling against everyone and not just acting as great grandchildren who are drowsy with a greatness that is no longer ours. . . . We

have to take a stand, incite our own passion, drive to the limit our own faith in our great future, that faith that every Italian feels in his deepest self, yet doesn't sufficiently desire! There will have to be some blood, and some corpses will be necessary. . . . We might have to hang or shoot anyone who deviates from the idea of a great Futurist Italy.[70]

The myth of regenerative violence—through war or revolution—is part of the cultural heritage of the modernist avant-garde. What sparked the interventionism of many young intellectuals was the conviction that Italy, in order to reach the state of modern greatness, would have to pass through a bloody experience of war and give its contribution to the creation of a new civilization. For Italy, participation in the Great War was the entry "into the great history of the world," as the philosopher Giovanni Gentile argued at the end of the conflict.[71] Significantly, Marinetti preferred to use the term "conflagration" to define the Great War, alluding to the Heraclitean and Stoic myth of palingenesis by the great fire, from which, in this case, would rise a new and Futurist Italy. War, in the Futurist conception, was "the great and sacred law of life," it was the periodic "testing, bloody and necessary, of the force of the people."[72] Though with different motivations, a positive conception of war in the life of the nation was predominant throughout the new national culture. War was an integral part of the nationalist vision of modernity. Corradini defended the "modernity of war."[73] Already in 1905 Morasso, with a tragically prophetic spirit, had announced that "the nineteenth century was the century of a democratic-humanitarian utopia; the twentieth will be the century of force and conquest. . . . It is in the new century that force will have its largest kingdom, and it is in the new century that we will see ever more formidable armies and ever more bloody wars."[74] Amendola attributed a moral significance to war, a collective test of discipline and sacrifice in which the character of the individual and the nation were tempered and tested.[75] Giovanni Boine idealized military discipline for its sense of hierarchy and order, an exemplary model of collective education for forming the character of Italians and educating them in the cult of the "religion of the *patria*."[76]

The idea of war's positive value derived from the myth of national palingenesis as a necessary process for the formation of a modern Italian conscience.[77] The New Italy was supposed to be shaped though a heroic pedagogy, created with a spirit of sacrifice, the exercise of discipline, readiness for combat, the sublimation of the individual in devotion to the collectivity. All these elements constituted a modernistic *national ethics*, borrowed form the "cult of the heroic," in "an atmosphere of myth and epic," as the syndicalist revolutionary Angelo Oliviero Olivetti wrote.[78] In his view there were spiritual and cultural affinities between revolutionary syndicalism and futurism in their will to power and their ideal of a "palingenesis through the burning crucible of struggle."[79] The futurists, not surprisingly, glorified Italy's participation in the Great War as the necessary rite of collective initiation into modernity, a violent acceleration of the process of modernization. "The war will develop gymnastics, sport, practical schools of agriculture, commerce, and industry. The war will reinvigorate Italy, enrich its men of

action, oblige her to stop living in the past amid ruins and a sweet climate, and to force her to use her own national forces."[80]

The outbreak of the Great War was, in a certain sense, both foreseen and anticipated by the culture of the avant-garde. On the threshold of the war Italy was in a state of messianic expectation of an incumbent catastrophe that would be palingenetic, a catastrophe that the avant-gardes were invoking in order to realize the mental revolution necessary to regenerate the nation and bring it to the conquest of modernity. When war broke out the majority of the militants of the avant-garde became active supporters of intervention. "Reality is moving with an accelerated rhythm. We have had the singular privilege of living at the most tragic hour in the history of the world. Do we want to be . . . inert spectators of the great drama? Or do we want to be—in some way and in some sense—protagonists?"[81] So wrote Mussolini on 18 October 1914, announcing his conversion to the cause of interventionism. His choice cost him his expulsion from the Socialist party, but he was hailed by the cultural avant-gardes as the "new man" on the Italian political scene. "In him," wrote the Futurist painter Carlo Carrà, "there is the drama of our entire generation."[82] Interventionism and the war set in place the last conditions for the participation of the cultural avant-garde in the adventure of fascism.

THE CONSTRUCTORS OF ITALIAN MODERNITY

Setting aside the specific debates and conflicts that marked the relations between futurism and fascism what constituted the principal cultural nexus linking the culture of the avant-gardes and fascism was the search for a symbiosis between art and life, culture and politics, nationalism and modernity—a search enacted through the myth of Italianism. But there were also a number of other features of fascist political culture that connect it very directly with the culture of the modernist avant-gardes in the early twentieth century, features that constituted essential traits of fascist political modernism.[83]

Above all the activist conception of life within fascism was typically modernist. That conception, as the newspaper for the Italian *Fasa di Combattimento* (Battle Fasces) explained, meant "knowing how to understand the times that we live in, to adapt oneself to the changed atmosphere, to the events that succeed one another, that accumulate in the panting vortex of modern civilization."[84] This activism was inseparable from fascism's irrationalist conception of politics, which affirmed the priority of lived experience over ideology and *faith* over theory in the formation of a political culture.[85] Fascism's anti-theoretical relativism and its institutional experimentalism were another modernist trait within fascism, in concordance with an existentialist intuition of politics, which was now understood in its immediate and vitalistic origins as "daring, as attempt, as undertaking, as dissatisfaction with reality, as adventure, as a celebration of the rite of action."[86] Typically modernist, moreover, was the affirmation of the primacy of mythic thought—in the sense articulated by Sorel—within a politics of the masses:

We have created our own myth. Myth is a faith, a passion. It is not necessary that it be a reality. It is a reality in the fact that it is a spur, a hope, a faith, a form of courage. Our myth is the nation: our myth is the greatness of the nation. It is to this myth, to this grandeur, which we want to translate into reality, that we subordinate everything.[87]

Modernistic, too, was the mythic use of history and tradition, and in particular the appeal to the heritage of Rome, an appeal that was certainly one of the major motifs of fascism's polemics with futurism, which protested against the fascist cult of Rome and its encouragement of classicizing sorts of realism in fascist art. Yet for fascism, history—beginning with Roman history, above all—was not a temple in which to contemplate and nostalgically venerate the grandeur of remote glories, carefully preserving the memories consecrated by archaeological remains. It was an arsenal from which to draw myths of mobilization and legitimization for political action. The archaeological recovery of Roman ruins was not dissociated from this exigency of the mythic construction of fascism's symbolic universe. The cult of Romanness, in this sense, was celebrated modernisitically as a myth of action for the future:

It is not a nostalgic contemplation of the past, but hard preparation for the future. Rome is our starting point and our reference point; it is our symbol, or if you will, our myth. We dream of a Roman Italy, which is to say: an Italy that is wise, strong, disciplined, and imperial. Much of what made up the immortal spirit of Rome is resurgent in fascism. . . . It is indispensable that the history of tomorrow, which we assuredly want to create, not be a contrast or a parody of the history of yesterday. The Romans were not only combatants, but also formidable constructors who could challenge Time, as indeed they have.[88]

The appeal to Romanness had the value of a mythic foundation for a fascist politics looking to create a new civilization for the modern age, one as solid and universal as the civilization of the Romans.[89] Like Italians of the Renaissance, the fascists viewed Rome as a source of inspiration for civic virtues, a sense of the State, a sacralization of politics, and universal organizing values—all elements for elaborating a modern model of a new civilization. In this sense the cult of Romanness was reconciled, without notable contradiction, with other elements of fascism that were more strictly futurist, such as its activism, its cult of youth and sport, the heroic ideal of adventure, and above all the will to experience the new continually in action projected toward the future, without reactionary nostalgia for an ideal of past perfection to be restored. To be sure, there were also fascist intellectuals who idealized the harmony of the good old days, such as the writers associated with *Strapaese* and the artists who theorized a return to the classical order of Renaissance art. But the principal impulse of fascism stemmed from its "movementist" and Dionysian feeling for existence, from the *myth of the future*, and not from the static contemplation of the past.

Fascism had no nostalgia for a lost paradise to be reconstructed. It never instituted a cult of tradition as the sublimation of the past in a metaphysical vision of inviolable order, to be preserved whole, to be segregated from the accelerated

rhythm of modern life. Fascism recognized tradition as "one of the great mental forces of peoples": it was not something "sacred, immutable, and untouchable," but a "successive and constant creation of their soul."[90] The past was supposed to be a "springboard of combat from which to launch into the future,"[91] and the fascists considered themselves, like the futurists, to be "constructors of the future." The Italian created by Mussolini, in one novel by a futurist writer, was depicted as a "modern barbarian . . . a modern man stretching out toward the future with spiritual tentacles."[92] From futurism fascism had absorbed a dynamic feeling of modernity that was expressed in the ideal of "continual revolution," an ideal that impelled fascism never to rest content with its accomplishments or even to guarantee its permanence in power with a prudent politics of conservation, but to feel itself obliged, almost condemned, to obey the command of its original essence and to project itself into the future, towards new realities to be constructed. "We are always tomorrow."[93] Even fascists who glorified rural provincialism, as did the writers and artists of the journal *Il selvaggio,* proclaimed that they were not opposed to modernity, but that they wanted an "Italian modernity."[94]

Fascist modernism sought to realize a new synthesis between tradition and modernity, without renouncing modernization in order to realize the nation's goals of power. Even though fascism exalted the ideal of *il buon contadino* (the good peasant) still tied to the land and its traditions, fascism was not anti-industrialist and it did not reject technological progress; technology was an instrument of the modern civilization that fascism could never renounce without being obliged to renounce its ambitions to power. The progress of mechanized civilization, said one writer in *Gerarchia* (the principal intellectual review of the regime) was "the sign of the power of modernization."[95] To wish for the disappearance of the machine, warned the authoritative *Dictionary of Politics* of the Fascist Party, was "ingenuous and crazy."[96] The advance of machines was a feature of modern society that could not be halted because that would mean "to halt the very path of civilization."[97] The machine was an instrument for liberating man from the servitude of work, a weapon of conquest for the nation's will to power. To be sure, there were also elements of ambiguity in the fascist attitude toward modernity, elements that partly attenuated the modernist enthusiasm of early twentieth-century nationalism. A distinction within its vision of modernity was introduced between "sane" modernity and "perverse" modernity. Reversing Croce's understanding of modernity, the fascists pretended to be the artificers of sane modernity and the antagonists of that perverse modernity that stemmed from Enlightenment values of liberal reason. They had discovered a new "formula for modern society," capable of saving Western civilization from the degenerations of industrialism, mechanism, and urbanism.[98] This formula, however, imposed the renunciation of individualism and freedom, the cause of modernity's perverse effects, under the banner of the absolute primacy of the national collectivity as organized by the totalitarian state. Though it inherited many of the motifs and myths of modernist nationalism, fascism recomposed and adapted them in an original form of political modernism that wished to bring to comple-

tion the conquest of modernity through the totalitarian revolution. That revolution, like the mental revolution of the avant-gardes, was to be a total revolution, affecting every aspect of individual and collective life, from habits to character, in order to regenerate the nation, forge the new Italian, and construct a new society, subjugating the machine to the "service of man and the collectivity as an instrument of liberation, not as a source of misery."[99] Italian modernity, as constructed by fascism, was to be a society of man, in which humanity would recover its dominion over the society of the machine. The totalitarian state and the sacralization of politics, integrating the masses into the nation through the faith, rituals, and symbols of fascist religion, were the foundations of a modern order that would be capable of channelling and using all the energies of modernization to the advantage of national power.

With the sacralization of politics and the institutionalization of the cult of the fasces, fascism realized, in forms that were distinctively its own, another aspiration of modernist nationalism, the construction of a lay religion for the nation. Artists of futurist provenance such as Sironi, architects who were exponents of modernistic rationalism such as Giuseppe Terragni and Giuseppe Pagano, and promoters of experimental theater such as Giulio Antonio Bragaglia faithfully and passionately contributed to the construction of the symbolic universe of fascist religion, helping its myths and ideals to be represented to the masses and perpetuated through time. The fascist aesthetic of the futurists was consistent with their conception of the political function of art and their faith in the religion of the nation. Futurist art, within fascism, was supposed to express the deep forces of the modern soul through "representative symbols of the new religious spirit that will bind together this century and from which nobody will escape, for it is universal and lasting."[100] The adaptation of art to the political needs of the regime did not strike them as inconsistent with their principles, convinced as they were that art achieves greatness in history only when it becomes the means for the representation of a superior sense of life, as Gino Severini asserted.[101] Modernist painters such Campigli, Carrà, and Sironi fought to affirm the pedagogic function of art in the service of the fascist State:

> In the Fascist State, art acquires a social function, an educational function. It must translate the ethics of our time. It must give unity of style and greatness of line to *communal life*. Art, therefore, returns to being what it was in its highest periods and amid the highest societies: *a perfect instrument for spiritual government*.[102]

For fascism the synthesis of politics, religion, and ethics, or Italian modernity, was to be actualized in new political institutions, in a new secular religion, and in modernization serving the aggrandizement of national power. Above all, however, it was to be actualized as a way of living, a *style of life*. Style was what defined the original and universal essence of a society and what transmitted its greatness to future eras. Fascist modernism pursued the original impulse of the futurists in its search for a new and original *modern Italian style*, deliberately priv-

ileging modern art over traditionalist classicism in accordance with Mussolini's own desire. Among fascist artists it was perhaps Sironi, Mussolini's preferred painter, who knew best how to interpret and represent the political-aesthetic ideal of Italian modernity. Sironi believed that fascism was the most advanced political expression of modernity itself, which he saw as an "epoch of grandiose myths and gigantic upheavals."[103] Fascist art, in all its manifestations, was to create the style of fascist modernity, to express the "complex orchestrations of modern life" and the "pagan and constructive primitiveness of the modern age."[104] Sironi's modernism integrated art and politics in an affirmation of a collective will to power, and it linked the artist with the political experiment of the totalitarian State in the creation of a new religion of Italianness. The fascist artist had a mission: with a modern sensibility, mythically to recall the great ages of Italian art, seeking to realize a new creative greatness, a synthesis between the classic and the modern, an epic transfiguration of fascist politics. Myths and symbols, as in the great religious art of the past, were to impress "a new impulse on the popular soul."[105]

The same ideal of integrating art and politics in the search for an Italian modernity inspired the modernist poetics of Massimo Bontempelli, a former futurist militant like Sironi and organizer of the movement *Novecento*. In his view, the new art of fascism would harmonize with modernity, an era he saw as "an age of activity and conquest," or one "avid of conquest," by inventing "the myths and stories necessary for new times."[106] Bontempelli believed in the coming of a "Third Age" of humanity in which it would be the task of Italian artists, "the primordial people of a new era, to discover and create new myths, new stories that will nurture the youth of the Third Age."[107] Through an aesthetic of "magical realism" they would give the future an intuition of modern life, "as an adventurous miracle: continuous risk and continuous effort to get through it safely," even at its "most normal and quotidian."[108] Even Bontempelli's modernism was wedded to the religion founded on the myth of "Italianism." Italy's cultural preeminence was "irrefutable"; she was unique among the nations because "alive with an eternal spirit" that from one age to another renewed "her office of instigator of civilization," a spirit that now, after the Great War, had returned and assumed the task of creating the myths of modern society.[109]

Intellectuals and artists of this sort, who had been active in the modernist avant-garde and futurism, enthusiastically participated in fascism and contributed to elaborating its cultural politics and its aesthetic style. In it they saw a political weapon for realizing the avant-gardist myth of *total revolution*, understood as an intellectual and spiritual revolution that was supposed to modify the essence and values of life, giving rise to a new art, a new style of life, a new man. They participated in fascism, it must be emphasized, rather than simply adhering to it. For the involvement of futurism in fascism was not simply an external act of joining a political movement, but an active and self-aware collaboration in elaborating the movement's culture and political style, that went as far as a substantial agreement between avant-garde culture and totalitarian political culture

regarding certain fundamental themes. In fact the futurists, in arguing for a futurist paternity for fascism, stressed those elements that could easily be integrated into totalitarian culture: from the religion of *Italianismo* (Italianness) to the search for an Italian modernity, to the heroicization of life and the glorification of war.

After the failure of the experience with a futurist political party in 1920, futurist politics, as captained by Marinetti, swiftly renounced the libertarian motifs of its ideology and the utopia of futurist democracy. With the advent of fascism to power, Marinetti and the futurists returned to fascism with a de facto acceptance of its politics as the "minimal program" of the futurist revolution. Perhaps they also trusted that fascism, once it had consolidated and developed its totalitarian politics, would gradually surpass or set aside some of the more conservative and reactionary forms dictated by political contingency, slowly approaching the "maximal program" of the futurist revolution. With their artificial optimism, the futurists struggled to accelerate this process within the regime, voluntarily collaborating in the political culture of the totalitarian State and the construction of fascist religion's symbolic universe. Moreover, the return was also accompanied by a change in the futurist vision of modernity, a transformation that rendered it much closer to fascism's own, with its distinction between a "sane" and a "perverse" modernity. Sharply attenuating the modernist enthusiasm that had marked the early years of the twentieth century, it largely abandoned the goals of radical and total renovation of human existence in a libertarian and individualistic sense, while increasingly it exalted the myths of bellicose, imperialist nationalism.[110] In effect its tragic sense of existence as an unredeemable reality gained the upper hand over its enthusiasm for modernity, which now appeared to the futurists in the perverse forms of "bureaucratic cancer" and the mucification of society through new forms of conformity. Even the fascist State was affected by these perverse forms of modernity, which rendered it all the more remote from the New State originally dreamt of by futurism. From this point of view one can indeed maintain that the original matrix of futurism largely faded away under the fascist regime. The futurists, however, were not obliged to make a serious sacrifice of their theoretical coherency in order to participate with renewed enthusiasm in the cultural politics of the totalitarian State. They had, after all, always proclaimed that the religion of the nation was to prevail over the principle of freedom. The essence of futurist freedom was not political freedom, but the creative freedom of genius, a sort that could easily adapt itself to living within a regime that never pretended to impose aesthetic conformism and that glorified politics as the art of shaping the masses, calling upon artists to collaborate in the task of forging the new Italian. To be sure, the fascist new man, regimented in the organizations of the regime and educated according to the rigid rules of discipline and military uniformity, was a "mass-Italian" that departed significantly from the futurist ideal of the "unique-type Italian." But the futurists ignored this discordance of ideals, accepting the fascist revolution as an initial phase toward the realization of the futurist revolution. As Marinetti had announced in 1920

The Futurist revolution that will bring the artists to power promises no earthly paradise. It will certainly be unable to suppress the human torment that is the ascensional power of the race. The artists, tireless airmen of this feverish travail, will succeed in reducing this suffering. They will solve the problem of well-being in the only way it can be solved: spiritually.[111]

All things considered, the futurists could regard the totalitarian state, which after all had been created by a man with a futurist temperament, one who combined the *duce* with the *artista*, as a passable realization of the futurist revolution. Even fascism didn't promise an earthly paradise, instead assuring Italians that they would have a future of greatness and conquest, and it too resolved the problem of well being "spiritually" through aesthetics and the sacralization of politics. The choreography of the fascist cult, the countless collective celebrations with songs and music, the festivals and spectacles staged in the piazzas by the political culture of the regime, the transformation of political mobilization into a continuous theatrical—religious—performance all this could appear to the futurists as a realization, however minimal, of the ideal city imagined by Marinetti in his brief work, *Beyond Communism:*

The proletariat of gifted men in power will create the theater free to all and the great Futurist Aero-Theater. Music will reign over the world. Every town and city square will have its great instrumental and vocal orchestra. So there will be, everywhere, fountains of harmony streaming day and night from musical genius and blooming in the sky, to color, gentle, reinvigorate, and refresh the dark, hard, banal, convulsive rhythm of daily life.[112]

The Futurists were restless fascists and disagreed with some of the regime's political and cultural decisions. None of them, however, ever questioned the fundamental motifs of the totalitarian State: the primacy of mythical thought, the vitalist realism, the mystical exaltation of national community, the heroic and warlike pedagogy, the imperial ambitions, or the myth of the Italian nation as the vanguard of a new society. The futurists were neither deceived nor misled by fascism; they were fascinated by its appeal for the total mobilization of culture to regenerate Italians in a religious cult of the nation and to construct a new society that would leave its mark upon the future in the style of "Italian modernity." No futurist believed that fascism harbored the intention of realizing a world of reason, freedom, equality, or peace.

NOTES

Reprinted by permission of Johns Hopkins University Press from Emilio Gentile, "The Conquest of Modernity: From Modernist Nationalism to Fascism," trans. Lawrence Rainey, *Modernism/modernity* 1, no. 3 (1994): 55–87.

1. The original reads: "Chiamato ad annunciare una nuova epoca." Yvon De Begnac, *Palazzo Venezia. Storia di un regime* (Rome: La Rocca, 1950), 111. Idem. *Taccuini mussoliniani*, ed. Francesco Perfetti (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), 15. On the relations between Mus-

solini and *La Voce* see Emilio Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1982), 103–34, hereafter referred to as *MSN;* and Walter L. Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 139–43, hereafter abbreviated *AGF.*

2. The original reads: "Ora, io formalmente dichiaro che, senza futurismo, non vi sarebbe stata rivoluzione fascista." De Begnac, *Taccuini Mussoliniani,* 425.

3. Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Fascismo e futurismo," *Il Secolo,* 3 July 1923; reprinted in Luciano De Maria, ed., *Per Conoscere Marinetti e il Futurismo,* 4th rev. ed. (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1981), 286–91, especially 287–88.

4. The original reads: "Per chi abbia senso delle connessioni storiche. l'origine ideale del fascismo si ritrova nel futurismo." Benedetto Croce, "Fatti politici e interpretazioni storiche," *La Stampa,* 15 May 1924: reprinted in Benedetto Croce, *Cultura e vita morale,* 3rd ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1955), 268–69, hereafter abbreviated *CVM.*

5. For an overview of the problems and a sampling of recent studies on Futurism and fascism, see Renzo de Felice, ed., *Futurismo, cultura e politica* (Turin: Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1988), hereafter abbreviated *FCP;* and Claudia Salaris, *Artecrazia: l'avanguardia futurista negli anni del fascimo* (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1992).

6. For an early effort to define fascism as a modern phenomenon see Emilio Gentile, *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1975). For a recent study that considers fascism as an "alternative modernism," see Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter, 1991), 47, hereafter abbreviated *NF.* Other recent works that examine "modernist fascism" and "fascist modernism" are: Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand, eds., *Faschismus und Avant-Garde* (Königstein im Taunus: Atheneum, 1980); Emilio Gentile, "From the Cultural Revolt of the Giolittian Era to the Ideology of Fascism," in Frank J. Coppa, ed., *Studies in Modern Italian History: From the Risorgimento to the Republic* (New York and Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1986), 103–19. See also *Fascist Aesthetics,* special issue of the *South Central Review* 5 (summer 1988); Walter L. Adamson, "Fascism and Culture: Avant-Gardes and Secular Religion in the Italian Case," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24 (July 1989): 411–35; idem, "Modernism and Fascism: The Politics of Culture in Italy, 1913–1922," *American Historical Review* 95, no. 2 (April, 1990): 359–90. See also *Fascism and Culture,* ed. Jeffrey Schnapp and Barbara Spackman, a special issue of the *Stanford Italian Review* 8 (1990); Walter L. Adamson, "The Language of Opposition in Early Twentieth-Century Italy: Rhetorical Continuities between Prewar Florentine Avant-Gardism and Mussolini's Fascism," *Journal of Modern History* 64 (March 1992): 22–51; *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture,* ed. Richard J. Golsan (Hanover, New Hampshire: New England University Press, 1992); *AGF;* Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

7. Cf. Walter Benjamin, "Epilogue," in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations,* ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), 241–42.

8. The original reads: "Estetizzazione della politica," "politica come spettacolo," "concezione estetica della vita politica." Emilio Gentile, "Alcune considerazioni sull'ideologia fascista," *Storia contemporanea* (January 1974): 123–24.

9. See Jeffrey Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations: Fascist Modernity and the 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution," in Richard J. Golsan, ed., *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture,* 3.

10. See Emilio Gentile, "Fascism as Political Religion," *Journal of Contemporary History* (May-June 1990): 229–251; and idem, *Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1993), hereafter abbreviated *CL.*

11. Marshall Berman, *L'esperienza della modernità* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985), 26 (translation of *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*).

12. Walter L. Adamson, "Modernism and Fascism: the Politics of Culture in Italy," 360.

13. Emilio Gentile, "Futurism and Politics: From Nationalist Modernism to Fascism (1909–1922)," in *FCP,* 105–159, especially 106–09.

14. The original reads: "Ottimismo artificiale." F. T. Marinetti, "Lettera aperta al futurista Mac Delmarle," in F. T. Marinetti, *Teoria e invenzione futurista,* ed. Luciano De Maria (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1983), 94, hereafter abbreviated *TIF.*

15. The original reads: "Vecchio uomo," "degli uomini moderni." Silvio Spaventa, *La politica della destra* (Bari: Laterza, 1910), 307.

16. The original reads:

> convertire il mondo moderno in un mondo nostro, studiandolo, assimilandolo, e trasformandolo . . . Il grande lavoro del secolo decimonono è al suo termine. Assistiamo ad una nuova fermentazione d'idee, nunzia di una nuova formazione. Già vediamo in questo secolo disegnarsi il nuovo secolo. E. questa volta, non dobbiamo trovarci alla coda, non a' secondi posti.

Francesco De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana,* ed. Luigi Russo, 2 vols. (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1960), 2:463.

17. The original reads: "rapido e immenso sviluppo della grande industria," "millenario equilibrio del mondo . . . non solo dal punto di vista economico, ma anche da quello politico e morale." Mario Morasso. *L'imperialismo nel secolo XX* (Milan: Treves, 1905), 330, hereafter abbreviated *I*.

18. The original reads:

> in un mondo nuovo fra il dispiegarsi di nuove forze incalcolabili . . . che hanno trasformato non solo le basi della vita politica dei popoli e della condotta morale degli individui, ma anche tutto il sistema dei rapporti economici." "una influenza poderosissima su altri generi di relazioni, sugli stessi sentimenti e abitudini dell'uomo, sulla natura umana, sulle attribuzioni del governo, provocando, per così dire, una nuova coscienza e una nuova politica," ripercussione profonda . . . sull'andamento della vita pubblica e privata, sul regime della nostra sensibilità e della nostra attività . . . la vita umana ne è uscita completamente mutata, costumanze inveterate sono state distrutte, tendenze profonde della nostra anima sono state deviate . . . anche l'assetto sociale è stato sconvolto per essere riordinato in vista di nuovi destini. (*I,* 325–26)

19. For the English translation, see F. T. Marinetti, "Destruction of Syntax-Imagination without Strings-Words-in-Freedom," in Umbro Apollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 95–106. The original reads: "Completo rinnovamento della sensibilità umana," "ingigantimento del senso umano,"

> acceleramento della vita . . . amore del nuovo . . . dell'imprevisto . . . orrore del quieto vivere, amore del pericolo e attitudine all'eroismo quotidiano . . . distruzione del senso dell'*al di là* e aumentato valore dell'individuo che vuole vivere la sua vita . . . moltiplicazione e sconfinamento delle ambizioni e dei desideri umani . . . uomo moltiplicato dalla macchina . . . amore de "record" . . . passione par la città, negazione delle distanze . . . nuovo senso del mondo . . . bisogno di sentirsi centro, giudice e motore dell'infinito esplorato e inesplorato.

F. T. Marinetti, "Distruzione della sintassi. Immaginazione senza fili. Parole in libertà," in *TIF,* 65–80, here 65, 69, 66–68.^20

20. The original reads: "Noi futuristi diamo per la prima volta l'esempio di un'entusiastica adesione umana alla forma di civiltà che si va plasmando sotto i nostri occhi . . . Noi abbiamo l'estasi del moderno e il delirio innovatore della nostra epoca." Umberto Boccioni, "Pit-

tura e scultura futuriste (dinamismo plastico)," in *Opere complete* (Foligno: Franco Campitelli, [1927]), 17, hereafter abbreviated *BOC*. This text was originally published as *Pittura scultura futuriste (Dinamismo plastico)* by the Futurist Editions of *Poesia* in 1914.

21. The original reads: "Essere moderni! Comprendere in sé le forme vitali proprie del nostro tempo." Scipio Slataper. "Ai giovani intelligenti d'Italia," *La Voce,* 26 August 1909, 1.

22. The original reads: "turbine vivente," "grandioso congegno della vita moderna" (*I,* 327).

23. The original reads:

> spirito della nuova vita . . . grande e possente come non fu mai . . . iniziatrice di un avvenire più grande e possente ancora . . . il ritmo della vita è straordinariamente violento e fulmineo . . . Lo spirito che come tempesta mondiale muove le moltitudini inconsapevoli, è lo spirito della nuova vita . . . [che] sembra tutto travolgere, perché non sono ancora sorti i nuovi uomini consapevoli che abbiano l'animo pari alla nuova vita del mondo e siano forti sopra le nuove forze. Qui è l'immensa tragedia del presente, e l'epopea dell'avvenire sarà nella vittoria dell'uomo sopra gl'instrumenti e le forze della vita, formidabili come non furono mai.

Enrico Corradini. "La vita estetica," in *Novissima* (1907); reprinted in Lucia Strappini, ed., *Enrico Corradini, Scritti e discorsi 1901-1914* (Turin: Einaudi, 1980), 64–65.

24. The original reads: "Noi ci sentiamo portati alla vita multipla, armonica, vertiginosa, mondiale." Benito Mussolini, "Bleriot," in *Il Popolo,* 28 July 1909, X, reprinted in idem Edoardo e Duilio Susmel, eds., *Opera omnia* (Firenze: La Fenice, 1951–1980), 2:194–95, hereafter abbreviated *OO*.

25. The original reads: "La parola che riassume e dà carattere inconfondibile al nostro secolo è 'movimento' . . . Movimento dovunque, e accelerazione del ritmo della nostra vita." Benito Mussolini, "Latham." in *Il popolo,* 22 July 1909, X; reprinted in *OO,* 2:187.

26. The original reads: "riconnettere la nuova attesa di civiltà italiana colla grande ascensione economica di cui siamo spettatori da alcuni anni." Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini, *La cultura italiana* (Florence: Lumachi, 1906), 84.

27. The original reads: "industrialisti lombardi, armatori genovesi, commercianti e banchieri del nord d'Italia," "successo della patria nella lotta fra le varie patrie che si disputano il mondo," Giovanni Amendola, "Il Mezzogiorno e la coltura italiana." *La Voce,* 7 January 1909, 1.

28. The original reads: "ha cominciato a camminare a passi lunghi e sicura sulla via della ricchezza e non può mantenervisi se non camminando contemporaneamente sulla via della potenza." Giovanni Amendola, "La vigile allemande," *Il Regno,* 25 July 1905, 17.

29. The original reads:

> . . . perdendo le caratteristiche del cimitero. Dove un tempo sognavan gli amanti, e cantavan gli usignoli, oggi fischiano le sirene delle officine. L'Italia accelera il passo nello stadio dove le Nazioni corrono nella grande Maratona della supremazia mondiale. Gli eroi hanno lasciato il posto ai produttori. Dopo aver combattuto si lavora. L'aratro feconda la terra e il piccone sventra le città. L'Italia si prepara a riempire di sé una nuova epoca nella storia del genere umano.

Benito Mussolini, "Un grande amico dell'Italia: Augusto von Platen." *Il Popolo,* 3 July 1909; reprinted in *OO,* 2:172.

30. The original reads:

> Per gli altri popoli l'Italia è ancora una terra di morti, un'immensa Pompei biancheggiante di sepolcri. L'Italia invece rinasce, e al suo risorgimento politico segue il risorgimento intellettuale. Nel paese degli analfabeti vanno moltiplicandosi le scuole: nel paese del dolce far niente

> ruggon ormai le officine innumerevoli; nel paese dell'estetica tradizionale spiccano oggi il volo ispirazioni sfolgoranti di novità.

Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini, "Manifesto dei pittori futuristi" (11 February 1910), in Luciano De Maria, ed., *Per conoscere Marinetti e il futurismo,* 20–22, here p. 20. For the English translation see "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters" (1920), in Umbro Apollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos,* 24–26, here 25.

31. The original reads: "Terza Italia senza un significato ideale nel mondo sarebbe il più assurdo miracolo della storia moderna, una risurrezione senza vita, una riapparizione di fantasmi, che passano soltanto." Alfredo Oriani. *La rivolta ideale* (Bologna: Gherardi, 1912), 157.

32. The original reads: "la guida spirituale della giovane, giovanissima e futura Italia . . . Io vorrei essere dunque il riorganizzatore spirituale di questa vecchia razza." Giovanni Papini, letter to Ardengo Soffici, 9 September 1905, in Giovanni Papini and Ardengo Soffici, *Carteggio,* ed. Mario Richter (Rome-Fiesole: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Fondazione Primo Conti, 1991), 1:78.

33. The original reads: "Religione dell'uomo moderno." Emilio Gentile, "*La Voce*" *e l'età giolittiana* (Milan: Pan, 1972). On the political culture of *La Voce,* see also Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 162–68; and *AGF,* 102–52.

34. The original reads: "una coscienza Italiana moderna che fosse europea e nazionale." Benedetto Croce, note of January 1912, in *Memorie della mia vita* (Naples: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici, 1966), 39.

35. See Augusto Del Noce, *Giovanni Gentile: per un'interpretazione filosofica della storia contemporanea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), 123–94.

36. The original reads: "cultura dell'uomo intero." Benedetto Croce, "Il risveglio filosofico e la cultura italiana" (1908), in *CVM,* 20.

37. The original reads:

> l'uomo moderno vive senza la fede passata e senza una fede presente e spesso senza neppure la fede in una fede futura. Destinato a preparare una civiltà nuova, si sente sacrificato, senza neppure assurgere alla coscienza di questo sacrificio, che potrebbe renderlo grande. Vive spesso la sua tragedia, senza salire tant'alto con lo spirito da farsi lui Fato e dominare il proprio intreccio. Di qui lo sgomento, la nerezza, il nichilismo di tante anime. . . . L'individuo non è più retto da dighe sociali che separavano, ma sostenevano, che impedivano il salire ma non permettevano il cadere, ed è ogni giorno davanti all'alternativa di diventare padrone del mondo o l'ultimo straccio di carne che una forza cieca afferri per ripulire le vie. Si sente che qualche cosa di grande è in gestazione, ma l'immenso sforzo torce di dolori e di spasimi il corpo sociale.

Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Parole d'un uomo moderno: la religione," *La Voce,* 13 March 1913, 1–2.

38. The original reads: "L'anima collettiva non è ancora formata e si dibatte tra il vecchio e il nuovo, fra gl'ideali moderni e le credenze antiche." Benito Mussolini, "La malattia del secolo," in *Il Proltario,* 4 June 1903; reprinted in *OO,* 1:30.

39. The original reads: "che si esplica nella creazione di nuovi valori morali o artistici o sociali," dà uno scopo alla vita . . . Il superuomo è un simbolo, è l'esponente di questo periodo angoscioso e tragico di crisi che attraversa la coscienza europea nella ricerca di nuove fonti di piacere, di bellezza, di ideale. è la constatazione della nostra debolezza, ma nel contempo la speranza della nostra redenzione. È il tramonto—e l'aurora. è soprattutto

un'inno alla vita—alla vita vissuta con tutte le energie in una tensione continua verso qualche cosa di più alto, di più fino, di più tentatore.

Benito Mussolini, "La filosofia della forza," *Il pensiero romagnolo* (29 November, 6 and 13 December 1908); reprinted in *OO,* 1:183–64.

40. The original reads: "non sarà grande spiritualmente se non avrà conquistato la propria coscienza religiosa, che è insieme coscienza filosofica." Benedetto Croce, "Per la rinascita dell'idealismo" (1902), reprinted in *CVM,* 40.

41. The original reads: "coscienza religiosa," "tutta la generazione nuova d'Italia," "che un movimento vasto e serio . . . non poteva avvenire che sotto forma *totale* . . . doveva avere un fondo, una linea etica, metafisica, in certo senso religiosa . . . Un movimento doveva essere totale, ossia doveva parlare all'uomo, all'uomo di oggi, all'italiano di oggi," "qualche cosa di grande è in gestazione." Giuseppe Prezzolini, *Italia 1912* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1940), 85–86.

42. The original reads: "effervescence collective," Emile Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985), 312.

43. Cf. Matei Calinescu, *Faces of Modernity: Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 62.

44. The original reads: "tutto il mondo contemporaneo è di nuovo in cerca di una religione," "bisogno di orientamento circa la realtà e la vita, dal bisogno di un concetto della vita e della realtà." Benedetto Croce, "Per la rinascita dell'idealismo" (1907), in *CVM,* 36.

45. Walter L. Adamson, "Fascism and Culture," 403; *CL,* 26–28.

46. The original reads: "soltanto il senso religioso della vita, identificando l'attuazione del bene comune con lo sviluppo della parte migliore della nostra personalità può dare valore assoluto ad ogni atto individuale e collettivo." Antonio Anzilotti, *La crisi spirituale della democrazia* (Faenza: Novelli e Castellani, 1912), 49.

47. The original reads: "L'Italia deve essere grande per lo spirito, deve dare vita ad una civiltà moderna." Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Il risveglio italiano," *La Voce,* 30 March 1911, 2–3.

48. The original reads: "una grande nazione, una nazione stretta dall'urgenza della competizione mondiale, e che ha dichiarato di accettare la lotta e di sperare nella vittoria." Giovanni Amendola, "Il mezzogiorno e la coltura italiana."

49. The original reads: "anima," "vita multiforme del suo tempo," "sentire veramente con senso di stupore, di rabbia, di venerazione, di amore, la vita di oggi," Scipio Slataper, "Perplessità crepuscolare," *La Voce,* 16 November 1911, 1–2.

50. The original reads: "una educazione umana, integrale, dell'uomo," "l'educazione è una sola, dell'*uomo* . . . Non si formano buoni italiani, se non si fanno dapprima buoni uomini." Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Come faremo *La Voce*," *La Voce,* 7 November 1912, 1.

51. The original reads: "creando nella società moderna il suo mito, il suo catechismo, il suo sacerdozio, si potrà attuare la riforma pratica democratica." Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Parole d'un uomo moderno: la religione," *La Voce,* 13 March 1913, 1–2.

52. The original reads: "religione moderna," "il vero mito moderno." Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Parole d'un uomo moderno: la storia," *La Voce,* 22 May 1913, 1.

53. The original reads: "che sarà il cattolicesimo che ridarà al mondo la religione." Giovanni Boine, letter to Alessandro Casati, 13 September 1910, in Giovanni Boine. *Carteggio,* ed. Margherita Marchione and S. E. Scalia (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e di Letteratura, 1979), 3:479.

54. The original reads: "religione della nazione." E. Corradini, "Una nazione," *Il Regno,* 19 June 1904, 3.

55. The original reads: "Bisogna creare simboli nei quali si raccolga una collettività, si contenga una massa, si sommino tanti casi isolati di energie individuali . . . la folla, la collettività nel regime presente sono per gran parte i sostituti dell'eroe." Mario Morasso, *L'Imperialismo artistico* (Torino: Fratelli Bocca, 1903), 173, hereafter abbreviated *IA*.

56. The original reads: "espressione di un pensiero collettivo e successivo, di un'ideale nazionale e sociale," "la collettività, è fatta, per dirla con frase moderna, dal pubblico e per il pubblico; solo un popolo può suscitarla ed è un popolo, o meglio, è l'anima di un popolo che essa deve contenere e rappresentare" (*IA,* 189).

57. The original reads: "innumerevoli energie disciplinate e dirette sotto dura disciplina a un solo intento da un inflessibile potere e rappresentando una vera profusione di forza in cerca del massimo e dell'enorme" (*IA,* 204–05).

58. This expression is used by F. T. Marinetti, *Taccuini,* ed. Alberto Bertoni (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1987), 349.

59. The original reads: "in quale stato d'abbrutimento giace l'idealità estetica del nostro grande paese, forte di 40.000.000 abitanti considerati come i più intelligenti del mondo," "l'Italia è un paese giovane e forte che diverrà grande, e basta. Tutto è da rifare spiritualmente, quindi esteticamente" (*BOC,* 5–9).

60. The original reads: "definitivamente alla testa dell'arte mondiale," "lo spirito costruttivo italiano torna a dominare nell'arte della nostra epoca." (*BOC,* 154, 161).

61. On the agreements and disagreements between Futurism and the ideology of the nationalist movement see Emilio Gentile, "Il Futurismo e la politica," in *FCP,* 112–113.

62. The original reads: "non socialistica e non imperialistica o decadentistica, che riproduca in forma nuova quella del risorgimento italiano." Benedetto Croce, note of January 1910, *Memorie della mia vita,* 39.

63. The original reads: "una vita avventurosa, energica e quotidianamente eroica." F. T. Marinetti. "Prefazione futurista a *Revolverate* di Gian Pietro Lucini," in *TIF,* 27.

64. The original reads: "paradigma autoritario della modernità," "in contraddizione con il movimento della vita moderna" (*I,* 10).

65. The original reads: "il primato della forza e la necessità di un dominio sempre più vasto e profondo, rinnovando alcune caratteristiche condizioni delle antiche civiltà dominatrici" (*I,* 11).

66. The original reads: "Riappariscono così le tendenze oligarchiche, le preminenze militari, e i sistemi inneggianti ad aristocrazie forti e direttive, ad un governo assoluto ed energico" (*IA,* 60).

67. Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914,* 106–202.

68. The phrase is from F. T. Marinetti, "Marinetti's Futurist Speech to the Venetians," which makes up part of "Against Past-Loving Venice" (27 April 1910): "Have you forgotten that first of all you are Italians, and that in the language of history this word means: *builders of the future*." The English translation is from F. T. Marinetti, *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings,* ed. R. W. Flint (1971: reprint, Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Press, 1991), 65, hereafter abbreviated *LMM*. The original reads: "Avete dunque dimenticato di essere anzitutto degl'Italiani, e che questa parola, nella lingua della storia, vuol dire: *costruttori dell'avvenire?*" The full text of the essay is in *TIF,* 33–38; this quotation 36.

69. The original reads: "cambiare radicalmente tutta l'anima di molti uomini," "in Italia l'avvento di quest'uomo nuovo." Giovanni Papini, "La necessità della rivoluzione,"

Lacerba (15 April 1913): [73]-77, here 77; and idem, "Il discorso di Roma," *Lacerba* (1 March 1913): [37]-41, here 41.

70. The original reads:

> . . . una coscienza che la spinge sempre più al lavoro tenace, alla conquista feroce. Che gli italiani abbiano finalmente la gioia inebriante di sentirsi soli, armati, modernissimi, in lotta con tutti e non pronipoti assopiti di una grandezza che non è più la nostra . . . Bisogna prendere partito, infiammare la propria passione, esasperare la propria fede per questa grandezza nostra futura che ogni italiano degno di questo nome sente nel profondo, ma che desidera troppo fiaccamente! Ci vuole del sangue, ci vogliono dei morti . . . Bisognerebbe impiccare, fucilare, chi devia dalla idea di una grande Italia futurista.

Umberto Boccioni, "Contro la vigliaccheria artistica italiana," *Lacerba* (1 September 1913), 191.

71. The original reads: "nella grande storia del mondo." Giovanni Gentile, "La data sacra," *Il Resto del Carlino,* 24 May 1918; reprinted in Giovanni Gentile, *Guerra e fede,* ed. H. A. Cavallera (Florence: Le Lettere, 1989), 92.

72. The original reads: "Conflagrazione," "grande e sacra legge della vita," "collaudo sanguinoso e necessario della forza del popolo." F. T. Marinetti, "Contro Vienna e contro Berlino," *L'Italia futurista* (25 July 1916), [1] and idem, "Distruzione della sintassi," in *TIF,* 68.

73. The original reads: "modernità della guerra." Enrico Corradini, "La guerra," *Il Regno,* 25 February 1904, 3.

74. The original reads:

> Il secolo decimonono fu il secolo della utopia democratico-umanitaria, il secolo ventesimo sarà il secolo della forza e della conquista . . . È nel nuovo secolo che la forza avrà il suo regno più vasto, ed è nel nuovo secolo che si vedranno gli eserciti più formidabili e le guerre più sanguinose. (*I,* 32, 39).

75. Giovanni Amendola, "La grande illusione," *La Voce,* 2 March 1911, 3–4.

76. The original reads: "religione della patria." Giovanni Boine, *Discorsi militari* (Florence: Edizioni della Voce, 1924), 60–61.

77. Roger Griffin has insisted on the importance of the myth of palingenesis in prefascist culture, considering it a fundamental element of "generic fascism," in *NF,* 38–40.

78. The original reads: "culto dell'eroico," "in un atmosfera di mito e di epopea." Angelo Oliviero Olivetti, "Sindacalismo e nazionalismo," *Pagine libere,* 15 February 1911, cited by Francesco Perfetti, "Introduzione" to Angelo Oliviero Olivetti, *Dal sindacalismo rivoluzionario al corporativismo* (Rome: Bonacci, 1984), 76.

79. The original reads: "palingenesi attraverso il crogiuolo ardente della lotta." Angelo Oliviero Olivetti, "L'altra campana," in *Pagine libere,* 15 November 1911, reprinted in *Dal sindacalismo rivoluzionario al corporativismo,* 42.

80. The original reads: "La Guerra svilupperà la ginnastica, lo sport, le scuole pratiche d'agricoltura, di commercio e industriali. La Guerra ringiovanirà l'Italia, l'arricchirà d'uomini d'azione, la costringerà a vivere non più nel passato, delle rovine e del dolce clima, ma delle proprie forze nazionali." F. T. Marinetti, "Contro Vienna e Contro Berlino," [1].

81. The original reads: "La realtà si muove con ritmo accelerato. Abbiamo avuto il singolarissimo privilegio di vivere nell'ora più tragica della storia del mondo. Vogliamo essere . . . gli spettatori inerti di questo dramma grandioso? O non vogliamo essere—in qualche modo e in qualche senso—protagonisti?" Benito Mussolini. "Dalla neutralità assoluta alla neutralità attiva ed operante," *Il popolo d'Italia,* 18 October 1914, 1; reprinted in *OO,* 1:402–03.

82. The original reads: "In lui vi è il dramma di tutta la nostra generazione." Carlo Carrà, letter to Giuseppe Prezzolini, 15 November 1914, quoted in *MSN,* 128.

83. In the argument to follow, I will not survey the disagreements and conflicts that marked the relations between Futurism and fascism, nor shall I address in all its aspects the attitude of fascism toward modernity and modernization. For an introduction to the fascist attitude toward modernity, see Emilio Gentile, "Impending Modernity: Fascism and the Ambivalent Image of the United States." *Journal of Contemporary History* 20 (1993): 7–20.

84. The original reads: "saper comprendere i tempi che si vivono, saperci adattare all'atmosfera cambiata, agli avvenimenti che si susseguono, che si accavallano nel vorticoso ansare della civilta moderna." Dante Bianchi, "*. . . i fascisti picchiano,*" in *Il fascio,* 27 October 1920, 1.

85. Emilio Gentile, *Storia del partito fascista, 1919-1922* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1989), 518–19.

86. The original reads: "audacia, come tentativo, come impresa, come insoddisfazione della realtà, come avventura, come celebrazione del rito dell'azione." Sergio Panunzio, *Italo Balbo* (Milan: Imperia, 1923), 9.

87. The original reads:

> Noi abbiamo creato il nostro mito. Il mito è una fede, è una passione. Non è necessario che sia una reaità. È una realtà nel fatto che è un pungolo, che è una speranza, che è fede, che è coraggio. Il nostro mito è la nazione, il nostro mito è la grandezza della nazione. E a questo mito, a questa grandezza, che noi vogliamo tradurre in una realtà completa, noi subordiniamo tutto il resto.

Benito Mussolini, "Discorso a Napoli," 24 October 1922, in *OO,* 38:457.

88. The original reads:

> non è contemplazione nostalgica del passato ma dura contemplazione dell'avvenire. Roma è il nostro punto di partenza e di riferimento; è il nostro simbolo, o se si vuole, il nostro Mito. Noi sogniamo l'Italia romana, cioè saggia e forte, disciplinata e imperiale. Molto di quello che fu lo spirito immortale di Roma risorge nel fascismo. . . . Bisogna, ora, che la storia di domani, quella che noi vogliamo assiduamente creare, non sia il contrasto o la parodia della storia di ieri. I romani non erano soltanto dei combattenti, ma dei costruttori formidabili che potevano sfidare, come hanno sfidato, il Tempo.

Benito Mussolini, "Passato e avvenire," *Il popolo d'Italia,* 21 April 1922; reprinted in *OO,* 18:160–61.

89. Cf. *CL.* 145–152; and R. Vesser, "Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romannia," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 (1992): 5–21.

90. The original reads: "una delle più grandi forze spirituali dei popoli," "sacro ed immutabile ed intangibile," "creazione successiva e costante della loro anima." Benito Mussolini, "Breve Preludio," in *Gerarchia,* 25 January 1922; reprinted in *OO,* 18:19.

91. The original reads: "pedana di combattimento per andare incontro all'avvenire." Benito Mussolini, "La bandiera dei volontari" (Discorso del 4 giugno 1924), in *OO,* 20:304.

92. The original reads: "costruttori dell'avvenire," "barbaro moderno . . . un'uomo moderno tutto proteso all'avvenire coi suoi tentacoli spirituali." Mario Carli, *L'italiano di Mussolini* (Milano: Mondadori, [1930]), 32.

93. The original reads: "rivoluzione continua," "Noi siamo sempre 'domani.'" Benito Mussolini, "Discorso alla camera dei deputati (8 December 1928)," in *OO,* 23:272.

94. The original reads: "modernità italiana." Mino Maccari, "Breviario," in *Il Selvaggio,* 30 January 1927, 7.

95. The original reads: "il segno di potenza delle nazioni moderne." Alberto Pirelli, "Liti ed ombre della moderna civiltà meccanica," *Gerarchia,* July 1931, 573.

96. The original reads: "pazzesco oltre che ingenuo." N. Madau Diaz, "Macchine," in *Dizionario della politica* (Rome, 1940), 3:4–5.

97. The original reads: "arrestare il cammino stesso della civiltà." Franco Ciarlantini, *Incontro con il Nord America* (Milan: Alpes, 1929), 175.

98. The original reads: "formula della civiltà moderna." Anonymous editorial in *Critica Fascista,* 15 January 1937, 81.

99. The original reads: "servizio dell'uomo e della collettività come strumento di liberazione, non come accumulatore di miseria." Benito Mussolini, "Discorso del 19 marzo 1934," in *OO,* 26:186.

100. The original reads: "simboli rappresentativi del nuovo spirito religioso che fascerà questo secolo e a cui nessuno potrà sottrarsi, perché universale e duraturo." L. C. Fillia, "Spiritualità nuova," in *La Città Nuova,* 21 April 1932, quoted in Claudia Salaris, *Artecrazia: l'avanguardia futurista negli anni del fascismo,* 113.

101. Gino Severini, "L'idolatria dell 'Arte' e decadenza dei quadri," *Critica fascista* (15 January 1927); reprinted in Claudia Salaris, *Artecrazia: l'avanguardia futurista negli anni del fascismo,* 78.

102. The original reads:

> Nello stato fascista l'arte viene ad avere una funzione sociale, una funzione educatrice. Essa deve tradurre l'etica del nostro tempo. Deve dare unità di stile e di grandezza di linee al *vivere comune*. L'arte così tornerà a essere quello che fu nei suoi periodi più alti e in seno alle più alte civiltà: *un perfetto strumento di governo*.

Massimo Campigli, Carlo Carrà, Achille Funi, and Mario Sironi, "Manifesto della pittura murale" (December 1933), in Mario Sironi, *Scritti editie inediti,* ed. E. Camesasca (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1982), 155–57.

103. The original reads: "epoca di miti grandiosi e di giganteschi rivolgimenti." Mario Sironi, "Pittura murale," *Il Popolo d'Italia,* 1 January 1932; reprinted in Mario Sironi, *Scritti editi e inediti,* 115.

104. The original reads: "complesse orchestrazioni della vita moderna." Mario Sironi, "Pittura murale," 104. "Primitività pagana e costruttiva dell'evo moderno." Mario Sironi, "Il Maestro," *Il Popolo d'Italia,* 13 March 1931; reprinted in *Scritti e inediti,* 97.

105. The original reads: "nuova impronta all'anima popolare." Mario Sironi, "Manifesto della pittura murale," 156.

106. The original reads: "di attività e di conquista," "della conquista ha tutte le avidità." Massimo Bontempelli, *L'avventura novecentista,* ed. R. Jacobbi (Florence: Vallecchi, 1974), 159, hereafter abbreviated *AN*. The second original reads: "i miti e la favole necessari ai tempi nuovi" (*AN,* 121).

107. The original reads: "primordiali di un'epoca, il compito di scoprire e creare i nuovi miti, le nuove favole, che nutriranno la giovinezza della terza epoca" (*AN,* 350).

108. The original reads: "realismo magico," "come un avventuroso miracolo: rischio coninuo e continuo sforzo per scamparne," "più quotidiana e normale" (*AN,* 351).

109. The original reads: "inconfutabile," "è viva d'uno spirito eterno," "il suo ufficio di suscitatrice di civiltà" (*AN,* 46).

110. Cf. Emilio Gentile, "Il futurismo e la politica," 155–57.

111. For the English, see "Beyond Communism," in *LMM,* 164. The original reads:

> La rivoluzione futurista che porterà gli artisti al potere non promette paradisi terrestri. Non potrà certo sopprimere il tormento umano che è la forza accensionale della razza. Gli artisti, instancabili aeratori di questo travaglio febbrile riusciranno ad attenuare il dolore. Essi risolveranno il problema del benessere, come soltanto può essere risolto, cioè spiritualmente.

F. T. Marinetti, *Al di là del comunismo* (Milan: La Testa di Ferro, 1920), reprinted in *TIF,* 486.

112. *LMM,* 163: The original reads:

> Il proletariato dei geniali al governo realizzerà il teatro gratuito per tutti e il gran Teatro Aereo futurista. La musica regnerà sul mondo. Ogni piazza avrà la sua grande orchestra strumentale e vocale. Vi saranno così, dovunque, fontane di armonia.

F. T. Marinetti, *Al di là del comunismo,* in *TIF,* 485.

Chapter 4

Myth and Organization: The Rationale of Fascist Mass Politics

Today anyone looking at the images of the parades and public demonstrations, which took place under fascism, has the spontaneous impression that they are watching a ridiculous sideshow. We are of course led to consider them a propaganda apparatus, concocted in a laboratory by clever manipulators of the collective imagination who, however, did not believe in the quality of the product which they were retailing to millions of Italians.

Fascist myths and organizations are often considered as no more than a demagogic mask designed to deceive the masses and keep them under the heel of the predominant bourgeoisie; or as minor and negligible aspects of the historical reality of fascism. Most studies of fascism place a great deal of importance—and rightly so—on class interests and on power play. We know a great deal about the connection between fascism and the dominant forces of the economic world; research has been done on the relations between fascism and other traditional institutions such as the monarchy or the papacy; detailed analysis have been made of the social situations—which fostered the development of the fascist mass movement through the substantial support which it gained from the middle classes; we are completely aware of the political events which led to Mussolini's rise to power; we have determined the responsibility of the old ruling classes, the authoritarian component of the liberal State, the errors of the anti-fascist parties, the decisive importance of the violence of the fascist action squads (*Squadrismo*). We also know—although not in detail—the main institutions of the fascist regime, the conditions, motives and objectives of its domestic and foreign policy. Nevertheless, we continue to delve into the past in order to understand the nature of fascism. This continued search implies that class interests and power play, while important are insufficient to define the nature of fascism and, in particular, its characteristic as a mass political phenomenon.

The study of class interests and power play alone does not lead to an historical understanding of the origins, forms and objectives of Fascist mass politics. Rather the historian must undertake research in depth into the role of myth and organization, inasmuch as these phenomena had a precise rationale of development which cannot be overlooked, even if it is foreign and offensive to our human and political ideals.

The main problem lies in this need for an historical understanding of the type of logic which accompanied the formation of the fascist myths and organisations. I believe that this logic—this rationale—was not a mere consequence of the logic of class interests and power play, but instead belonged to an intuition of politics which lay at the very heart of fascism. In this chapter I shall try to determine this logic and point out the role of myth and organisation in Italian right-wing radicalism and, in particular, in fascist mass politics.

We shall start with a premise. If the myths, rites and symbols of fascist mass politics were an illusory structure, the fascists themselves were the first to be deceived, as they actually were, by the illusion. In reality, the fascists were the first to believe in the quality of their myths and in the seriousness of their manifestations, considering them a coherent expression of their political vision and an essential element of mass politics in a contemporary state. In keeping with its ideal of unity of thought and action, fascism went on to elaborate its ideas and myths as a consequence of its actions. We might say that the political style of fascism was the expression of its own ideology, the materialization and the living experience of its myths. Myth and organisation, in fascism, were not only instruments of political technique, they were also the basic categories which fascists used to interpret modern mass society and to decide their place within this reality in order to act on it and transform it. Myth and organisation were also fundamental components of fascist mass politics; they were two complementary and indissoluble aspects of its conception of politics in a modern society. To use a play on words, we might say that fascism had the myth of organization and tried to give organization to a myth: that is, to translate it into institutions in order to transform it into reality.

Fascism had a mania for myth and organization. Only one example is necessary to point out the incredible heights this mania could reach: on 28 October 1942 there were over twenty-seven million Italians belonging to Fascist party organisations and their affiliates out of a population of forty-five million. As for the importance attached to myth during fascism, it must be noted that fascism, since its beginning, was the first contemporary political movement which explicitly proclaimed and exalted the power of myth in mass politics "Only the myth," Mussolini said in 1922, "can give strength and energy to a people which is about to construct its own destiny."[1] After the march on Rome, the Fascists seriously placed among their main goals the creation of a mythical tradition destined to "flow eternally through the centuries."[2]

Fascist mass politics were not an improvisation; they were related to a long tradition of Italian and European political culture. The myths and rites of fas-

cism, its forms of collective organization, its public demonstrations, the political cult of the nation and the state were a consequence of a conception of man and the masses which had developed after the discovery of the irrational in the collective way of life. Anti-rationalism already present in most of the radical movements in Italy at the turn of the century, both right wing and left, as we have seen, was the consequence of that rational depreciation of reason conceived as the guiding principle of man and history which was so common in the "generation of 1914." This depreciation was not caused by mere hate for mankind: it was a derivation of the culture of the period and seemed to be firmly based both on scientific positivism and on a newly emphasised spiritualist philosophy.

Fascism considered myth and organisation as two complementary forms of modern mass politics. Modern life was dominated by the struggle for supremacy of organized collectivities such as classes and nations. The principle of organization triumphed with the great imperialist powers, industrial agglomerates, international financial cartels and the trade unions. Isolated individuals, unorganized collectivities and national states without solid domestic discipline were bound to be overwhelmed by the dynamic and violent rhythm of modernity. Myth and organization indicated to fascism the way to control the irrational energy of the masses and channel it into political action. In this sense, one can define the new political myths and mass organizations of fascism as a rational use of the irrational in mass politics.

Gustave Le Bon, George Sorel and Roberto Michels provided the solution by explaining how it was possible to change an amorphous crowd into an orderly mass. Le Bon asserted that crowds obey and submit to the charm and will of a leader. The leader forges the crowd into a mass dominated by a belief, and animated by the attraction of a myth. The belief, Le Bon added, is nourished by the creation of a tradition of myths, rites and symbols which in turn strengthen the belief in the consciousness of the masses. Sorel underlined the function of the myth as an element of mobilisation, organization and moral unification of the masses. The myth united their will, aroused their passions and gave them faith in the revolutionary palingenesis of society and the state against the bourgeoise parliamentarinism. Michels warned that only organised groups could work successfully in a mass society. Organization was the sole instrument possible and necessary to create a solid mass movement and establish a collective will. He explained, however, that mass organization did not eliminate the role of the elite. On the contrary, it endowed the ruling minorities with a power which they never had before, a power based on the inherent nature of mass organization. Organization gave the masses discipline, a common outlook, a shared belief, it also imposed a hierarchy of roles, the control of a ruling minority and the charismatic authority of a leader whom the masses could recognise spontaneously and worship sometimes with an almost religious devotion.

As its distinctive state of mind, fascism always showed a contempt for formal and rational political thought, boasting of its spirit of action, realistic and activist, modern and pragmatic, always up to date and able to deal with new cir-

cumstances. However, its "anti-ideological ideology," as I have defined it, rationalized an activist and relativist attitude toward life and politics, and a spirit of revolt against the establishment and bourgeoise habits, combined with a bitter hostility for liberalism and socialism, pacifism and internationalism, as well as for static traditionalism and conservatism. During its making, fascist ideology could and did avail itself of the new political culture that had already had an important part in Italian life when the fascist movement sprang up.

The most important protagonists of fascism had their first political experiences in the atmosphere of the "cultural revolt" against Giolitti's policy before the Great War. Giolitti ruled Italy for more than ten years with the support of a vast majority in Parliament, but he never gained the consent of the majority of public opinion. Almost all the young intellectuals were against him. The young were opposed to Giolitti because they judged him to be mediocre, bureaucratic, and corrupt politician, devoid of ideals and culture. "Giolittismo" was loathed as a day-to-day policy, bereft of higher moral ideals. The cultural revolt against *giolittismo* was a generational phenomenon, which voiced the hatred of the young for the old and for the existing order of things, and, at first, it did not have a political program but counted mainly on cultural activities to renew ideas and spirits. These young intellectuals who opposed Giolitti shared Sorel's theory that a revolution did not bring about deep changes unless it was supported by a myth and a vision of a "new man." They believed that the renewal of the State and society would be the result of a new culture. Many of the young thought that, in order to build up a new ruling class, it was necessary to form a new moral conscience, a "total personality." According to this belief, culture involves the organic formation of the whole man, a man endowed with an historical consciousness of reality and with a moral energy able to create new realities. Also, the ideal of a national community as a moral unity, superior to classes and individuals, was an important topic of the new political culture of the young who shared the idealist heritage of the *Risorgimento* and Mazzini's national radicalism. They had to struggle against Giolitti and the whole political class in order to reach a higher ideal of the goals that a great nation, such as Italy, could and had to pursue.

Fascism claimed to be a movement of youth which was the authentic representative of the "new Italy," an aristocracy of "new men" purified and trained by the experience of the war. During its development, fascism defined its own myth of the national regeneration calling for absolute political supremacy and total dominion of society.

From its very beginning fascism demanded to have the monopoly of the national myth and to be the solely legitimate movement to represent the nation—hence the only party to be entitled to rule the country, to bring the nation-State under control. Any other movement which did not subject itself to fascism and did not adhere to its myths, values and norms was considered an enemy of the nation. In this way, the liberal nationalist ideal of the nation-state as a homeland for all Italians without ideological, religious or ethnic discrimination was rejected and replaced by the ideal of a totalitarian State, a state,

in other words, where only those who were fascist were considered "true" Italians and could have been granted a "complete citizenship." Those who did not swear allegiance to the fascist State ceased being part of the Italian nation. They were treated as traitors of the nation and banned from public life.

The distinctive feature of fascism as a political movement was its military organization, its style of action, its terroristic method of struggle against its opponents, which all contributed to shape its ideology. Ideologically, psychologically and politically, fascism had absolutely no reverence for the liberal State or for the old ruling classes or traditional institutions. Nevertheless, in its battle for political success, fascism adapted its desire for power to the circumstances, uniting intransigence and opportunism, terrorist action and parliamentary manipulation. In its organization, fascism made a concrete experiment of nationalizing the masses, uniting them through patriotic fervour, and setting them into interclass organizations with military discipline, a hierarchy which would overcome individual values, roles and jurisdictions.

During its development, fascism defined its own myth of the "New State" in a new plan of absolute political supremacy, foreshadowed by the practical experience of local power groups formed by the fascist squads. The communist newspaper, *Ordine Nuovo,* was acutely aware of its totalitarian nature when it affirmed, on 27 October 1922, that fascism was born "from a new class of lower middle-class people aspiring to political supremacy."[3] The totalitarian State derived its essential characteristic from the original model of *squadrismo,* the fascist "armed party," which was the embryo of the totalitarian State. *Squadrismo* had a military organisation in order to destroy all adversaries, whether by physical elimination or by passive obedience imposed through humiliation. *Squadrismo* thus became the nucleus of absolute political supremacy, trained locally by a leader who was elected and esteemed by his followers. For many fascists, *squadrismo* was an experience of a militarized community, based on the spontaneous support of its members, who felt that they were united by bonds of elective affinity and solidarity, they were also brought together morally by a complicity in terrorist ventures, by patriotic fervour, and by the exaltation of war heroes and their dead comrades. What united fascists was not a doctrine but rather a state of mind, an experience of faith which took shape in the myth of a new political religion that was identified with fascism itself.

The "armed party" was the fundamental structure for the new fascist state. However, it is also plain that there was nothing at all exciting and irresistible in the totalitarian nature of fascism. The totalitarian embryo could have been aborted before birth. But its opponents, most of whom had been educated to a traditional and rational concept of politics, did not immediately perceive the novelty of fascist mass politics, which expressed itself through new myths and new forms of organization. Most anti-fascists were simply unable to understand the nature of fascism, and therefore they did not oppose it with a policy equal to the danger of its totalitarian dynamism. Fascism, however, had been quite open in revealing its intentions. Fascism did not conceal its view of man or the masses, its concept of myth and organization, its will for totalitarian supremacy, and dur-

ing the course of its history fascism tried to keep its promise to realize the myth of the "New State" within the forms of the totalitarian political system. This myth was based on the principle that politics had supremacy over all other aspects and activities of human life.

The fascists considered themselves the only authentic representatives of the "New Italy" born out of the war, the creators of the "New State" who would accomplish the nationalization of the masses and lead Italy in the conquest of modernity. Their goal was a political revolution which, while leaving the fundamental pillars of the bourgeois house intact, would transform the architecture of the liberal state along the lines suggested by the totalitarian myth of the "New State." The closely knit network of fascist organizations, from the party to the trade unions, like some horrifying octopus, wanted to possess and absorb every aspect of Italian public and private life. But fascism did not want to limit itself merely to an act of domination and coercion of the masses; rather, fascism wanted to work actively in order to involve an ever-increasing number of Italians in the life of the totalitarian political system.

The participation as well as the obedience of the masses in the fascist regime was considered essential for the "permanent revolution" and the construction of the totalitarian state. The fascist participation of the masses had nothing in common with the democratic version of "participation." It was not a spontaneous or free participation based on individual conviction and autonomous choice. On the contrary, it was attained through myth and organization and corresponded to the process of integration of the individual into State organizations. Participation of the masses would have been the final result of a fascist socialization of mind and behaviour, of ideas and feelings. This socialization began in infancy and continued in those organizations which would accompany the citizen in every phase of his growth and in every aspect of his social life. To achieve the "fascist participation" of the masses, the totalitarian State assumed the role of mentor, that moulder of minds which supervised citizens "from birth, throughout their development and formation, without ever abandoning them," and which instilled in them all a "united and profoundly centralised consciousness and will."[4] Fascism did not consider human nature either good or bad: it was malleable to the action of the will of a minority endowed with outstanding qualities to govern the masses, and able to shape their character and mind in the image of the fascist myth. Fascism believed that the masses were incapable of self-government, but did assert that it was possible to mould them and change their character by educating them to live in the State and for the State. Once again myths and organizations were the inseparable elements in fascism's moulding action on the minds of the masses and of the individual. "The mystical side and the political side," as Mussolini said, were interdependent in the mutual task of transforming the mass into an organised collectivity which would in turn transform the "population" into "people." Within this totalitarian pedagogy, even the myth of the Roman Spirit was evoked for the education of a national collective spirit and the creation of a "New Man." Mussolini firmly maintained that the Roman Spirit was a

heritage of myths, rituals and symbols through which fascism would give Italians a sense of the State. The Roman Spirit exalted by fascism was not so much the Roman Spirit of the Imperial splendours: it was, rather, the consciousness of the frugal and simple people of the Republic. The fascist myth of the Roman Spirit was based on the organisation of the roman republic, in which "the citizen had nothing except the life of the State."[5]

Indoctrination of the masses was of the fundamental task of the totalitarian laboratory. Therefore, it was not just a simple propaganda apparatus: it was the projection of an intuition of man and of the masses into society, coherent with the vision of fascism on the functions of myth and organisation in mass politics. This was another lesson provided by Gustave Le Bon, a writer whom Mussolini knew very well. The idea, Le Bon wrote, penetrated into the emotions of the masses in the form of myth, thus assuming the nature of a religious belief. Then the triumph of the idea-myth "is deeply ingrained over a long period, and no line of reasoning would be able to discredit it."[6] The popular organizations of the fascist regime, therefore, had to transmit the myths of fascism from its cultural elaborations to the feeling of the masses. The fascist State had to become for a man the unique condition in which he could fully develop his personality. Like the future Polish citizen imagined by Rousseau, the "new Italians" should see, from infancy to death, nothing but the total presence of the State. The masses, subjected constantly to the process of totalitarian organizations, integration and socialization, would absorb this myth as living reality, recognizing the fascist State as the highest form of collective life in the age of mass politics. Through myths, rites and symbols, Fascism intended to control the irrational in man and in the masses, and to channel this energy into the totalitarian State structures, in order to increase the unity and power of the nation. Only by means of ritual and symbolism was it possible to involve the individual and the masses morally in the mystical political body of the totalitarian community. Rituals and symbols gave the tangible sense of belonging to a superior dominating reality, to an established and permanent order, as the totalitarian State intended to be.

According to the fascists, only a new political faith could provide the cement to unite society and the State. It was the political faith which gave real strength to their mass organization. In the official textbooks used for the education of the new generations, throughout its history, fascism insisted obsessively on the need for a secular religion attributing to it the virtue of firmly and finally uniting the individual and the masses into the totalitarian State. We know that the mixture of politics and religion, the concept of politics as a secular religion was not a fascist invention, but belongs to the history of nationalism after the French Revolution. But fascism was the first political mass movement of the twentieth century which consciously surrounded itself with a religious aura, using the rituals and symbols of war and the political liturgy which Gabriele D'Annunzio had developed at Fiume. Fascism explicitly stated this totalitarian obsession: "the idea of the State must be instilled in young minds from infancy with the suggestion of the myth, so that with growth it will develop into forms of civil discipline and a working army."[7]

Fascism taught primary school children: "You may be in the Garden of Eden, but real Paradise is where God's will is done, which is also felt through the mill of the State."[8] Fascism was in fact a political religion preaching the total submission of men and women to the will of the state, as it was conveyed by the will of the Duce through the fascist party. Therefore the fascist State took on the character of a sacred institution, with its symbols, myths, and martyrs. At the center of this cult the charismatic figure of the Duce stood as a living myth, a human demigod worshiped by the masses in an everlasting collectivite cult.

In the totalitarian State, fascism explicitly assigned myth and organisation the task of creating a mystical political body, and of elaborating a liturgy and a mythical tradition. The enormous parades, the cult of the Duce, the choreography of the mass meetings, the huge architectonic monuments, the civic holidays, the symbols, the veneration of the "martyrs of the revolution" in the memorial chapels adjoining the *Casa del Fascio* were all expressions of the fascist political cult. This political cult aroused in many Italians, as it still does today, the sense of a grotesque and formal stage design. However the fascist cult was not an improvisation, a trivial device, artificially adopted for propaganda purposes. Rather, the coherent likeness between the fascist political cult and its perception of man and the masses should be manifest. Both sprang from the role of myth and organisation in the development of totalitarian logic as applied to mass politics. It might be said that the totalitarian State, by its very nature, had to assume the character of a secular religious institution, with rituals and symbols, totally enclosing man in his material and moral reality.

Fascism had to "mould spirits, educate minds, refine wills, provide new concepts and customs adequate for the new times."[9] Like all modern revolutionaries, Mussolini despised the real man and fanatically believed that only through the discipline of a heroic pedagogy the radical transformation of character habits, mentality, and sentiments could be effected to create a "New Man." Mussolini did not have a high opinion of the Italians whom he ruled, notwithstanding public declarations of esteem. In reality, he felt he was in a permanent state of war against the character of the Italians. "His antagonist," Bottai observed, "is this nation whose history he would like to revise, to refashion it in his way."[10] The attitude of the duce toward the Italians was determinant in defining the objectives of the totalitarian state as regenerator of the nation. The Italians had to undergo a true anthropological revolution:

> We must scrape and pulverize, in the character and mentality of the Italians, the sediments deposited by those terrible centuries of political, military, and moral decay, that ran from the seventeenth century to the rise of Napoleon. It is an immense labor. The Risorgimento was but the beginning, because it was the work of tiny minorities; the world war, instead, was profoundly educational. Now it is a matter of continuing, day by day, this remaking of the national character of the Italians.[11]

The highest ambition of the duce and fascism was to transform Italians into the new Romans of modern times, capable of challenging time by creating a new

civilization. As Mussolini said, "If I succeed, and if fascism succeeds in shaping, as I wish, the character of the Italians, be confident and certain that, when the wheel of destiny passes at our hands' reach, we will be ready to catch it and bend it to our will."[12] The stages in this anthropological revolution of the Italian character were the campaigns for the "reform of custom," antibourgeois polemics, the adoption of racism and antisemitism, and, under certain aspects, participation in the Second World War. In these campaigns to forge the "new Italians" the duce and the secretaries of the party could rightly proclaim themselves zealous disciples of Giovanni Gentile, who, before the advent of fascism, had noted that "the Italian people" predicted by "prophets of the Risorgimento" like Mazzini, was not the people one could see around, but the "future people that the Italians themselves had to create."[13]

To sum up, I would like to stress several points which stand out from these reflections on the role of myth and organisation in fascist mass politics. I consider these points essential for a better understanding of the fascist phenomenon:

1. Myth was a fundamental category through which fascism interpret the political nature of existence and defined its place in the world. The prevalence of mythical thought in its attitude towards existential and political problems was determinant in influencing the creation of a condition of ideological euphoria and an enthusiasm for action, which gave hundreds and thousands of people the spontaneous conviction that the world would undergo a profound and radical transformation of values by virtue alone of fascist will to power and creative action.
2. The main focus of fascist ideology and practice was the conception of the State as the accomplishment of the will to power by an activist minority bent on making its "myth" reality and establishing, within the existing society, a political group which would be autonomous in its choices and independent of all other economic and social forces. Fascism was ideology of the State, and affirmed the State's irrepressible and totalitarian reality, necessary to impose order on the masses and to prevent disintegration of the national collectivity into the chaos of modern time. Fascists looked on the totalitarian State as the "New Order" capable of solving the problem of the masses and of the State in modern society, of reconciling order and change, of achieving a dynamic synthesis between tradition and modernity. They sought to create a political system endowed with solid material structures but also with spiritual elasticity, based on a dynamic role of myth and on the capacity of the organization to adapt the continuous transformations of modernity.
3. The totalitarian State was the original contribution made by fascism to the theory and practice of modern authoritarianism and to contemporary mass politics. Among the antiliberal movements of our century, aimed at the abolition of parliamentary democracy and the creation of a new order considered more just and happy, fascism was the only one which had a totalitarian concept of politics and the State and which demonstrated this concept openly in all its ideological and practical expressions. Fascism asserted the supremacy of politics conceived as the highest and most complete expression of human life, an integral activity of the human spirit on which all other expression depended. It attempted, therefore, to achieve the total cancellation of the "private" into the "public," subordinating those values pertaining to private life (feel-

ings, morals, culture, work) to its supreme political value—the State—intended as totalitarian.

4. The myth of the totalitarian State held a decisive position in fascist ideology and practice. The initiatives, the choices, the behavioural pattern, the achievements, the ideals of fascism refer constantly, in the diversified attitudes of men and historical situations, to the realisation of the totalitarian State. The relationship between myths and organisations in the history of fascism derived from this dominant goal. This relationship was not always coherent in its obvious forms. Nevertheless, it held together thanks to a precise totalitarian and fascist rationale, which rose above the surface of inconsistency and actual circumstance. The centralisation of the myth of the state clearly distinguished fascist totalitarianism from Nazi and communist totalitarianism. While for Nazis and communists the State was considered an instrument to achieve race supremacy or a classless society, fascism considered the totalitarian State a value and an end in itself. The State was the very basis of the revolution which would create a "new civilisation," identified in the fascist political system.

In the thirties, fascism boasted that its ideology and its political system were the only one which would enable the western civilization to overcome the crisis of liberal democracy, the crisis of capitalism and the threat of Bolshevism. Fascism claimed it was a modern movement-regime which provided new solutions to the pressing problems of an ever changing world. It promised to reintegrate the individual in the community, setting him free from the alienation and the materialism of capitalistic society, but without abolishing the class structure and the hierarchy of functions. The fascist totalitarian Utopia pledged to conciliate tradition and modernity, order and change, national community and class structure. In this way, fascism promised to save men and women from the conflicts of modernity. Fascists were convinced, as if possessed by an oneiric rapture, that they had a will-power which could rise above all limitations and the resistance of objective reality, to mold reality and the nature of man in the image of its own myth. As Giuseppe Bottai wrote in 1944[14] after the fall of the fascist regime, the fascists understood politics as "the art of the impossibile, the marvellous, the miraculous" and considered their creative power unlimited.

In this way, the fascists had the ambition of accomplishing the national regeneration through an anthropological revolution which aimed at penetrating all aspects of individual and collective life, custom, and character, in order to forge the new Italians, and build a new civilization. Fascist mass politics, using myth and organisation, aimed to create a "New Man." The idea of a "New Man" was common to many other fascist movements, but in Italian Fascism it had a special and specific meaning only in reference to the concept of the totalitarian State. The "New Man" in Italian Fascism was not a reality coming before the state (like the Nazi "New Man"): he was created by the state, which moulded human nature to its own ends. The "New Man" in Italian Fascism had to be a new kind of citizen, the so called "citizen-soldier," who lived totally in the State and for the State.

Fascism claimed it was accomplishing the national revolution initiated with the Risorgimento, by regenerating the Italians and uniting the nation, spiritually and

morally, in the fascist religion. In the final analysis the fascists could not consider themselves the authors of the regeneration, the creator of the "New Man" that had been envisioned by Mazzini, by the patriots of the Risorgimento, and by most militants of the modernist avant-garde. The revolution that they envisioned was to produce a nation of free man, masters of their destiny. Fascist regeneration instead sacrificed the freedom of the Italians on the altar of politics and the name of the absolute primacy of the totalitarian State. The fascist "New Man" was quite different from the "New Man" most young opponents to "*giolittismo*" had expected. When the latter spoke of a "New Man" they meant a free man able to master his own destiny. The fascist "New Man," on the contrary, was a man devoid of any individual autonomy and responsibility, who would had been trained to consider himself as a mere instrument of the State, and prepared to sacrifice his life for it.

In accordance with its aims, fascism led the Italian people to the Second World War. It wanted to conquer new countries and broaden all over the "New Europe" the empire of the totalitarian State, and its myths and organizations. The result of fascist totalitarian experiment was a tragedy for the Italian people. Fascism, looking forward to creating "new civilization" actually achieved suffering and death for millions of men and women. That was eventually the failure of a Utopia whose purpose had been to solve the conflicts of modernity by sacrificing human beings to the supremacy of a modern Leviathan, degrading the individual and the masses into mere instruments of its will to power. Fascism was eventually the loser in its struggle against rationality and liberty, after it had tried to degrade men and women into mere instruments of its will to power.

In this chapter I have not attempted to explain the whole nature of fascism, but rather to study that segment of the movement which often seems mere political madness. Like Shakespeare, we need to remember in this sense: "Though this be madness, yet there's method in't."

NOTES

This chapter was originally presented at a conference held by the University of Sydney, August 1982, sponsored by the Frederick May Foundation for Italian Studies. A revised version of this paper has been published in *"Altro Polo": A Volume of Italian Studies,* ed. Richard Bosworth and Gino Rizzo, Frederick May Foundation for Italian Studies, University of Sydney, 1983.

1. Quoted in A Simonini, *Il linguaggio di Mussolini.* Milan. 1978. p. 37.
2. G. Neri, "La tradizione mitica che ritorna," *Il Popolo di Lombardia,* 24 February 1923.
3. "Massimalismo fascista," *Ordine Nuovo,* 27 October 1922
4. *Il cittadino soldato,* (Roma: Partito nazionale fascista, 1936), 23.
5. E. Ludwig, *Colloqui con Mussolini,* (Verona: Mondadori, 1932) p. 125.
6. G. Le Bon, *L'evoluzione dei popoli,* (Milan: Mannoni, 1927), p. 153.
7. *Il cittadino soldato,* 13
8. *Il libro della terza classe elementare* (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1935), 65.
9. G. Casini, "Integralismo," *Critica Fascista,* 1 March 1931
10. G. Bottai, *Diario 1935-1944,* ed. G.B. Guerri (Milano: Rizzoli, 1982),187.

11. B. Mussolini, *Opera Omnia,* eds. E. and D. Susmel (Florence: La Feníce, 1951–63), vol. 19, 283.
12. Ibid., vol. 22, 100.
13. G. Gentile, *La riforma dell'educazone* (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), 12
14. Quoted in Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato movo,* 266.

Chapter 5

The Problem of the Party in Italian Fascism

From its foundation until the fall of the 'regime', the party posed a problem for fascism that gave rise to continual discussion, polemics, and at times head-on collisions between the supporters of different ideologies within the movement.

In 1921, the proposal to turn the *Fasci di combattimento* 'movement' into a 'party' had already provoked a serious rupture between the fascist groups, a rupture that was healed only superficially by the Rome Congress (November 1921), when the proposal was almost unanimously accepted. The first years of the PNF were in fact dominated by internal conflict. These disputes were due both to a lack of effective unity in the organization at national level, and to the precariousness of the agreement on ideas and political outlook of people who differed both in terms of their social and regional backgrounds, and who were united only temporarily in acts of terrorism against socialist and Catholic organizations and in the struggle for power.

After the march on Rome, the internal disputes of the PNF exploded violently and the very existence of the party was endangered. After the crisis of 1925 had been overcome, the PNF lived in a kind of institutional uncertainty during the period of the construction of the fascist 'regime', until the law on the constitutionalization of the *Gran Consiglio* of 1928 legally subordinated the party to the State. Internal stability and the legal provisions concerning the State did not put an end to the discussions and arguments on the 'problem of the party', especially on its function and duties in the political system that fascism was gradually constructing, and on its role in the development of the 'fascist revolution'. Even in the last years and months of the 'regime', the 'problem of the party' was still dealt with as a fundamental question for the uncertain future of fascism.

Examination of these facts[1] makes it obvious that the PNF was in no sense a homogeneous organism, not only because of the inevitable mutations to which

all parties are subject, but also because within the structure and functions of the party there were a number of clearly distinct attitudes and modes of operation.[2] During its history, the PNF underwent a real metamorphosis which substantially modified its original characteristics, without, however, completely wiping out the typical features by which its historical identity can be recognized, in spite of the structural and functional changes. It would, however, be superficial to attribute this series of changes only to circumstances, unpremeditated interventions, class interests and power plays. These changes, in fact, correspond to a logic—which we might define as specifically 'totalitarian'—consistent with the conception of mass politics characteristic of fascism. I would like to try to illustrate this 'totalitarian logic' by considering the most significant ideological and organizational attitudes towards some of the principal questions in the history of the PNF: the character of the party, its position in the 'regime', its role in the future of the 'fascist revolution'.

The decision to give the *Fasci di combattimento* 'movement' a party organization was taken by Mussolini in the summer of 1921, when fascism, from being an urban phenomenon of small groups, had grown into an enormous mass conglomeration composed largely of the rural middle classes. Created as an 'antiparty', in 1919–20 the *Fasci di combattimento* considered themselves an aristocratic minority movement who despised the organized masses and had no intention of keeping their movement in being for longer than necessary to perform the tasks which they had set themselves at the end of the first world war: to justify the war, to exploit the victory, to fight bolshevism. The ideology of the fascist 'movement' was an anti-ideology, which expressed more than anything a state of mind, an activist attitude towards life, a spirit of revolt against the existing order and a juvenile aspiration for novelty and change along with a confused nationalist and revolutionary mythology. As a self-styled 'libertarian' movement, the *Fasci di combattimento* had no statute or detailed regulations: organization and methods of struggle were dictated by circumstances and situations. There were no ties of leadership and members could also join other parties so long as they were patriotic and anti-Bolshevik. During this period, the ideology and organization of fascism were formed spontaneously or by imitation, thanks to local initiatives, often on the part of individuals and which frequently proved ephemeral. In general, the driving force of a centre to co-ordinate policy and propaganda was missing.

In the second half of 1921, fascism had become a mass phenomenon, based on *squadrismo;* it also had a parliamentary group and represented one of the major political forces in the land. Its ideology gained greater consistency by abandoning the negative anarchy of its origins.[3] It began to emphasize the values of tradition and order, and to integrate them into a programme of action aimed at the future to 'assure the country, above all through the nationwide education of the masses, of the fundamental renewal of its institutions'.[4] Fascism wanted to bring to power the new forces and values unleashed by the war and victory. By proposing the formation of the fascist party, Mussolini intended to give to the new and heterogeneous mass of fascists the stability of an organization founded on order,

leadership and discipline. In this way he wanted not only to avoid the dispersal of fascist forces but also to impose on them his own image as *duce del fascismo*.

The reactions which Mussolini's proposals provoked in the fascists demonstrate very clearly the ideological and political arguments which rent the party even after the march on Rome. These problems may largely be attributed to the desire of provincial *squadrismo* to resist Mussolini's pretentions to hegemony and to lay claim to being the representatives and political leaders of the new mass movement.

The leaders of the provincial *squadrismo*—such as Dino Grandi, Roberto Farinacci, Italo Balbo, Piero Marsich—rejected the proposal for reasons which were essentially political. They wanted to take the leadership of fascism away from Mussolini and the Milanese group and to keep full freedom of action. There was even some attempt to give an ideological character to this opposition. For example Dino Grandi proposed an interpretation of fascism as the heir of *fiumanesimo*, as being a transitory revolutionary phenomenon which would burn itself out and give life to a new 'national democracy', modelled on the national and syndical State designed in D'Annunzio's *Carta del Carnaro*. Piero Marsich wanted fascism to preserve the character of a 'movement' with an 'open' ideology which was anti-parliamentarian and without the rigid ties of a party organization and programme. For most *squadristi*, the reasons for their anti-party opposition were above all of a psychological origin, deriving from their activist and rebellious mentality. The young *squadristi* were afraid that parliamentary protocol and the organization of fascism into a party would corrupt its genuine spirit and deaden revolutionary dynamism in the meanders of traditional politics. One nineteen-year-old *squadrista* wrote in his diary on the eve of the Congress of Rome:[5]

> We are beginning to fear that our fascism, this limpid font of energy, will get bogged down in the mephitic marshes of Montecitorio, that the youth and poetry of the movement will be contaminated by Roman alchemies, in a word that our David will grow a paunch and a moustache and beard.

This attitude was defeated by the results of the Congress, but it remained a permanent component of fascism, in constant if underground controversy with the party.

The transformation of the *Fasci di combattimento* into a party did not, in reality, occasion substantial changes in the organization of the *squadristi*, but it gave them a formally unified organization. In fact, the statute of the PNF formally named *squadrismo* an essential institution of the new party. Every section was obliged to form an 'action squad' which formed 'an indivisible unit with the sections'. The squads were composed of fascist volunteers who gathered under a 'flame' and elected a 'commandant' whom they had to obey with military discipline. The action squads depended politically on the governing bodies (*direttorio*) of the section and had to be ready to fight the enemies of fascism and to hurry, at the request of the *direttorio*, to the defence of 'the supreme interests of the nation'.

The link between *squadrismo* and the fascist party was indissoluble. When the Bonomi government, in December 1921, proposed the dissolution of the 'armed groups', the secretary of the PNF, Michele Bianchi, warned menacingly that before dissolving the squads, it would be necessary to outlaw the fascist party.[6]

From its beginning, the PNF seemed a 'new party' compared with the traditional mass parties. It presented itself in the original and unheard of form of an 'armed party' which acted openly in a liberal democracy, despising its laws and using its institutions to destroy it. With its transformation into a party, fascism strengthened its political-military structure. The activities of the central committee, the *squadrismo* and the parliamentary group were co-ordinated in a unitary way. The strategy of action of the new party combined parliamentary politics with the politics of terrorism. As Italo Balbo wrote in his 1922 diary, the secret of fascist strategy lay in conserving its revolutionary dynamism and, at the same time, adapting itself to reality: 'We despise Parliament but we must make use of it'.[7] Furthermore, by proclaiming itself not to be a factional organization but 'a voluntary militia in the service of the nation', the PNF publicly laid claim to a privileged position in the liberal State.

In this period, the principal myth of fascism was still the nation, rather than the State. The PNF affirmed that it wanted to defend the tradition, the sentiment, and the will of the nation, operating with the State and in place of the existing State against those parties defined by fascism as 'anti-national'. At the same time, however, with its armed organization, its trade unions, its 'groups of competence', the PNF already presented itself as the nucleus of a 'new State', with the publicly declared intention of integrating or replacing the liberal State, should its actions prove to be—according to the fascists—ineffective in the struggle against the 'anti-national parties'. In practice, the PNF placed itself in a privileged position, both in relation to other parties and in relation to the liberal State, claiming for itself alone liberty of action within and without the law, and openly despising the rules of parliamentary democracy. Another important element characterized the PNF's pretension to privilege, namely the right to decide which Italians—and which parties—were 'national' and which were 'anti-national'. In a speech in Milan, on 4 October 1922, Mussolini declared that the fascist State would not concede liberty to all citizens, as the liberal State did, but would divide Italians into three categories: the indifferent, 'who will stay at home and wait'; the sympathizers, 'who will have freedom of movement'; and the enemies, 'and these will not have freedom of movement'.[8]

The elements which form the original character of the fascist party make it possible to identify, right from the first moment of its life, its totalitarian orientation, even if this orientation does not correspond to a precise political design, knowingly worked out. The essential characteristics of this totalitarian orientation are evident not only in the organization of the party and in its public announcements, but above all in the mentality of the fascists, in their attitudes towards their adversaries, in the new forms of organization and political participation in which fascism involved the masses.

The 'armed party' was, indeed, the embryo of the totalitarian regime. For *squadrismo*, political opponents were not adversaries with whom one disagreed, but enemies to eliminate and humiliate by imposing on them a passive obedience. In many regions, consequently, before the march on Rome, *squadrismo* established absolute political domination, exercised at local level by a chief, who was elected by his followers and obeyed with fanatical devotion. Even the new political style of *squadrismo*, assimilated by the PNF, contributed to defining its totalitarian orientation. In the minds of the *squadristi*, their action was a continuation of their wartime experience into the political struggle, only now the boundary that divided the nation from its enemies was the internal one which divided 'national' Italians from 'anti-national' ones. In the life of the 'squad', and in the acts of terrorism against their opponents, the *squadristi*—especially the younger ones who had not taken part in the war—felt the spirit of comradeship of the trenches and the warrior spirit which united them in the mystique of the nation, without distinction of class, profession or age. *Squadrismo* was practised as a concrete experiment in the nationalization of classes. At their rallies, the fascists visually depicted the classless and 'national' character of the party. Workers and intellectuals, peasants and clerks, proletarians and bourgeoisie, young and old, men and women took part in the rites of a new 'religion of the nation', celebrating with ritual and symbolism the 'profound, indefinable, infinite fascist faith'.[9]

The PNF placed a good deal of importance on these ceremonies and exalted their pedagogic function through its newspapers. The new political style of the PNF was not a secondary factor in its propaganda, especially among the young. Putting it simply, one might say that for fascism the style was the ideology; the forms and the rituals of the organization were both the representation of its myths and their materialization. The new style of the PNF gave its adherents an immediate and sensible perception of their strength, consolidated their unity psychologically with an image of order, of rhythm and energy in which there appeared 'the indestructible destiny' of the future of fascism. Because of these factors, the party took on the character of a *Bund*, founded on the elective affinities of its members, consecrated by the blood of war heroes and the 'martyrs of the revolution'; united spiritually (apart from the inevitable differences of class and the fundamental hierarchy of the organization that fascism never claimed to abolish) in the common cult of the fascist 'faith'. The rituals and symbols of *squadrismo*, becoming an integral part of the PNF, served to throw into relief, even through the uniform the fascists wore, the privileged 'differentness' of the new party, an armed militia to defend and propagate the 'religion of the nation' and the cult of the fascist 'faith'.

The two years succeeding the march on Rome were the most difficult period for the fascist party, now the party of government. Differences of opinion, ambition, political rivalry, conflicting interests, regional patriotism, personal distrust and hatred aggravated the internal conflicts. There were schisms and violent clashes between old and new fascists, who poured in *en masse* after the party

came to power, between moderates and extremists, between those favouring 'normalization' and the supporters of the 'second revolutionary wave'.[10]

In 1923–24, the party was really in eclipse. Its fragile organizational unity, though it had served to win power in a round of threats of terrorist action and compromising manoeuvres, dissolved into dissident factions, autonomous groups and personal power domains. The structure of the 'armed party', when compelled to demobilize by Mussolini, could not withstand the centrifugal forces at work, and broke up. The governing body of the PNF was modified several times by the *Duce*, who was trying to consolidate his position as 'Chief of Fascism' above the party. The institution of the *Gran Consiglio* deprived the democratically elected ruling organs of power and set in motion the tortured process of the subordination of the party to the government. The institution of the MVSN, by depriving the party of its military function, meant the end of *squadrismo* as a form of organization indivisible from the trade-unions and political organization. And all this occurred during a period of chaotic ideological ferment, each ideology claiming to provide the correct interpretation of fascism and its objectives after the party came to power.

The years between 1922 and 1926 were, however, the period of greatest and liveliest freedom for the different ideological positions in the PNF, even if that freedom was sometimes confused and inconclusive. In the effort to define the meaning of the 'fascist revolution' and the duties of the Mussolini government, opinions multiplied and developed, while the myth of the 'new State',[11] which posed different problems relative to the functioning of the party, began to emerge ever more distinctly and dominantly. These different ideas corresponded to a broad range of attitudes. Some proposed the dissolution of the party, since its function had been fulfilled with Mussolini's coming to power, and the formation of a national coalition government; others protested that the PNF had not exhausted its revolutionary function and therefore claimed the revolutionary right of the party to win total power and create its own State.

The most hostile criticism of the party came from the dissidents and the moderate revisionists, like Massimo Rocca. These thought that fascism had fulfilled its role as a party when it took over the functions of government in the name of all the Italian people and not just the fascists. The party should submit to the orders of the government; it should put an end to the still frequent acts of terrorism and collaborate in restoring the authority of the State, respecting traditional institutions and returning to the ideals and spirit of the historical right. The intransigent revisionists, like the *Critica Fascista* group, adopted equally critical positions with regard to *squadrismo*. Giuseppe Bottai's review had no doubts about the existence of the party, but maintained that the period of *squadrismo* and the 'armed party' was over. The revisionists wanted a profound revision of the men, ideas and methods inside the party, to bring it into line with the needs of those new enterprises fascism would have to undertake once it had gained power: the creation of a new ruling class and the construction of a 'new State'. For the intransigent revisionists, the 'armed party' had to be replaced by a 'party of

intellectuals', creators of ideologies and institutions, through which to introduce the masses to the national State. At the same time, with an ideological virtuosity which tended towards political abstractness, they asked the party and the fascist government to adopt an intransigent strategy, in order not to confuse the ideas and purpose of fascism with moderate conservatism and traditional authoritarianism.[12]

On the other side, there were the extremists of provincial *squadrismo*. They set great store by the revolutionary function of the party and wanted to proceed by all possible means to the full seizure of power. Their 'hero' was Roberto Farinacci, one of the few fascist chiefs with a strong 'sense of the party'.[13] The extremists knew they were the real strength of fascism and defended to the last the privileged position of the party against any compromising or 'normalizing' manoeuvre. They called for, and tried to create, a 'second revolutionary wave' to sweep away the opposition and to move, without legal scruples and intellectual complications, towards a complete and brutal fascistization of the existing State. The leaders of *squadrismo* thought that the subordination of the party to the government would be the end of their power within fascism and a definitive victory for Mussolini's hegemony. At this time, Mussolini was not yet the unchallenged *Duce*, the charismatic chief above all criticism and protest. Many extremists, on the contrary, doubted his will to continue the revolution and feared the success of his supporters, such as the moderates and the nationalists, in eliminating *squadrismo* and containing revolutionary fascism in an authoritarian version of the old constitutional state. In the attitudes of the extremists the totalitarian orientation of the 'armed party' took on the appearance of a deliberate political design to seize control of the state by revolutionary methods.

The crisis of fascism after the death of Matteotti, killed by a group of *squadristi* in June 1924, threatened Mussolini's power. Extremist *squadrismo* played a crucial role in saving fascism and establishing the new regime after 3 January 1925. Farinacci's faction achieved pre-eminence, if only temporarily. This resulted in greater vigour in the party's efforts to transform the state. The equivocal position of a 'revolutionary party' which was also the party led by the premier of a parliamentary government, was replaced by the new and definitive position of the 'single party'. After a period of collective leadership (1923–24), the return to a single secretary, Farinacci, indicated an important change in the political and organizational life of the PNF. Farinacci effectively united the party, with energetic action aimed at eliminating dissent and disruptive factions and at restoring the party's character as a revolutionary movement. He defended the autonomy of the PNF against government, and by identifying fascism with intransigence and *squadrismo*, managed to impose on other factions as well the politics of extremism. Even the revisionists of the review *Critica Fascista* adhered to the totalitarian orientation which Farinacci wanted to impose on the politics of both party and government.

By means of a reorganization carried out at times with brutally hasty methods, Farinacci rebuilt the special character of the party, integrating the totalitarian

elements of the 'armed party' with the new functions of a revolutionary party in power. He maintained that the PNF ought to be made up of an elect minority of hardline fascists and that it should be a 'closed order', ready to face isolation to preserve the integrity of the fascist faith from contamination by moderates and normalizers. The party should take on the character of a political army in a state of permanent mobilization against the enemies of revolution, even, if necessary, reconstructing the action squads. The organizational structure was remodelled with military-style discipline, based on the absolute obedience of followers to leaders. The internal hierarchy, according to Farinacci, should spring from a renewed 'community' relationship between the soldiers of the 'fascist religion'. He encouraged the mass of fascists to take an active part in the life of the PNF; he encouraged discussion; he exhorted the leaders to keep in constant touch with the rank and file. The fact that the leadership was elected ought to guarantee the agreement and participation of the masses in the political initiatives of the party, but once elected, the leader had to be followed with absolute discipline.

Farinacci also tried to give new importance to the position of Secretary General, who should be an effective 'chief of the party' and not just an ordinary administrator of an organization who had to take orders from the government. The Secretary General, for Farinacci, was the guardian of the fascist faith, the interpreter of the will of the fascist masses, the real guide of the party. He strove to realize his totalitarian design by affirming the primacy of the party over the fascist trade unions and the *Milizia*. Finally, his 'politics of the party' aimed at guaranteeing the full autonomy of the PNF in relation to Mussolini's government. Farinacci placed the party and the government on a plane of formal parity. Acting together and through their example the fascist revolution would be realized. By placing a 'chief of the party' alongside the *Duce del fascismo*, Farinacci was making a concrete attempt to reserve revolutionary initiative for the party and to limit Mussolini's hegemony to the sphere of government activity, in the symbolic role of *Duce*. Lastly, a further practical refinement of the totalitarian orientation came with the passing of the PNF from a position of 'privileged difference' to the 'single party' policy of the new fascist regime. The discrimination between sympathizers and enemies was extended to the point of identifying people as 'Italian' or 'fascist'. Whoever opposed fascism became an enemy of the nation.

During Farinacci's secretaryship (February 1925-March 1926), the PNF enjoyed its greatest active autonomy, and certainly succeeded in influencing the development of the totalitarian organization of fascism and the realization of this orientation in new institutions, but the 'politics of the party' as conceived by Farinacci was never brought to a conclusion in the sense that he wished. He was instrumental notably in bringing order to the internal life of the PNF and in consolidating its structure, into which were slotted other institutions, introduced by Farinacci to extend the presence of the party in society. He reduced internal conflict and brought back to the PNF a general homogeneity of attitudes. However, Mussolini's hostility prevented the party from becoming the active and autono-

mous centre of revolutionary initiative for the construction of the fascist 'new state'. Paradoxically, with his 'politics of the party', Farinacci actually created the conditions which in the following years made the metamorphosis of the PNF's political function easier, with the subordination of the party to government and its incorporation in the State.[14]

The metamorphosis of the PNF occurred simultaneously with its juridical inclusion in the new fascist regime, accomplished between 1926 and 1932. First of all, the internal situation of the party was greatly altered by the purges ordered by the new Secretary, Augusto Turati (March 1926-October 1930) and by his successor, Giovanni Giuriati (October 1930-December 1931). Many *squadristi* who were resistant to discipline were expelled, together with a good number of opportunists who had flocked to the PNF after the march on Rome, while new transfusions in the social body of the party had considerably altered the components of revolutionary fascism. Given the position taken up by the PNF in the fascist regime after 1926, reference to its social composition becomes less relevant to an evaluation of the character and function of the party. Both were, in fact, now determined from above and almost always according to the wishes of Mussolini, who had decided to reduce the party's political autonomy as much as possible. From this point of view, the period 1926–32 may be considered a distinct phase in the history of the PNF, a phase characterized by the domination of the *Duce* over the party and its transformation into a 'popular institution' of the fascist state, the functions of which institution were the organization, control, and political education—in the fascist sense—of the masses.

Mussolini's attitude to the PNF, after the march on Rome, was always consistent in denying it any sort of parity whatsoever with the government. Being almost completely without 'sense of the party', Mussolini opposed in any way he could any attempt to affirm the autonomy and supremacy of the PNF. In the government directives issued between the end of 1922 right up to the well-known circular to Prefects in 1927, the *Duce* stated peremptorily that the party was subordinate to the government. This attitude was shared and supported by moderate fascists, 'fellow-travellers' and nationalists, who had flocked to the PNF at the beginning of 1923. Thanks to the work of Luigi Federzoni as Minister of the Interior (June 1924-November 1926), the nationalists who were not totally converted to the fascist faith obstructed Farinacci's 'politics of the party' and opposed revolutionary extremism in government policy.

The nationalists tried to justify their actions with ideological arguments. They stressed the role of fascism as the spiritual heir of the nationalist movement, and extolled the 'national' aspects of fascism rather than the 'party' ones. With captious dialectic the nationalists maintained that fascism, after it had become a 'regime', had ceased to exist as a 'party', because the fascist regime asserted its incompatibility with the existence of parties. By nationalizing itself as a 'regime', fascism had to cease to exist as a 'party', to the extent of dissolving itself as a specifically political phenomenon. The nationalists never accepted the presence of the PNF with enthusiasm. Enrico Corradini, founder of the nationalist move-

ment, complained that too much was said about fascism and too little about Italy: 'Less Fascism and more Italy, less Party and more Nation, less Revolution and more Constitution', as he observed in some personal notes.[15]

A similar attitude to that of the nationalists, but based on different ideological motives, was manifested by Giovanni Gentile during the passage of the law concerning the *Gran Consiglio* in 1928. According to this authoritative philosopher, the constitutionalization of the *Gran Consiglio*, by subordinating the PNF to the state, effectively created the condition for the liquidation of the party and the end of discrimination between fascists and antifascists in the unanimous concord of Italians brought about by the fascist State. In the new 'national State', according to Gentile, there were now only Italians, no longer divided into supporters of the fascist revolution and champions of the old regime, but rather all citizens devoted to the authority of the State and to co-operating in the greatness of the nation.[16] But the nationalists and Gentile, the latter perhaps without realizing it, ended up by proposing the dissolution of fascism into an authoritarian patriotism. They were satisfied by the results achieved by the 'Fascist Revolution' with the creation of a new regime, and therefore maintained that the historical function of fascism as a movement and as a political party was finished.

The pitfalls of this interpretation were perceived even by Mussolini. In 1929, during the Grand Assembly of the fascist leaders, the *Duce* defended the PNF. He stressed 'the conscious, definitive, solemn subordination of the party to the state', but made clear that this subordination would not lead the PNF 'to renounce its autonomous existence'. The fascist party would never be enlarged to such an extent that it would embrace indiscriminately the entire nation, thus abolishing the distinction between Italian fascists and Italian non-fascists, or anti-fascists. For Mussolini, these distinctions were 'decreed by fate and necessary'. Moreover, he assigned to the PNF a fundamental function as a 'capillary organization of the regime', which with the mass of its members, gave to 'the authority of the state the willing consensus and incalculable support of a faith'.[17]

The new function of the PNF was clearly delimited in terms described by Mussolini and in a form consonant with the development of totalitarian fascism. The party was not an organ which elaborated or helped to elaborate, on its own initiative, the 'political will' of the State, but was the instrument for carrying it out. The 'political will of the State' under totalitarian fascism resided exclusively in the will of the *Duce*. The PNF was to act as a nervous system, through which the will of the *Duce* penetrated the nation, organized into a 'political body'. Through its pedagogic activities, the party gave Italians the fascist faith and a 'sense of the State'. The juridical position of the PNF under the fascist regime marked the end of its political autonomy and a change in its character. The statute of 1926 abolished its elective offices and conferred on the *Gran Consiglio* the prerogative of determining the party's guiding policy, and it definitively consecrated the figure of the *Duce* as the 'supreme guide' of the party and fascism. Successive statutes (1929, 1932, 1938) formally clarified the new position of the PNF, which became 'the Civilian Militia at the orders of the Duce, in the service of the Fascist State'.[18]

In the thirties, the party extended its presence in social life, multiplying the number of its institutions and tasks, especially in the sector of youth organization and social services, thus expanding enormously in numerical terms. Above all, during the long secretaryship of Achille Starace (December 1931-October 1939) the PNF perfected, with maniac attention to detail, its capillary organization, conducted with heavy-handed monotony its campaign to fascistization of public life and accentuated, in more and more elaborate forms, its political style, its role of 'civil army' and lay religious institution, guardian of the fascist faith. Starace was the high priest of the 'cult of the *Duce*' and the key figure in staging the liturgical ceremonies of fascism. Under the orders of Mussolini and with fanatical personal zeal, Starace developed the totalitarian party machine with the aim of involving millions of men and women of every age in a system of collective life which in time would become 'a moral community' within the fascist state in which a new kind of Italian would be raised. Under Starace, the presence of the PNF in society became obtrusive and obsessional to the ludicrous point of the daily issuing of 'regulations' intended to teach Italians how to conduct both their personal and social relationships according to the rules and forms of the 'new fascist custom'. Even Bottai's magazine, which was so alive to intellectual seriousness and longstanding polemics against noisy ceremoniousness, appreciated this aspect of Starace's work:

> The secretaryship of Starace has been characterized by the bringing to perfection of the Party as an organ [. . .] The forms and functions of the various organs of the Party have been specified and defined; many of the norms which had never been collected together, were uncertain or purely customary have been codified; a clear and explicit form has been given to ceremonies and rituals; the fascist style has been consecrated in precise and uniform ways of behaviour. This is an undertaking which is neither small nor of secondary value. One must recognize that it was necessary and that it was not easy, especially given the temperament of the Italians. We have form which is also substance; which needed creating; which was inevitable from the moment that the Revolution left behind it, with the seizure of governing power, its improvised and romantic air of insurrection to take on this orderly, constitutional, formal character of a constructive Regime. [. . .] This period is characterized by the great prestige which the Party has obtained in the national life, its position as the central and predominant organ of the constitutional organism of the Country, by the capillarity which it has desired to assume and succeeded in assuming by means of a fine net of direct or interlinked organs which permeate the whole body of the Nation.[19]

Many attribute to Starace the responsibility for having transformed the PNF into an obtuse bureaucratic organization and a ridiculous propaganda machine for the 'cult of the *Duce*'. This judgement corresponds only in part to historical reality. In effect, *staracismo* was merely the heightening of the character, the function and the tasks which the party had assumed back in 1926 and was even carried out by the secretaries who preceded Starace. Naturally one has to take into account the important differences in the ideas and policies of Turati and Giuriati as sec-

retaries of the PNF, but one must also recognize that their work was decisive for the transformation of the PNF in a way consistent with the new function it was gradually assuming in the totalitarian fascist system.

We owe to Turati, who was secretary of the PNF from March 1926 to October 1930, the liquidation of the 'politics of the party' of Farinacci and the PNF's adaptation to the new position deriving from its function as subordinate to the government. With Turati, the PNF assumed an eminently educative role both towards the masses and, above all, the younger generations. The task of the party was to back up the work of the government as a disciplined and obedient army under the orders of the *Duce*, preparing the formation of a fascist ruling class capable of carrying the revolution in the direction of total fascistization of the State. These were the principal directives adopted by Turati, in line with Mussolini's policy. This did not mean, for Turati, giving the PNF an independent political role, as Farinacci had tried to do, but rather making its presence felt more strongly in public life. The PNF, according to the ideas and policies of Turati, ought to extend its action towards a more profound transformation of the mentality, the behaviour and convictions of the Italians. According to Turati, the party conserved a central position in the fascist regime, because it was responsible for the political control of the economic and social institutions, without interfering with or coming into conflict with the actions of the *Duce*. Turati was the first secretary of the PNF who explicitly laid the foundations for the 'cult of the *Duce*', by exalting Mussolini as the leader and supreme guide of fascism, the sole depository of 'political will', 'the sole leader from whom all power emanated [. . .] the sole pilot whom no crew could replace'.[20] In practical terms Turati kept the party alive, sought to extend its influence among the mass of workers and broaden the sphere of its actions. The PNF assumed the character of a school of civilized life, as a perfect exemplar of the new collective morality. For Turati, the party was the guardian and the nurturer of the fascist faith, 'the ever burning furnace within the revolutionary spirit of Fascism forges minute by minute the revolutionary laws for tomorrow'.[21] Giovanni Giuriati, during the brief period of his secretaryship, sought to preserve the active presence of the party in the 'regime' and made a fundamental contribution to the work of the fascistization of the younger generation with the creation of the *Fasci giovanili di combattimento* which organized adolescents between 18 and 20 and was intended to be 'the fecund nursery for the ranks and cadres of the PNF and the MVSN'. Giuriati emphasized the militarization of the internal life of the party and its character as a lay-religious institution. For Giuriati, fascism was the civil religion of the Fatherland: the party was to dedicate itself to the formation of a fascist conscience in the younger generation and in this area to oppose the influence of the Catholic Church. The PNF was above all to work to rear and educate the new faithful, the apostles, the soldiers and the martyrs of the 'fascist religion': 'Whoever is not ready to give body and soul to the Fatherland and serve the *Duce* without discussion does not deserve to wear the black shirt', so said the second commandment of 'The Young Fascist's Decalogue', written by Giuriati in 1931.[22]

As we have seen, right from its origins fascism had the character of a civil religion and its organization was considered a 'militia' at the service of a 'faith'. In 1926, the statute of the party emphasized that the PNF was an army of believers and fighters under the orders of the *Duce*, and that fascism was above all a faith, which had its confessors and martyrs. After 1926, as a result of Turati's and Giuriati's initiatives, party ceremonies formally assumed the character of 'civil rituals' which were expected to manifest 'the fascist faith' to the minds of the Italians and to perpetuate it there. Turati was the first to elaborate the forms of the more important ceremonies of fascism which were celebrated on the fundamental dates of the new calendar of the 'regime': 28 October (the beginning of the fascist year), 23 March (foundation of the *Fasci di combattimento*), 21 April (the anniversary of Rome's foundation and the fascist Workers Feastday). In 1927, the principal ritual of fascism was instituted, the *Leva fascista* (fascist Draft), an initiation rite for adolescents who came from the avant-garde organizations and entered the party after it had been decided to close the membership. The *Leva fascista* was similar to the confirmation ceremony in the Catholic Church and was celebrated every year in the chief towns, in the presence of the authorities of the government and the party. The main ceremony took place in Rome and culminated in a speech by the *Duce*. The young people who wanted to join the party and the MVSN were received at the *Casa del Fascio* by their older comrades and after having taken the oath of loyalty unto death to the *Duce* and the cause of the fascist revolution, they received their membership and their musket. On the occasion of the second *Leva fascista* in 1928, the secretary of the party went to various cities throughout Italy to consecrate the new young Italians, faithful to the new Fatherland to the service of fascism. 'We'—said Turati during the ceremony—'already tested by the struggle and a little worn by the testing—entrust to you, young comrades, the musket and the dagger, trusty arms for all battles and reminders of our Deaths, and we consecrate you Fascists'. Turati, commented the magazine *L'Ordine Fascista*, 'is the priest who speaks with mystic voice and life-giving appeal'.

Starace, for his part, continued and perfected, with his personal touch, the work started by his predecessors. He had an absolute mania for organization, inspired by his own vision of the 'fascist style' which he maintained was essential for the character of the PNF and for the new politics of the fascist State. He elaborated and multiplied the forms of the fascist liturgy; he introduced the 'fascist Saturday'; he meticulously laid down the ways in which a fascist should behave in everyday life, the use of uniforms in the life of the party, the formal relationship between the leaders and followers. He attributed enormous importance to parades and mass sports meetings, because he was convinced that these contributed to form the fascist spirit of the Italians: 'The fascist style'—affirmed one of the 'dispositions' of Starace of 23 March 1935—'except for some incurable actors, cannot be considered a mere exterior attitude, but it is a precise expression and revelation of an intimate substantial content'. The institution of the 'fascist Saturday' in 1935 had the precise object of forming the 'new Italians' of

fascism from the physical, military exercises and political conferences. All this, let it be said, did not constitute an extemporary innovation but was part of the coherent development of the ritual tradition of the PNF, and corresponded to its ideal of mass politics and its function in the fascist regime. This function of the party was clearly defined by Starace in his speech to the *Gran Consiglio* of 14–16 February 1935:[23]

> The part of this speech of mine which refers to the organization of the Party, which has also been brought to perfection in its exterior forms [. . .] emphasizes a whole field of activity of a psychological and formative character which, in my opinion, ought to be predominant for someone who, like the Secretary of the Party, has the responsibility of the management of men.
>
> I am of the opinion that the Secretary of the Party, rather than in the field of politics which both internally and externally is the domain of the DUCE, a domain where there is little to do but obey orders with that spirit of initiative without which the execution of orders would have scarce value, the Secretary, I say, ought to work in that psychological and formative field to impress on Fascists and Italians the new style of the time in which we live. To perceive, in all circumstances, even the most tenuous nuances of a psychological character and give them body in harmony with the immediate and mediate needs of the Regime, constitutes the real, concrete help which the Party can give to the DUCE, to make it possible for him, at any moment, to develop his actions in the political domain, for those objectives which he only can conceive and indicate.

Starace was convinced that he could form the new character of the Italians by the imposition of customs which would render them more permeable to the myths of fascism. The habit, according to Starace, did make the monk. Furthermore, with his frenetic activity, Starace enlarged the spread of the tentacles of the party in the structure of the state and society; he widened the areas of its competence and of its educational and organizational penetration. Starace sought to bring into being the ambitious project of 'the politics of the party' without ever challenging the authority of the *Duce*, through the construction of a solid effective organism of power, perhaps with a view to succeeding Mussolini eventually. After all, it was not foolishly ambitious to think that a probable successor, the heir of the 'political will' of the *Duce*, could be the 'collegiate political will' of the PNF, and, therefore, of the man whose hands were on the steering wheel of the party. In this sense, one can perhaps guess the purpose of Starace's actions, which progressively transformed the PNF into an omnipresent and irreplaceable structure in the fascist political system, until it became the nervous system of the totalitarian State in the making. Starace's party extended the boundaries of its power in the 'regime' until it took on a determining weight in the equilibrium of the compromises on which Mussolini's dictatorship was founded.

By the end of the secretaryship of Starace, the PNF included over 21 million Italians, both men and women, from the age of six years. Its organizations went from the centre to the periphery through the *Federazioni provinciali*, the *Fasci di*

combattimento, the *Gruppi rionali*, the *Settori* and *Nuclei*.[24] When he left the secretaryship, Starace drew up the balance-sheet of his long labours:[25]

> The capillary structure has been developed as far as it is possible: this does not only mean that an organizational mechanism has been brought to a high level of efficiency; but it means above all that the work of cohesion and education carried out by the party has been thrust right down to the smallest possible unit that it could reach, that is the individual.
>
> The creation of the man, of Mussolini's new Italian, capable of believing, of obeying, of fighting, has been our constant objective, towards which the Party has channelled all its forces.
>
> In the Party's complex machine even major parts can be changed without its forward movement stopping and without its objectives changing in the least.
>
> This is due to the fact that, although the organization is so vast, it has been produced by depersonalization: the activity of the Party is founded not on individualism, but from the idea which surges forth from unlimited faith in a Man in whom it is totally mirrored.

This heavy-weight organization, as is well-known, was anything but efficient, in the way Starace meant. Its internal workings gave rise to continual criticism because of the local quarrels, conformism, arrivism, formalism and bureaucracy which accompanied the growth of the party. In particular, the group of *Critica Fascista*, fascinated by the myth of the 'new state' conceived as a structure in perpetual construction, possessing its own 'organic' idealistic spirituality, wanted the totalitarian machine of the party, so well assembled by Starace, to go further than organizing the people, and to become a dynamic organism in the hands of an *aristocrazia di comando* (aristocracy of leaders), formed by modern Platos capable of moulding the conscience of the 'new Italians', and of breathing into the massive body of Starace's party the creative spirit of Bottai's totalitarianism.

One cannot say that this transformation ever took place or could have taken place. The party machine remained a muddled bureaucratic apparatus with both military and educational propaganda functions, which were largely discredited in the eyes of public opinion. However, one ought not to forget that Starace's party by its mere 'presence' in civilian life and in the more important sectors of the state apparatus conditioned the existence of millions of men and women. It is certainly difficult to say what the effect was of this 'presence' on the collective conscience of the Italians who were organized and controlled by the PNF. However, one must not underestimate the fact that the party in time became the only political dimension within which it was possible to exercise any form of active participation, either individual or collective, in the life of the State. It is sufficient to say that belonging to the PNF became an indispensable requisite for joining the public administration or for advancement in one's career, and that as the totalitarian identification between the life of the party and public life became complete, expulsion from the PNF, which meant being banned from political life under the statute of 1926 entailed being banned from public life under subsequent statutes.

Even though it had become an organism completely deprived of autonomy, the party remained the hegemonic and predominant organization of the fascist

State, as far as the fields of education and welfare which the *Duce* had assigned to it were concerned. No fascist ever seriously contested this function of 'voluntary civil militia under the orders of the *Duce*, in the service of the Fascist State'. However, many fascists also remembered that the duty of the party was 'the defence and development of the Fascist Revolution'.[26] For this reason, in spite of the fact that the party's situation was considered more and more depressing during the 1930s, its importance as a fundamental institution of the 'regime' was never questioned. The 'problem of the party' remained at the centre of the debates between the various ideological factions, especially those factions, revisionist or extremist, forced together by totalitarian intransigence in view of a radical and integralist development of the 'fascist revolution' on the social and political plane. The 'single party', in the forms assumed by the PNF in the course of its history, was an essential element in the political system of fascism, both in the existing structures and those planned for the future. As far as the fascists were concerned, one could discuss the efficiency of the PNF, but no one could cast doubt on its bureaucratic and pedagogic function and organization. Its organization needed to be improved, but could not be replaced or even less done away with. The single party was the main instrument of 'perpetual revolution' and the only candidate to succeed the exceptional and unique figure of Mussolini, the *Duce*. From the point of view of the totalitarian logic of fascism, one might say that at the end of the 1930s this logic appears much more evident and important in the debates on the nature and character of the PNF, and contributed to fuelling its mania for expansion and pervading all society and state institutions. Above all, through the action of the party, totalitarian fascism aimed at bringing about in real terms the 'primacy of politics' by fusing the 'private' and the 'public'. This was the principal objective of the activity and ideology of fascism, both of which were based on an idea of 'total politicization' of human existence which was consistent with the fascist idea of man and the masses. For the fascists, human nature was neither good nor bad in itself, but could be moulded by the action of a political will, which had its highest expression in the totalitarian state and, in the single party, had the most modern and suitable instrument for turning the masses into a 'moral community'.[27]

In the second half of the thirties and especially during the war, the 'problem of the party' was a lively topic of discussion, because it was directly related to the future of the 'fascist revolution'. The orientation of totalitarian fascism was at that time favourable for a renewal of revolutionary action, both social and institutional, to reopen the discussion on compromising with the traditional forces, in the light of a possible victory of the Axis powers. Many fascists wanted the PNF, as far as was compatible with the fascist political system, to recapture its political initiative. In reality, the whirligig of secretaries who followed Starace—Ettore Muti (October 1939-October 1940), Adelchi Serena (October 1940-November 1941), Aldo Vidussoni (December 1941-April 1943), Carlo Scorza (April–July 1943)—was only a manifestation of the vain attempt to escape from the contradiction in which the PNF had been enveloped by Mussolini's policies.

Mussolini himself, at the beginning of 1942, declared that he had lived too close to the life of the party and repeatedly stressed the essential function of the PNF as a linking organ between the State and the people. But the fundamental contradiction remained: how to transform an enormous bureaucratic apparatus for controlling and governing the masses into the dynamic and active instrument longed for by the totalitarian fascists. The last secretary, Scorza, made a brief attempt to restore to the party the spirit of *squadrismo*, by recalling its origins which would revitalize the nature of the PNF as a 'community of believers and fighters', without renouncing its mass organization.

Even in this last phase of its history, the function of the PNF was conceived by the fascists as subordinate to and circumscribed within the sphere of the State. In spite of various suggestions which came from the Hitler regime, and in certain respects from Stalin's regime, the fascists never rejected the fundamental myth of the 'new state'. For a fascist, it would have been just as absurd to hear talk of the superiority of the party to the state as for a nazi to hear talk of a state which creates the Aryan race or for a communist to hear talk of the survival of the state in a classless society after the arrival of socialism. In fact, the polemical attitude of most fascists towards the state, urging greater initiative on the part of the PNF, never questioned the ideal and mythical supremacy of the 'new state'. But this was, in fact, a *myth*, projected into the future, and therefore did not exclude, according to the fascists, the possibility of a difference and even an antagonism between the party and the *existing* state, which was not yet the 'fascist state' and did not even appear totally fascistized, remaining the hybrid result of a compromise between the 'old' and the 'new' regime. In the course of the twenties and at the beginning of the thirties, the fascist party was subordinate to the government, and being a part of the existing state, had actually contributed to transforming it in the fascist sense. However, the fascists who supported a new 'politics of the party' did not yet recognize the existing state as *their* state, and did not feel at all bound to conserve it, even if they did not deny the subordination of the PNF to the *Duce*'s government. Their position was clearly expressed in the political journalism of those years. For instance, we read in the volume *Nuova civilità per la nuova Europa* of 1942:[28]

> The fascist State is not yet a complete construction; the Corporations have yet to come into being; there is the reform of the school under way; although the reform of the code books is nearly finished it is carried out half-heartedly for certain institution (such as the family); the *Statuto Albertino* of 1848 still survives, and the *Carta del Lavoro* has only just entered into the code books. The Party, then, has still some way to go, to realize its State, before resting its head on its arms and going to sleep bureaucratically satisfied, as the bureaucrats of the Revolution would wish.

In the view of the fascists, the 'single party' remained the cornerstone of the totalitarian system of the 'new state' in the making, and no fascist foresaw the disappearance of the PNF even in a totally fascist state: 'We fascists are not permitted to think that this process of fascistization of the State can ever be fully

realized [. . .] Not only ought the Fascist Party never to delude itself into thinking that it has definitively fascistized the State, it ought never to presume that it has completely fascistized itself.'[29] Moulding man and the masses was, for fascism, the supreme activity of politics as the inexhaustible manifestation of a will to power: according to fascists, no other institution could perform this activity, in the era of mass society, better than the single party formed by fascism in the course of its two decades of experience. In this sense, one can put forward the hypothesis that, in the last years of the 'regime', the party was creating the conditions for a change in the relationship between the PNF and the *existing* state in favour of a new totalitarian and extremist initiative of a *squadrista* nature. In this trend, it is, furthermore, possible to see the origins of some of the typical attitudes of 'the fascism of Salò'. This means that the extremism and violence of republican fascism were not only a consequence of the desire for reprisal and of the civil war, but were also the logical conclusion of attitudes already evident at the end of the thirties and which are connected, by a subterranean stream, with the mentality and the myths of the 'armed party'.

In conclusion, it would be easy to show the wishful thinking involved in these lucubrations of the fascists on the party, the fascist revolution and the 'new state'. But it is wrong to ignore their historical significance as testimonies, which reveal a mentality; an attitude towards politics, an idea of man and the masses which were peculiar to Italian fascism and had practical consequences for the lives of millions of people. It is only if we take these peculiarities of Italian fascism into consideration that we can understand the kind of logic that accompanied the development of the PNF in the course of its history, and illuminate the relationship between party and state in fascist totalitarianism. Any comparative analysis between Italian fascism and any other 'fascist' movement-regime, or in the widest sense, any totalitarian regime, must take account of the specific nature of Italian fascist totalitarianism, both as regards the actual historical development of its organizations and the logic which accompanied this development and indicated the future perspectives towards which the fascists wanted to move, to model man and the masses in their own image and likeness.

NOTES

The research for this article has been made possible by grants from the *Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione* and the University of Camerino.

1. There are very few studies on the fascist party in Italy, its history and its organizational development before and after the fascist seizure of power. For general information on the subject see: D.L. Germino, *The Italian Fascist Party in Power. A Study in Totalitarian Rule* (Minneapolis 1959); A. Aquarone, *L'organizzazione dello Stato totalitario* (Turin 1965); E. Santarelli, *Storia de movimento e del regime fascista* (Rome 1967); and R. de Felice's biography of Mussolini.

2. See A. Canepa, *L'organizzazione del PNF* (Palermo 1939), 43–104.
3. See E. Gentile, *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista* (Rome-Bari 1975), 191–248.
4. *Il Popolo d'Italia,* 11 January 1921.
5. M. Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano 1919–1922* (Rome 1980), 198–199.
6. *Il Popolo d'Italia,* 21 December 1921.
7. I. Balbo, *Diario 1922* (Milan 1932), 43.
8. B. Mussolini, *Opera omnia,* v. XVIII (Firenze 1956), 437.
9. *Il Popolo d'Italia,* 4 October 1921.
10. See A. Lyttelton, 'Fascism in Italy: the Second Wave', *Journal of Contemporary History,* 1, 1 (January 1966).
11. See E. Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo* (Rome-Bari 1982).
12. See E. Gentile, *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista,* 253–315.
13. H. Fornari, *Mussolini's Gadfly, Roberto Farinacci* (Nashville 1971).
14. See R. de Felice, *Mussolini il fascista,* II: *L'organizzazione dello Stato fascista 1925–1929* (Torino 1968), 167–200.
15. Quoted in L. Federzoni, *Italia di ieri per la storia di domani* (Milan 1967), 17.
16. G. Gentile, 'La Legge del Gran Consiglio', *Educazione Fascista,* September 1928.
17. B. Mussolini, *Opera omnia,* v. XXIV, 141.
18. Statute of PNF, 1932.
19. 'Il Partito' in *Critica Fascista,* 15 November 1939.
20. A. Turati, *Una rivoluzione e un capo* (Rome-Milan 1927), 143. On Turati see Ph. Morgan, *Augusto Turati* in *Uomini e volti del fascismo,* ed. F. Cordova (Rome 1980); on the origins of Mussolini's myth and the 'cult of the Duce', see E. Gentile, 'Il mito di Mussolini' in *Mondo operaio,* July–August 1983.
21. A. Turati, op. cit., 38.
22. On Giuriati see E. Gentile, Introduction to G. Giuriati, *La parabola di Mussolini nelle memorie di un gerarca* (Rome-Bari 1981), V–XLII.
23. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio Riservato, busta 99, fascicolo 13.
24. See A. Canepa, op. cit., 207–266.
25. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio Riservato, busta 41.
26. Statute of PNF, 1938.
27. See E. Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo,* 231–260.
28. U. Indrio, *Idee sul partito unico,* 256–257.
29. C. Pellizzi, *Il Partito educatore* (Rome 1941), 43.

Chapter 6

The Theatre of Politics in Fascist Italy

POLITICAL THEATRE AND THE THEATRICALITY OF POLITICS

In classical Greece, the term *theatron* could mean either a place for dramatic performances or one for civic gatherings and public orations. Similarly, in modern mass society there is a theatrical dimension to politics, understood in the dual etymological meaning of the term. Since the time of the French Revolution, mass political movements have exercised considerable influence on politics and have experimented with a new form of political theatre. Ideologies were given representation in performance, which became an instrument of propaganda and a weapon in the political struggle. Political theatre has not always been successful though, owing to its artistic quality or the extent to which it was able to attract a mass audience. There is, however, another aspect of the connection between theatre and politics which is intrinsic to politics as such. I am not talking here about a type of theatre that serves politics, but rather the form of politics that enters directly onto the stage. Politics assumes a performative character when it unfolds by means of mass spectacles, such as political meetings, processions, parades, festivals, ceremonies and rituals. These events dramatise the myths and ideologies of political movements and régimes, and involve the public both as spectator and actor. This *theatricality of politics* has acquired, particularly in contemporary society, an important and enduring collective dimension and has become an integral part of mass politics.[1]

Of all the political movements of this century fascism has been, from its very inception, the one to give the greatest boost to the theatricality of politics. Fascism attempted to create a truly political theatre. In 1933 Mussolini, himself the author of plays about historical characters and events,[2] launched the idea of

the creation of a 'mass theatre'. However, the actual result did not live up to the Duce's expectations.[3] The real 'political theatre' of fascism cannot be found in the experiments with propagandistic theatre, but rather in the creation of a fascist liturgy for the masses, in the theatre of political rites at meetings, celebrations and festivals.

The importance of theatricality in the mass politics of fascism did not escape contemporary observers. The French historian, Paul Hazard, visited Italy at the beginning of the 1920s and was struck by the overt ritualism of the *Fasci di Combattimenti*.[4] In the mid-1920s, the American scholar Schneider attached great importance to what he defined as 'the new fascist art of secular celebrations'.[5] And yet, in spite of these perceptions, the question of a specifically fascist theatricality of politics has been neglected by historians. Up until now, the tendency has been to view mass spectacles either as the more ridiculous and grotesque face of fascism, or as a mystifying instrument used to deceive and manipulate the masses. This attitude has not completely disappeared in recent studies, in which the theme of fascist mass spectacles is analysed using Walter Benjamin's concept of the 'aestheticisation of politics'.[6] When the *aesthetic* element is foregrounded to the detriment of the *political* element, the theatricality of fascism becomes viewed as being only a surrogate of the dearth of political culture and ideological coherence. This, however, does not suffice.

Certainly, the theatrical aspects of fascism can often appear grotesque and as purely instrumental in the mystification of the collective. Mussolini was not in the habit of hiding the fact that mass spectacles had a manipulatory function. Nevertheless, an analysis conducted along these lines is, in my view, too limiting and misleading, above all because it undervalues the consistent link between the *theatricality* of fascism and its culture as a totalitarian movement and modern political religion.

The 'aestheticisation of politics' is certainly an important aspect in the relationship between theatricality and fascism. The crucial point though, is to arrive at a clearer understanding of the nature of this relationship. In so doing, one inevitably discovers another typical aspect of fascism, the *sacralisation of politics*. This, in my opinion, is an essential ingredient of the political theatricality of fascism, whether in the form of performances of political theatre or mass spectacles. Both shall be dealt with in this chapter.

THE LITURGY OF A MODERN POLITICAL RELIGION

Fascism was a political religion with a coherent system of beliefs, myths, rites and symbols, with a 'sacred history' and a vision of mystical community. Its most conspicuous symbolic and dramatic representation was the Lictorian cult. Here, 'sacred' and 'secular' stood side-by-side and more often than not intermingled to disseminate and reinforce faith in the fascist religion.[7] Fascism's greatest ambition was to achieve the rebirth of the Italian population, to create the 'New Man' and a 'New Civilisation', which would confirm fascism's historic mission:

The Fascist era will really have commenced the day on which Fascism has moulded the whole population by uniting it in the Fascist faith (. . .). Men of the Fascist Revolution have to perform the work of Titans: all artistic works and cultural trends of the past must be closely examined by the Fascist eye. With political religion and by means of the political religion, which we practise every day, we must recreate the world as we feel and experience it. The reality of the past must be subdued to fit the reality of our times: to be loftier, brighter and more profound, because it is a part of us and nearer to us, because it is our true self.[8]

The theatricalisation of politics, in the form of 'sacred' rites and 'secular' spectacles, was considered necessary to fulfil this aim, to shape the spirit of the masses and to obtain their consent. This, however, was not to be attained through free and critical approbation, but rather through mystical participation in the cult of a lay religion. In this sense, one can view the fascists as degenerate disciples of Rousseau. Although rejecting the ideology of the French Revolution, they nevertheless followed its example in their attempt to construct a new lay religion.[9]

In his drawing up of a fascist political liturgy, Mussolini followed a logic that was consistent with his own concept of the masses. There was an awareness of the collective function of symbols, rites and festivals. The author of a treatise on the fascist concept of the State maintained that the masses 'need spiritualism, religiosity, catechism, rite.'[10] Mussolini saw politics as the art of moulding the masses; he therefore made use of rites and collective ceremonies to implant fascist ideology in the heart of the population:

For me, the masses are nothing but a herd of sheep as long as they are unorganised. I am nowise antagonistic to them. All that I deny is that they are capable of ruling themselves. But if you lead them you must guide them by two reins, enthusiasm and interest. He who uses one only of the reins is in great danger. The mystical and the political factors condition one another reciprocally. Either without the other is arid, withered, and is stripped of its leaves by the wind.[11]

According to Mussolini, the Fascist Revolution

creates new forms, new myths, and new rites; and the would-be revolutionist, while using old traditions, must refashion them. He must create new festivals, new gestures, new forms, which will themselves in turn become traditional. (. . .) The Roman greeting, songs and formulas, anniversary commemorations, and the like—all are essential to fan the flames of the enthusiasm that keep a movement in being.[12]

This concept led fascism to assert the supremacy of mythical thought in mass politics. *Il popolo d'Italia* maintained that the true force of a political movement came from the suggestive potency of its myths, which would propel people to live and die for it.[13] The fascist leadership was fully aware of the connection between myth, symbol and rite as a necessary precondition to instill and keep alive a collective faith. The fascists had probably learnt the lesson of Le Bon, an author

much admired by Mussolini: 'A religious or political belief is based on faith, but without rites and symbols, faith would not last.'[14] They knew that the masses could be more enthused by 'a beautiful symbol than a mediocre reality of fact'.[15] The dramatisation of myth by means of collective ceremonies was therefore essential to the politics of fascism, which primarily aimed at moulding the Italian masses and transforming them into a *community of believers:*

> In its celebration of solemn rites in accordance with austere, simple and strong forms, which themselves have so much fascination simply through their single exterior appearance, Fascism itself, even before Art, has given aesthetic expression to the new myth by which it shall speak more profoundly to hearts and minds. (. . .) But today, when classical mythology is perhaps more than ever a sign of cultural dilettantism and artificial symbolism, a whole new mythology adorns the immense Pantheon of our faith.[16]

THE RITES OF COMMUNION OF THE FASCIST ACTION SQUADS

From its very inception, fascism developed its own political style and placed particular emphasis on the theatrical aspects of its public events. The fascists boasted that they had restored the so-called 'art of mass ceremonies'. On the eve of the March on Rome, *Il popolo d'Italia* proclaimed:

> Public demonstrations before Fascism were extremely anti-aesthetic. Fascism has returned to Italian cities that *art of human movement and group gathering* which is referred to in the Statutes of Fiume. Our processions, winding their way through the streets, passing under the arches, standing in formation in the town squares around the belfry and towers, are worthy of our cities, and their beauty increases that of the stones and marble.

Fascism spread amongst the people 'the unifying love of *civic festivals*, which as such is a love of the city, tradition and therefore of the country' and reawakened 'the love of improvised singing and choral concerts. Fascist celebrations are *great choral celebrations*.'[17] In 1923, Margherita Sarfatti, an authoritative interpreter of fascist aesthetics, wrote that the true art of Fascism was 'the beauty of its outward displays—I would go as far as to say that its rituals are new and ancient, simple and solemn, stately and war-like'.[18]

The fascist liturgy possessed a highly militarist character. It was used to glorify the privileged status of the Fascist Party as an 'army of the nation' and to assert the pretensions of fascism as a charismatic movement, invested with the mission to regenerate the nation and erect a new State. All the ceremonies and public displays carried out by the fascist action squads—the forays of challenge and conquest, the processions, demonstrations, funerals, consecration of the colours, the occupation of cities—were staged with the declared aim of conveying 'the tangible and real sensation of the power of our movement and the indestructible fate of its future'.[19] Public ceremonies of the fascist action squads were organised according to precise choreographic plans. Stylised gestures and movements were

designed to externalise the squads' war-like spirit in 'a military formation that marches behind its leaders, behind its pennants, in step, singing hymns of war and songs from the trenches'. It was 'an exercise in discipline and pride', which contrasted with the 'badly designed white or red demonstrations based on insults, offensive posters, drunken choirs and shouting down the opposition'.[20]

The fascist *war of symbols* against the 'enemies of the nation' entailed a variety of formal devices and performative elements. There were the devastating forays of the action squads, the impressive processions, the inauguration rites of the pennants of the fascist action squads, the display of the tricolour on civic buildings, as well as the reconsecration of squares and streets in honour of the country's new religion. A triumphant theatricality of terror transformed the brutality of fascist violence into a crusade for the redemption of the country. The political struggle was symbolically represented as an epochal clash between Good and Evil, between the black fascist knight and the red communist dragon. On the victorious completion of an action squad's expedition against the representatives of a socialist city administration, the fascists would carry out a ritual display of the national flag or bless the action squad pennant in the main square. Such ceremonies functioned as purification rites to redeem the place and the crowd from the contamination of Bolshevism and to baptise them in the name of fascism.

The fascists compared themselves to the first Christians, who spread the word amongst the pagans, ready to brave martyrdom for the triumph of the new faith. The close connection with Christian martyrology became most apparent in the celebration of funeral rites, which, from the era of the action squads onwards, played a central role in the fascist cult. Careful preparation ensured the prevalence of an extremely emotive atmosphere, which would leave a deep impression on the public spectators assembled in the 'sacred space' specially decorated for the occasion. A procession, made up of thousands of people, was grouped according to the locality of the action squads, each with their own pennant. There were representatives from the different local branches, from the national leadership and the patriotic associations, as well as from the fascist youth movements. The processions were characterised by hierarchical unity and military discipline, and the whole ceremony was designed to conjure up a picture of ordered and lasting strength, effected by the country's new religion. However, these rites also had other functions. After the procession to the roll of drums and the playing of funeral marches by the fascist bands, the rite would culminate, amongst the colours of hundreds of pennants and black flags, with a funeral oration by a fascist leader and the slow march of the action squads past the coffin, silently honouring the dead with the Roman salute. Then the leader would call out the names of the fallen heroes, to which the action squads would respond 'present!'. At his command, they would kneel in silence for a few minutes; then, when commanded to rise, they would shout out 'alala', invoking the names of the martyrs.

The presentation of the fascists as defenders and martyrs of a national religion continued a tradition well-known from Christianity, the Risorgimento and the Great War. The set for the funerals was designed to symbolically represent this

ideal continuity, integrating Catholic liturgy into the lay fascist ritual. In these death rites, fascism always emphasised the link with life: the spirit of the fallen heroes is resurrected in the fascist cult, united with the action squad community, and consecrated to the immortal memory of the fascist faith, so that finally they can ascend to the Fascist Pantheon, where they keep alive the spirit of the fascist Revolution.

Furthermore, the funerals were celebrated as *rites de passage* for the fascist youth, thereby turning them from *death rites* into *rites of life*. The ritual was no 'lugubrious ceremony of death', but rather 'a serene rite of faith and youth, which unfolds before the glory of the sun, in a floral celebration, in the benediction of a whole multitude in a melancholy gathering, in the offering of the tears of women and young girls.'[21]

The symbolism of the rite and the theatricality of the performance are effectively evoked in typical description of a fascist funeral by *Il popolo d'Italia:*

The Milanese Fascists march past, bare-headed and silent, in martial step, to the rhythm of fanfares. They file past, austere and proud, without a sound, sorrow written on their faces, but with an expression of strength, dignity and pride. The gallant battalions march between two dense bands of people, who know not how to hold back their admiration. Old and new faces pass by. There are all the old Fascists, those of 1919 [i.e., the founding members who gathered in Piazza San Sepolcro], the first formidable, faithful nucleus of men, who have experienced all the battles of Fascism, always staying on the road, through sad and happy times, through the bitterness of disappointment and the joy of triumph. And now with them are all the new and newest recruits, forming a phalanx of men equal in pride, courage, enthusiasm and faith to the Fascists of the old guard, those who are unforgettable.

The pageant is impressive: the battalions march in an admirably ordered and disciplined fashion. Who, or what has been able to so perfectly discipline the Italian population? How has it been possible to attain such a miracle, to organise responsible and strong-willed, audacious and generous individuals, to go so far as to make an army out of them, an army that has nothing in common with the old processions, with the formless pageants of time past, gatherings of uncontrolled and incontrollable crowds? What, if not the profound, undefinable, infinite Fascist faith? It is the new awareness, the new virile and war-like pride of our race, which returns to the Roman spirit by virtue of Fascism. The Fascist battalions march past: here they are, joined together in martial rhythm, disciplined into perfect ranks; here passes the most handsome, the noblest, the most generous section of our population. Young men with open and intelligent faces, with sparkling and vivacious eyes, side-by-side with old men, who do not show any sign of weariness despite the fast pace of the march. Workers with modest clothing and employees, who have all relinquished their Sunday afternoon siesta to respond to the call. Fighters from all the army units and front lines proudly display their war decorations and march with the same pride as when they left the trenches. They glorify the dead, extol victories, strengthen the spirit by paying homage to the martyrs and heroes, thereby preparing themselves for new victories, new glories. (. . .) Strong and wonderful peasants from our countryside, with severe male faces, bronzed faces of youths, decorated with ribbons for bravery in war, handsome in their bearing, which emphasises their appearance as strong, healthy workers. It is in these strong men, who carry the signs of hard daily labour, that one discovers the

immense, everlasting and historic value of the Fascist miracle: to have returned to the People, who are the backbone of the nation and who seemed to be carried away by the Bolshevik madness, but are now the healthy conscience of the Nation and an inextinguishable pride to our Race.[22]

The exultation and choreographic display of youth and symbolic unanimity beyond divisions of sex, age or class prefigured the image of the New State and the *rebirth* of the country from the ruins of the liberal State.

THE LICTORIAN CULT

One of the principal aspects of the 'fascist religion' was the institutionalisation of a State liturgy, not only for the Party activists, but for all Italians who, willingly or unwillingly, were involved in the periodic celebration of the régime's rites. Fascism entrusted to the State the task of realising the ideal of a mystic community, involving Italians of every class and every age, in an experiment of collective regeneration. The theatricality of politics was fundamental to the mass pedagogy of the totalitarian State and dominated every aspect of public life for millions of men and women. Italians became actor-spectators in an succession of 'sacred' and 'secular' mass spectacles, distinct but complementary displays of the mass liturgy of the fascist religion. Herman Finer, one of the more perceptive observers of Mussolini's Italy in the 1930s, rightly stated that the mass spectacles were the main industry of the fascist régime.[23] Artists and architects were summoned to construct temporary or durable monumental sets, which played host to the 'sacred' and 'secular' displays of fascism's political theatricality.

Immediately after the fascists came to power, they renewed and enriched the calendar of State lay-festivals and established procedures for celebration.[24] The régime set a calendar which articulated the annual rhythm of mass ceremonies and the ritual celebration of great events in the 'sacred history' of the Italian race. For example, there was the celebration of the Birth of Rome (21 April), the anniversaries of the 'rebirth of the nation', such as the entry into the Great War (24 May) and the Victory (4 November), and the dates fundamental to the Fascist Revolution, such as the birth of the Fasci de combattimento (23 March), the March on Rome (28 October) and the Foundation of the Empire (9 May).

The First World War played a central role in the symbolic legitimisation of the fascist government. In the first years of the régime, the anniversary of the entry into the war was celebrated with great solemnity in the capital and in other cities. There were many participants: the armed forces, servicemen's associations, associations for the disabled, for invalids, for mothers of the fallen, for widows and orphans of war and, naturally, the Fascist Party faithfuls. Everywhere, public and private buildings were bedecked with flags, bands played patriotic songs, monuments were unveiled, orations held to praise the revived country and the new national government. Over the years, the rites for the 'rebirth of the country' were incorporated into the Lictorian cult and became less spectacular. In many cases, the ceremonies consisted of a single rite, the cult of those who died

for the country and of those who died for the Fascist Revolution. Speaking in Enna on the anniversary of Italian victory in the First World War, at the unveiling of a war memorial on 4 November 1932, the under-secretary of state, Ruggero Romano, described 'how in the Decennial of the Régime, the victims of the War and the Revolution have returned to us, wrapped in the same flag.'[25] The typical ritual formalisation of the anniversaries of the Great War, after the incorporation of the Lictorian cult, is summed up in a report by the prefect of Padua, dated 4 November 1932:

> This provincial capital—after morning mass celebrated in the cathedral—present: civil and military authorities, organisations of the Party, armed troops, representatives of servicemen and war-disabled—gathered together from all provincial towns—formed an impressive procession which went to the monument to the fallen to lay wreaths and assist in the blessing given by the Archbishop—procession re-established—then reached the Park of Remembrance—singing of patriotic songs—great applause when victory bulletin, naval bulletin and reasons for granting war cross to this city were read.
>
> This afternoon—this municipal theatre—present: city authority, organisations, associations, and large general public—local Fascist combat squat has effectively re-evoked victory, eliciting enthusiastic and impassioned response—manifestations of consensus and devotion to the House of Savoy, Duce and régime.[26]

The start of the fascist year was 28 October, the date of the March on Rome. In 1923, Mussolini wanted to celebrate the first year of his accession to power in a solemn and spectacular manner and decreed five days of ceremonies and mass rituals. On the morning of 31 October, an impressive procession, accompanied by four-hundred aeroplanes circling the skies, formed in the streets of Rome. It was headed by the Duce, followed by Party leaders and cadres from all over Italy, representatives of associations for servicemen, the war-disabled, mothers and widows of the fallen, the militia, as well as representatives from political parties, trade unions and fascist youth organisations. For about five hours, the pageant wound its way through the centre of the city, retreading the route taken by the columns of action squads during the March on Rome. Accompanied by singers and bands and passing through streets bedecked with flags, it made its way from the Piazza del Popolo past the Altar of the Country in Piazza Venezia, where homage was paid to the Unknown Soldier, to the Quirinal to salute the king.[27]

The ceremonies commemorating the March on Rome were a spectacular review of force, which aimed to glorify the fascists and reinforce in them a sense of unity around Mussolini. Moreover, the exhibition of the Party's strength, and the public display of consensus granted to the fascist government by the institutions and the population served both to make an impression on the sympathisers of fascism and to intimidate its opponents. In 1926, the anniversary of 28 October was included into the State calendar of celebrations as a public holiday.[28]

Another annual mass ceremony of particular solemnity was the celebration of conscription: a young man's rite of passage from the fascist youth organisation to the ranks of the Party. The rite took place at the same time in all provincial cen-

tres before the eyes of the fascist faithful and the general public. Naturally, the most solemn ceremony was staged in Rome, in the presence of the Duce, either in the Colosseum or in the Mussolini Forum. The representatives of the various ranks of the youth organisations would stand to attention. After the swearing in, the rite of passage would be symbolically carried out. The young fascist conscript would be given a gun by a soldier of the fascist militia; the fascist youth would then present the *Avanguarolisti* (Vanguard Rifleman) with a scarf in the colours of Rome. Following this, the Balilla would receive white braids from the *Avanguarolisti*, and the *Figli della lupa* (Wolf-Cub) would be given a blue scarf from the Balilla. The whole intricate ceremony would be concluded with an embrace and a salute to the Duce. Comparable to confirmation in the Catholic Church, conscription was a rite of passage to admit the youth into the fascist community. This perennial renewal of the symbolic bond of spiritual continuity between the old and young soldiers of the fascist religion found its most conspicuous representation when the new generation of faithful pledged to consecrate body and soul to the Duce and to fascism.

The fascist rites and festivals took place at different times of the year in order to distinguish the 'sacred' from the 'secular'. The *rite*, which was generally celebrated in the morning, included religious and martial ceremonies. Rites with a religious function included those in memory of the victims of the Great War and the Fascist Revolution. The Party ordered that the ceremonies had to be 'marked by the greatest severity and sobriety' debarring banquets and sumptuous receptions. The oratorial part was restricted to the reading of messages from the Duce, or a party secretary conveying solemn descriptions of the glorious achievements of the Fascist Revolution.[29] Party members were obliged to wear black shirts, and in the evenings were expected to meet in their headquarters for 'confidential displays of fraternity' in memory of the fallen heroes. The place of honour was reserved for the mothers of the fallen, the decorated, the war-disabled, volunteers and servicemen. After a religious function in memory of the victims of war and revolution, which would be held near a war memorial, a Park of Remembrance, or a sanctuary dedicated to the martyrs in every branch of the Fascist Party, a procession would form and move to a recently completed public building, where they affixed the symbols of the Fascist Revolution to the façade. The whole ritual was interpreted as renewal of the 'oath of faith' to the Duce and to fascism.[30]

The military rites consisted predominantly of parades which sought to convey to both participants and spectators 'the idea of a formidable company of forces which rests at the basis of the Fascist Revolution and protects the life and development of anyone who is part of it.'[31] The ceremonies combined both traditional and modern symbols: public buildings were illuminated and decorated with flags, the bells of civic towers were rung at full peal for half an hour, Fascist insignia and inscriptions praising the Duce were hung in town squares and streets, torch-lit processions paraded through the city, and in the evening fires would be lit on mountain summits.

Festivals, on the other hand, took place in the afternoon and included holiday outings, dances, singing and musical entertainment. The performance of choral

songs was present in both the 'sacred' and 'secular' ceremonies. They were meant to give symbolic representation of the spiritual unity of the masses and to enhance the solemn atmosphere of this feast of fascist communion.

Naturally, the most important national celebrations of the Lictorian cult took place in the capital, in the presence of the Duce. They were performed against the backdrop of Ancient monuments such as the Colosseum or the Capitol. Piazza Venezia, situated between the ancient Roman and Italian temples and housing the *Altare della Patria* (Altar of the Country) and Mussolini's residence, was the 'sacred centre' of the Fascist religion. It was the '*piazza* of the Revolution, synthesis of all *piazze* in Italy', destination of pilgrimages and assemblies of vast crowds, which would 'call upon the Duce to appear [on the balcony of Palazzo Venezia] and speak, which always rises tension to an absolute high.'[32] In addition to the ritual processions and the Duce's speeches, ceremonies in the capital sometimes included other extraordinary acts. In 1928, for example, on two Roman altars taken from the Diocletian Baths and erected in front of the *Altare della Patria* (Altar of the Country), the Duce carried out the symbolic burning of National Debt notes to the value of 140 million Lira as a 'symbol of the offering of the Italian people to the National Treasury.'[33]

The best-known and most grandiose events in the history of fascist mass rituals were the vast assemblies which occurred during the Ethiopian campaign. It was perhaps at this point that the régime and the Italian population came closest to a state of mystic communion, which Mussolini would have liked to be a permanent state of the nation's collective life. On 18 December 1935, during the Ethiopian campaign, a 'Day of Faith' was held throughout Italy: Italian women donated their gold wedding rings to the country in exchange for rings of steel. In Rome, the rite was symbolically carried out on the *Altare della Patria* (Altar of the Country), where the Queen and a group of war widows threw their wedding rings into the burning fire. As a communiqué of the French embassy in Rome reported, the whole celebration had 'the solemn character of a new mystical marriage between the Régime and the Nation (. . .) The impression was clearly theatrical, as is almost everything in this country, but it was not less moving, nor less thrilling for it.'[34]

THE 'NEW GOD' AND HIS FAITHFUL

Enthusiastic mass gatherings celebrated the Ethiopian victory and the declaration of the Italian Empire. The successful campaign led to a veritable deification of the Duce, who now rose to the rank of 'the new god of Italy'.[35] The glorification of Mussolini became the principal activity of the 'factory of consensus',[36] which worked ever more intensely to spread the myth and cult of the Duce amongst the masses, making his image omnipresent. Mussolini's continued encounters with the masses, during public festivals or on his visits throughout Italy, played a major role in sustaining and feeding the cult of the Duce amongst the population. Mussolini was the first Italian Head of the Government to have visited the length and breadth of Italy only a few months after coming to power. Moreover, he visited regions and cities where his predecessors had never ventured. He

established direct contact with the ordinary 'man in the street' and gave to him the feeling of being closer to power and of being heard and answered by the Duce. Many of the speeches were also broadcast on radio. They often announced important decisions for which the Duce asked the people's consent, thereby giving them the impression that they were involved in his decision-making process.

Mussolini's encounters with the crowd were an important ingredient in the theatre of fascist politics. Careful preparation ensured that the right conditions prevailed to create a highly charged emotional atmosphere and to elicit collective enthusiasm which, at the climax of the ceremony, would lead to a 'mystic' union of leader and crowd. It was a symbolic dramatisation of the unification of the nation through its leader. The stratagem of the 'factory of the consensus' was to produce a collective trance state in the congregation. Mussolini's visits were *cult events* with two protagonists: *Dux et popolo*, or the leader and the led.[37]

The meetings between deity and crowd were carefully designed to synthesise all aspects of the Fascist liturgy and mythology: the sacred and the secular, the modern and the traditional, the national and the regional. In general, the visits were preceded by an *invocation*, made by the prefect or provincial party secretary, to the population to receive the visit of the Duce. Then followed the *announcement* by the Duce himself. However, it was not unusual that a few years would elapse between the invocation, announcement and visit, so that the feeling of expectation was all the more intense. For example, on 9 July 1934 Mussolini answered the invocation of the Genovese fascists, who, after eight years, wanted to see their leader again, and announced that he would visit Genoa in 1936. However, he only arrived in May 1937, but this helped to make his reception even more fervent.[38] As with a pilgrimage, people rushed from all over the province to be present at the *appearance* of the Duce. On arrival, the Duce stopped at the memorial chapel for fascist martyrs, close to the Fascist Party headquarters, and paid his respects to the fallen heroes. Then followed his address to the general public. Lined up in a large square were the forces of the Party and the army, together with representatives from patriotic associations and the local government. The Duce arrived to the sound of trumpets, volleys of machine-gun fire, bell-ringing and fascist hymns. A high podium, dominated by a gigantic letter 'M', the name 'Dux' and the Roman eagle, towered over the crowd assembled in the piazza. The stage was surrounded by pennants, banners and flags and assumed the symbolic character of an altar, which presented the deity to the crowd of believers:

> The multitude is stupefied for a moment. The eyes of the faithful multitude are fixed on His face. The podium is, now, an altar. The delirium is immediate: there is an outburst of voices and gestures, the loud ringing of fanfares. Flags, pennants, ensigns stretch forward in a wonderful agony of offering (. . .) There are many minutes of rejoicing (. . .) Now everything is given up to the Leader, down to the last breath and drop of blood.[39]

Before beginning his speech, Mussolini gazed, obviously delighted, at the exultant mass shouting 'Duce, Duce, Duce'. His oration was scattered with tags and

sententiae, and occasionally interrupted by jubilant ovations, which took on the character of an impassioned dialogue between the Duce and the crowd. At its conclusion, as after a very successful theatre performance, the Duce was recalled to the podium many times by the cheering crowd. The visit then continued with the inauguration of public works, the laying of foundation stones for new buildings, visits to factories and agricultural centres, and so forth. During his journey the Duce stood upright in his car and received the tribute of the crowd, who exhorted him to extend his stay or to pay a return visit.

CELEBRATIONS OF THE 'HARMONIOUS COLLECTIVE'

Fascist civic religion not only embraced the political rites of the régime, but also the popular festivals. By means of syncretistic assimilation, fascism incorporated the whole complex of existing displays of collective life into the Lictorian cult and, vice versa, introduced its own system of myth, symbols and rites into traditional festivities. In this way, the fascist cult was divested of its most overtly political features and as such was made more suited to influence the lives of those individuals still diffident or resistant to the Fascist message. For example, the agrarian 'Feast of the Grape', celebrated on the last Sunday in September, was relaunched by the régime to 'publicise amongst the masses the consumption of the exquisite and wholesome fruit of life' and to help the Italian wine industry.[40]

The Feast of the Grape became an occasion for celebrating the Roman spirit of fascism and restoring 'the healthy traditions of earth and fertility', which 'defeat time and reunite the new races, who create and restore those ancients of the Mediterranean, whose law it was to construct and produce'.[41] As with other rituals linked to agricultural production and peasant labour, this festival was not only 'a colourful and joyous folklore display, but the healthy and vigorous expression of life in the fields, of the serene joy of agricultural work, of the luxuriant fertility of our vineyards.'[42]

Although fascism encouraged a certain cult of nature, it did not follow the mystic 'religion of nature'[43] as it was practised in National Socialist Germany. In the Lictorian cult, nature is tamed, redeemed and fertilised by the labours of man. For example, in 1931 a procession of 207 floats took place in Rome, in the presence of Mussolini, to celebrate the Feast of the Grape. The Lictorian concept of the 'work of redemption' found expression in one of the first groups of carts, depicting the malaria-infested marshland of Maccarese. The following carts showed the various stages of progress towards land reclamation, with the last one offering 'the wonderful vision of a grape harvest cheered by the opulence of bunches of grapes and the festiveness of large casks.'[44] The fascist régime promoted the wine festival as a 'joyous and solemn rite'. The festival added 'high symbolic value' to the commercial importance of viticulture and, as the 'great autumn festival for the whole nation', it played an important part in the liturgy of the 'harmonious collective'.[45] Nature as such was not part of the fascist religion, but served as a backdrop for the celebration of fascist rites: 'The new life of

the new Italy must be taken out of the enclosure in which it once grew weak and mouldy. It must be brought into the fresh and sunny air. For many people, physical improvement will mean spiritual improvement.'[46]

The mixture of modernism and traditionalism helped to raise the image of fascism as the modern heir of the Roman spirit. The invocation of the past in the production of public celebrations was a mythical appeal to the 'sacred history' of fascism, and was used to summon the people in the drive towards the future. Aircraft circling over the town squares during the solemn meetings between the Duce and the crowd introduced an element of modernity into the setting of monuments from Italy's past. Mussolini would often arrive at public gatherings by air, himself at the controls. In fascist mythology, the machine was a modern instrument of power and well-being. Together with the traditional elements of popular culture, folklore, craftwork and regional costume, it was employed to enhance the image of Fascism as an integrating and harmonising force linking the leader and the masses, man and nature, past and future.

The fascist glorification of all forms of outdoor collective life encouraged the development of gymnastics and sport, which at mass spectacles were put to the service of the 'propaganda of the faith'. The gymnastic and sporting displays aimed to represent the fascist community and 'to stir up that authentic service and civic duty', which 'the good fascist citizen' had to practise in order to 'be a truly integral part of that population, which the DUCE has proclaimed to be *the body of the State* and dynamic coefficient of that State which is, by the same high definition, *spirit of the body*.'[47] The régime made use of its fiscal resources to widen the practice of gymnastics and sport and to finance the construction of gymnasia and stadia. Practising the cult of physical health was integral to the Lictorian cult; it was an essential component of the education of the masses and the creation of the 'new Italian'; it prepared the physique and tempered the character of a virile and virtuous citizen, a believer in, and fighter for, the fatherland.

One of the first 'temples' of this new sports cult was the *Littoriale* in Bologna. It sprang up in 1927 through the initiative of Leandro Arpinati, the local Fascist leader, who was described by *Il popolo d'Italia* as a 'visionary and practitioner, the most suitable champion of lay religions.'[48] An equestrian statue of the Duce held a prominent position at the entrance to the Bolognese amphitheatre, to immortalise the discourse of 1926 held by the Duce from horseback, to fifty-thousand blackshirts gathered 'in the bare, elliptical interior of the *Littoriale*, scarcely laid out, like the ancient Roman population in the design of a city of the future'.[49] In the most grandiose architectural sporting complex constructed under Fascism, the Mussolini Forum, the vast entrance square was dominated by a large marble monolith, inscribed with the name of the Duce in order to 'project into the future, the epoch and name of Mussolini'.[50] Renato Ricci, president of the Fascist youth organisation, Opera Nazionale Balilla, had designed even more grandiose projects to glorify the Lictorian cult. For example, he wrote to Mussolini of a large bronze statue to fascism, which would have made 'the memory of the legendary Colossus of Rhodes turn pale'. The statue, called 'Arengo of the nation',[51]

would have taken up an area five times the size of Piazza Venezia and would have been three times higher than the Statue of Liberty; it would have stretched over 120,000 square metres and held 300,000 people. The project was commenced, but had to be abandoned as a result of the demands of the Ethiopian war.[52] The Mussolini Forum became a 'sacred space', a place to celebrate the cult of the Duce. It was a space for gymnastic displays accompanied by choral singing, which together represented the strength, health and faith of the new Italians. Fascism promoted sport in order to 'create passion amongst the masses and not just champions'.[53] It was an essential component of the totalitarian project of collective mobilisation, by means of which fascism aimed to overcome the mentality of private isolation and to imbue the masses with a sense of 'human communion'.[54]

As a final example of the mass spectacles designed to spread the fascist faith I would like to mention the exhibitions organised to celebrate the great achievements of Rome, Italy and fascism. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Mussolini's seizure of power (the so-called *Decennial*), a vast array of ritual activities and mass ceremonies were organised to glorify the first ten years of Fascist government and to counteract the effect of the 'great crisis', the growing signs of discontent that were spreading amongst the Italian population. Numerous exhibitions were organised, from agrarian mechanics to land reclamation, from fruit farming to bread production, from anniversary celebrations for the death of Garibaldi to an Exhibition on the Fascist Revolution, all inspired, as *Il popolo d'Italia* explained, by one single criterion, 'the work of national education, which has been taken on by the Fascist State and is being developed by schools, sports clubs, youth organisations, after-work groups, all diverse initiatives'.[55] The inauguration of exhibitions in the Duce's presence almost always took on a cultic character, in which the 'sacred' and the 'secular' were intertwined. The visits turned into 'pilgrimages' undertaken as part of the Lictorian cult.

A particularly illuminating example of these ritual representations of the 'harmonious collective' was the opening and closing ceremonies of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, held in 1932 to re-evoke the 'sacred history' of Fascism.[56] The exhibition itself was an extraordinary cult event, with the museum designed as a 'sacred space' and the visitors serving as a liturgical mass. Different groups took turns performing the changing the guard, and the public assisted in the rites that took place in front of the entrance: marches, singing, music and chanting in praise of the Duce and Fascism. At the opening ceremony, on 28 October 1932, Mussolini and the upper ranks of the Party were welcomed by a Fascist hymn sung by a military division, riflemen, 180 consuls from the Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale (National Voluntary Security Forces) lined up with their legions' standards, the Quadrumvir and the national directorate of the Fascist Party. At the entrance, where the fascist oath was silhouetted on an illuminated wall, a young fascist posed the traditional question, 'Do you place your oath?', to which the division shouted their response. Having walked through the halls accompanied by his retinue, Mussolini reached the memorial chapel to the martyrs, where he silently paid

his respects to the fallen fascists.[57] Throughout the two years of the exhibition, the changing of the guard was carried out many times a day. It was performed not only by regular soldiers, but also by representatives of the fallen, the crippled, the ex-servicemen, the workers, the professionals and the mercantile community. An official columnist commented that this participation of different elements of Italian society turned the performance into 'a profoundly symbolic act showing the close spiritual union between the people and fascism, between the citizen and his government, between the well-being of the individual and that of the fatherland'.[58]

On 28 October 1934, the exhibition was closed with an even more solemn public ritual. It started in the morning, when the tricolour and the black flag of fascism were raised up onto the façade of the entrance hall, where throughout the day they were protected by a guard of honour. In the evening, Mussolini arrived, accompanied by the secretary of the PNF and members of government. He returned to the memorial chapel, where he stood to attention for a few minutes and gave the Roman salute. He then approached the crowd, preceded by the standard of the Party carried by a group of Men of the First Hour (*sansepolcristi*). Mussolini stood alone at the top of the flight of steps, illuminated by the huge Lictorian emblem on the façade. Achille Starace, the general secretary of the PNF, launched the 'salute to the Duce', to which the crowd responded with 'to us!'. Immediately afterwards, a Balilla went up to the Duce and, after giving the Roman salute, swore an oath, to which the crowd responded in chorus. Starace then declared the exhibition closed and ordered the guard of honour to file off. The flag was lowered, trumpet blasts and volleys of gunfire made everyone stand to attention, and to conclude the event, there was a *son et lumière* spectacle with choirs of young Roman girls singing patriotic and fascist hymns amongst the multi-coloured blaze of torches and flares.[59]

FAITH AND MANIPULATION

All 'sacred' and 'secular' fascist mass spectacles were instruments to manipulate public opinion, to enforce obedience and to obtain consent by appealing to people's emotions, fantasies and desires. In the period of greatest economic crisis, the mass spectacles compensated for the privations suffered by the lower classes of society. The mass spectacles concealed the régime's difficulties behind a façade of order and efficiency. They distracted public attention from the problems of foreign policy and gave them reassurance with a joyous picture of the 'harmonious collective'. As spectacles of power they served to reinforce a sense of identity within the fascist movement and to project to the outside world an image of unity, solidarity and force, which would fascinate the masses and intimidate enemies.

The theatricality of fascist politics also aimed at propagating faith. The rituals dramatised the myths of a political religion. Liturgical devices glorified the sacredness of the State and surrounded the Duce and the Party with an aura of 'numinousness', evoking devotion and fear. Fascism proclaimed itself to be a new

religion, and those who had to compete with its magnetic power on the masses—for example, the Catholic Church—became very aware of the religious aspect within the political theatricality of fascism. The Vatican did not underestimate—as many historians have done—the impact the totalitarian experience had on the population, especially through the institutionalisation of the Lictorian cult.[60] In 1940 *Civiltà cattolica* wrote: 'In this way, politics is turning into a lay religion, which demands the complete devotion of the whole human being, and prevents him from using his rational faculties.'[61]

In this chapter we have seen only a few significant examples of the theatrical aspects of the fascist experiment. I have attempted to illustrate some connection between mass spectacles and fascist political culture. The area of research remains open for more detailed analysis of the nature and function of the theatre of politics in the lay religion of fascism. Every conclusion can only be but provisory.

NOTES

Reprinted by permission of Berghahn Books from Emilio Gentile, "The Theatre of Politics in Fascist Italy," trans. Kate Rickitt, in *Fascism and Theatre: Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925–1945*, ed. Gunther Berghaus, Providence, RI, Berghahn Books, 1996.

1. On the intimate connection between theatre and politics see R.M. Merelman, 'The Dramaturgy of Politics', *Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1969, pp. 216–241; Ferdinand Mount, *The Theatre of Politics*, New York, 1973; James Rosenau, *The Drama of Political Life*, North Scituate, MA, 1980; Georges Balandier, *Le Pouvoir sur scène*, Paris, 2nd edn, 1992; Gautam Dasgupta, 'The Theatricks of Politics', *Performing Arts Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1988, pp. 77–83; Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, Chicago, 1988; Art Borreca, 'Political Dramaturgy: A Dramaturg's (Re)View', *The Drama Review*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1993, pp. 56–79.

2. See Mario Verdone's essay in this volume.

3. See Pietro Cavallo, *Immaginario e rappresentazione*, Rome, 1990, and his contribution to this volume.

4. See Paul Hazard, *L'Italie vivante*, Paris, 1923.

5. Herbert Wallace Schneider, *Making the Fascist State*, New York, 1928, p. 222.

6. See, for example, R. Golsan (ed.), *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture*, Hanover, 1992.

7. See E. Gentile, 'Fascism as Political Religion', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 25, nos. 2–3, 1990, pp. 229–251, and my recent study, *Il culto del littorio*, Rome, 1993.

8. Salvatore Gatto, *1925: Polemiche del pensiero e dell'azione fascista*, Rome, 1934, p. 62.

9. In 1922, Mussolini's paper made explicit reference to the festivals of the French Revolution. See Volt [i. Vincenzo Fani], 'Pareto e il fascismo', *Gerarchia*, October 1922. A French journalist, who visited Rome in 1924, was struck by the apparent similarities between the symbols, ceremonies and rites of the French Revolution and the Fascist Revolution. See R. de Nolva, 'Le mysticisme et l'ésprit révolutionnaire du fascisme', *Mercure de France*, 1 November 1924.

10. Guido Bortolotto, *Lo stato e la dottrina corporativa*, Bologna, 1930, p. 35.

11. Emil Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini*, London 1932, p. 122 (Italian edition, pp. 121–122).

12. *Ibidem,* pp. 70, 123 (Italian edition, pp. 72, 122. See also *ibidem,* pp. 193–194).
13. See F. di Pretorio, 'Il nostro mito', *Il popolo d'Italia,* 5 July 1922.
14. See Gustave Le Bon, *Aphorismes du temp présent,* Paris, 1919, p. 96.
15. Camillo Pellizzi, *Problemi e realtà del fascismo,* Florence 1924, p. 116. See also Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini,* p. 191 (Italian edition, p. 190). Many years later, Pellizzi returned to the subject and wrote a highly informative treatise on the function of symbols, myths and rites in political liturgy. See his *Rito e linguaggio,* Rome, 1964, esp. chapter VIII.
16. Roberto G. Mandel, 'Mitologia fascista', *L'assalto,* 25 November 1922.
17. 'Le opinioni degli altri sul fascismo', *Il popolo d'Italia,* 5 May 1922.
18. Margherita Sarfatti, 'Nei dodeci mesi dall'avvento: L'arte', *Il popolo d'Italia,* 22 October 1923.
19. 'Superba dimostrazione a Milano', *Il popolo d'Italia,* 4 October 1921.
20. Ernesto Daquanno, *Vecchia guardia,* Rome, 1934, p. 218.
21. *Il popolo d'Italia,* 8 August 1922.
22. *Il popolo d'Italia,* 4 October 1922.
23. See Herman Finer, *Mussolini's Italy,* London, 1935, p. 404.
24. See the material in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome, Section PCM, 1924, file 2.4.1.996.
25. See the telegram of the Prefect of Enna, dated 4 November 1932, in the Archivio dello Stato, MI, DGPS, 1932, cat. C4, Sez. 2a, b. 58.
26. See the letter of the Prefect in the same file (Busta 58).
27. See the reports in *Il popolo d'Italia,* 30 October to 1 November 1923.
28. Royal Decree no. 1779 of 21 October 1926, transformed into Law on 6 March 1927, no. 267. See Archivio Centrale dello Stato, PCM, Gabinetto 1926, fasc. 2.4.1. no. 3904.
29. See *Foglio d'ordini,* 15 October IV (1926).
30. *Foglio d'ordini,* 7 November IV (1926).
31. *Foglio d'ordini,* 9 October IV (1926).
32. Ottavio Dinale, *La rivoluzione che vince,* Foligno, 1934, pp. 57, 69.
33. 'Il rogo simbolico', *Il popolo d'Italia,* 28 October 1928.
34. Archives Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Europe 1918–1940, Italie, vol. 258, communiqué of 19 December 1935.
35. See Gentile, *Il culto del littorio,* pp. 263–297.
36. See Philip V. Cannistraro, *La fabbrica del consenso: Fascismo e mass media,* Rome, 1975.
37. Mario Appelius called this mystic union a 'dramma epico con due protagonisti: Mussolini e la moltitudine'. See his article, 'Il Duce e il popolo', *Politico sociale,* August 1937.
38. See the material preserved in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, PCM, 1937–1939, fasc. 20.2., no. 946. This visit, as well as others to Trieste and Venice in September 1938, was also well-documented in the contemporary press and the cinematic news reels.
39. *Il popolo d'Italia,* 25 May 1930.
40. See the article 'L'uva', in *Il popolo d'Italia,* 27 September 1931.
41. M.S., 'Spirito rurale', in *Gioventù fascista,* 30 October 1932.
42. 'Il Duce alla festa dell'uva a Roma', *Il popolo d'Italia,* 29 September 1931.
43. See R.A. Pois, *Nationalsocialism and the Religion of Nature,* London 1986
44. 'Il Duce alla festa dell'uva a Roma', *Il popolo d'Italia,* 29 September 1931.
45. See Rustico, 'Vendemmia in città', *Il popolo d'Italia,* 21 September 1932.
46. A. Toni, 'Il littoriale polisportivo', in *Il popolo d'Italia,* 29 August 1926.

47. R. Nicolai, 'Sport', in *PNF Dizionario di politica,* vol. 4, Rome, 1940, p. 343.
48. Toni, 'Il littoriale polisportivo'.
49. *Ibidem*.
50. C.R. Maccaroni, 'La colonna del Duce verso il mare di Roma', *Il Carlino della sera,* Bologna, 16 January 1929, quoted in S. Setta, *Renato Ricci,* Bologna, 1986, p. 159.
51. The Arengo was the 'parliament' of the medieval city republics in Italy.
52. See Setta, *Renato Ricci,* pp. 162–165.
53. PNF, *Atti: 1931-1932,* Rome, 1932, circular of 16 May 1932.
54. P.L., 'La coscienza della collettività e lo sport', *Bibliografia fascista,* no. 2, 1933, pp. 108–110.
55. 'Lettere romane', *Il popolo d'Italia,* 6 July 1932.
56. See Gentile, *Il culto del littorio,* pp. 212–235 and the recent study on the exhibition by D. Ghirardo, L.A. Andreotti and J.T. Schnapp in the *Journal of Architectural Education,* February 1992.
57. See 'La cerimonia inaugurale', *Il popolo d'Italia,* 30 October 1932.
58. Francesco Gargano, *Italiani e stranieri alla Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista,* Turin, 1935, p. 266.
59. *Ibidem,* pp. 715–723.
60. See Gentile, *Il culto del littorio,* pp. 135–146.
61. A. Messineo SJ, 'Il culto della nazione e la fede mitica', *Civiltà cattolica,* vol. 3, 1940, p. 212.

Chapter 7

Mussolini's Charisma

INTRODUCTION

Fascism was the first twentieth-century revolutionary movement to create a totalitarian regime founded on a personality cult. In this sense, Mussolini was the prototype of the charismatic dictators who populate the century's history. Yet despite the fact that Mussolini came before other comparable figures, the problem of his charisma has not been studied extensively. Although there are studies of the Mussolini myth and the cult of the Duce, in comparative analyses of the various forms of charismatic leadership Mussolini has been a marginal presence when he has not been completely absent.[1] Of course, analysis of the myth of Mussolini and the cult of the Duce necessarily involves making reference to the charismatic nature of his authority, but in existing studies such references do not go far beyond generalities.[2] This paper has no pretensions to being an exhaustive treatment of the theme; its aim is merely to outline some essential aspects of Mussolini's charisma, before and during fascism. My attention will be focused chiefly on the relationship between Mussolini and the political movements in which he was a central figure. Thus, although a few indispensable references will be made to them in passing, the complex problems related to the Duce's role in the fascist regime, and the function of the myth of Mussolini in its various aspects in the policy of consensus-building, must remain outside the remit of this study.

PRESTIGE, MYTH AND CHARISMA

The study of Mussolini's charisma brings with it several theoretical problems that I think it appropriate to raise here, albeit in pared down form, so as to define my work's thesis, perspective and limits.

The term 'charisma' is much used today. It is employed imprecisely, to describe the attraction a person has for the public when s/he creates a following of enthusiastic supporters, or indeed to describe any form of personalization of politics. My own view is that we should avoid indiscriminately applying the term charisma so as not to dilute the specific meaning the concept has in relation to manifestations of power. For example, in the political domain, it is worth underlining the difference between charisma and other concepts used to analyse the personalization of politics. I particularly have in mind concepts like 'prestige' and 'myth'. These certainly belong to the phenomenology of charisma, because they are essential conditions for charismatic authority. But they are not coterminous with charisma and should not be confused with the power actually exercised by a leader through a charismatic relationship with his followers.

As Max Weber explains, charisma is 'applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities'.[3] The charismatic leader is accepted as a guide by his followers who obey him with veneration and devotion because they consider that he has been invested with the task of realizing an 'Idea'—the *mission;* the leader is the living incarnation and mystical interpreter of this mission. The *myth of the mission,* I believe, constitutes the particular character of the leader's charismatic investiture; it is the fundamental link between the leader and his/her followers, and it legitimates the leader's power to command in the eyes of the followers. In its essence, charisma means being invested with a mission. It is this myth of the mission embodied by the leader that inspires veneration, devotion and obedience from his followers.

As a consequence, the charismatic leader is always endowed with the prestige that comes from the recognition of his extraordinary gifts as bearer of the mission and from his successful leadership. Furthermore, the charismatic leader is always transformed into a myth through the symbolic transfiguration of his person into an emblematic hero; this process can reach the point where a cult of personality is instituted. Myth is a constitutive aspect of the charismatic personality. In many cases it heralds the development of charismatic authority.

Nevertheless, in themselves neither prestige nor myth can be considered to be evidence of charismatic authority. A political leader, whether democratic or authoritarian, may have prestige without then becoming a myth or being venerated and obeyed by his followers as a charismatic leader who embodies the Idea and guides a missionary movement. In democratic systems, if a leader has prestigious or mythical qualities and personifies a particular form of political hegemony within the parliamentary domain, it does not necessarily mean that his followers will attribute charismatic power to him. There are numerous examples from Italian history, both before and since fascism, of the personalization of politics founded on prestige but not on myth or charisma: one thinks of Giovanni Giolitti. There are also authoritarian regimes where the personalization of power is not based on a charismatic type of legitimisation, as in the case of Salazar.

PERSONAL CHARISMA AND COLLECTIVE CHARISMA

At this point I think it is important to make some preliminary remarks on the nature of the political movements which give rise to forms of charismatic power, and within which charismatic power manifests itself. In political movements from a rationalist cultural background, charismatic authority is a form of power at odds with the basic ideology in question and should not be theorized as being an institutional function essential to party organization or the political system. The appearance of a charismatic leader in a liberal or democratic movement or regime is a genuinely exceptional and extraordinary phenomenon: it occurs in unusual circumstances, is largely dependent on the leader's personal qualities, and is not transformed into an 'ideology of the Leader'. In movements from an irrationalist cultural background like fascism and National Socialism the figure of the charismatic leader should be theorized as a fundamental component of the ideology and as an institutional function of the way both the party and the regime are organized. Charismatic authority is therefore inherent in Fascism and an essential element in any definition of it.

From a theoretical point of view we also need to draw a distinction between charismatic authority which arises from the leader's 'personal charisma' and charismatic authority conferred on the leader by the 'collective charisma' of the movement which chooses him as its guide.

In the first case, charisma originates in the leader's personality. This happens when it is the charismatic leader who initiates the movement by creating a following of people who recognize his authority because they accept his assertion that he is the bearer of a mission. The founders of religious movements are cases in point. Personal charisma also exists in political movements in cases where a leader's authority spontaneously asserts itself as a result of personal magnetism, which produces devotion and dedication in followers. In such cases the emotional influence involved is not determined by the formal discipline deriving from an ideology of the Leader with its hierarchical principles. Where personal charisma exists, the leader already seems surrounded by a mythical aura before the hierarchical principle is established and considerably before the propaganda machine or cult of personality start to operate. Lenin can be taken as an example of personal charisma arising from personal magnetism within a movement which did not have an ideology of the Leader.[4]

The second type is a form of charismatic authority derived from an external source. Charisma does not have to be associated with the presence of personal magnetism. 'Derived charisma' is typical of movements and institutions that are considered to be charismatic by their very nature. The Pope's authority in the Catholic Church is the classic model of derived charisma. In order for the charismatic authority of a leader without personal charisma to be created and stabilized in political regimes, it is essential that there be a ritualization of obedience, a propaganda machine and the institution of a cult of personality: Stalin is a case in point.[5]

This distinction helps us to understand the Mussolini myth and the charismatic aspects of his political persona in its various manifestations. The story of Mussolini's charisma displays features distinct from other charismatic leaders, like Lenin or Hitler. Indeed, whereas the myths and charisma surrounding Lenin and Hitler emerged within single movements—Bolshevism and Nazism, respectively—Mussolini went through three distinct phases as a mythical and charismatic figure within different and even diametrically opposed movements: as a socialist; as a supporter of Italy's intervention in the First World War; and as a fascist. A further difference between Mussolini and Lenin or Hitler is that the former also underwent the trauma of losing his charisma, as happened in 1914 when he was expelled from the Socialist Party because he chose to support intervention in the war. Twice, when he was fascist leader, he had to confront serious challenges to his personal charisma. The first occasion was in 1921 when fascist chiefs rebelled against his decision to demilitarize fascism. The second was in 1924, after the assassination of Matteotti, when the authority of his personal charisma was challenged by fundamentalist fascists who thought of themselves as the trustees of fascism's collective charisma.

Just as Mussolini's charisma was not limited to his status as Fascist Duce, so his position as Duce was not associated right from the start with unquestioned charismatic authority. The myth of Mussolini as a figure with personal charismatic traits considerably predates the birth of fascism. Furthermore, for a long time before the final consecration of the Duce's power as absolute, unquestioned leader, the relationship between Mussolini and fascism was marked by tension, and at times by open conflict between Mussolini's personal charisma and the collective charisma of the movement. Fascism claimed to have been invested with its own mission as the incarnation of an Idea, independently of Mussolini as a person.

THE 'NEW MAN'

The origins of the myth of Mussolini and some aspects of his political persona date back to his years as a socialist militant. The first traces can be detected in 1912 when, at just 29, Mussolini changed from being an obscure provincial socialist to being a national personality as the leader of the revolutionary faction which took over the leadership of the party. He was seen as socialism's 'new man', an authentic revolutionary entirely devoted to the Idea: he appeared to be a strong character, intransigent in his adherence to principles, with an originality to his ideas, his style, his oratory and his actions. His physical appearance also seemed strongly evocative. A newspaper described him as 'pale, thoughtful, with two burning eyes, and a flame of goodness spread across his face . . . tormented by his own thoughts'.[6] His sudden political rise from provincial obscurity to the editorship of *Avanti!* and the leadership of the Socialist Party was spontaneously accompanied by his being transformed into an emblematic hero who personified the Idea of social revolution. 'He is a man of bronze. He is a man of ideas. He is charged with the energy of events,' as the revolutionary socialist Paolo Valera wrote.[7]

Mussolini was the effective leader of the Socialist Party for two years until he was expelled for choosing to support intervention. He gave a decisive push to its organizational development after a long period of decline. This helped to accentuate his prestige and his myth and also promoted the growth of a charismatic aura around him. His personality captivated the socialist masses and particularly influenced young revolutionaries including Antonio Gramsci himself.[8] A Turinese worker who was later to become a communist recalled, 'We young people were all enthusiastic about Mussolini.'

In an article published after his expulsion, *Avanti!* asserted that in Mussolini 'Socialist youth, after a long and anxious wait, had found not just a sound character who fought with the spoken and written word, but also a heroic soul and revolutionary man of action . . . The man, in other words, had become the symbol.'[9] The charismatic effect of Mussolini's personality also extended beyond the Socialist Party to the syndicalist and libertarian subversives who saw in him an 'extraordinary man', an authentic revolutionary.

Within the Socialist Party Mussolini wielded a personal authority which had strong charismatic associations, as his adversaries in the reformist wing of the Party noted with concern. One of them wrote that Mussolini had set up a 'dictatorship which has an individual basis, but also a collective psychological or even emotional basis'. Mussolini, the same writer went on, could make 'the masses swallow' anything he wanted, thanks to the 'irresistible prestige of his harsh but elevated combativeness' and to the captivating power of his 'personal gifts as a believer and foot soldier'.[10] Even his reformist opponents recognized the extraordinary captivating power of the young 'revolutionary leader' who had become 'the favoured son of the rejuvenated Socialist ranks, the *excubitor dormitantium*, the Party's electrifier, the renovator of *Avanti!* . . . the man respected by everyone within the Party'.[11]

The socialist myth of Mussolini was linked to a trust in his integrity as a revolutionary and in the sincerity of his ideas and his faith in social revolution. When Mussolini set himself against his Party and chose to support intervention in the war, that trust broke down, the myth collapsed, and his charisma dissolved. The masses who had idolized him then turned against him with the passion of a love betrayed. He became, for the socialists, the 'traitor' who had been 'bought off'. The myth of the intransigent and pure 'new man' was replaced by a kind of antimyth of the politicking opportunist who was selfishly ambitious, egocentric, lacking in ideas and ideals, and corrupted by the desire for power. Not even during the fascist regime, when the propaganda machine was working flat out to drive the cult of his personality, did Mussolini succeed in fully winning back the trust of the working masses.

THE REGENERATOR OF THE NATION

Accounts of Mussolini's nascent personal charisma before Fascism also emerge from other sources, none of which was influenced by propaganda or by adherence to Mussolini's ideas. Some of these accounts are very important because they

come not from socialist militants but from intellectuals independent of or hostile towards the Socialist Party yet who made their own contribution to constructing the myth of Mussolini.

What these accounts have in common with the socialist myth is the image of the young Mussolini as a 'new man': he seemed to be motivated by a sincere faith in his ideas, a convinced, resolute revolutionary who was hostile to any compromise and destined to have a decisive role in Italian history. As one woman, an anarchist, asserted in 1913, Mussolini 'is the Socialist for heroic times. He still feels, he still believes; and his feelings and beliefs are endowed with a virile, forceful élan. He is a Man.'[12] 'He is a real man, and he stands out all the more in a world filled with half characters and minds as frayed as worn out elastic', averred *La Voce*, organ of the Florentine avant-garde.[13] At that time Gaetano Salvemini, the future enemy of Mussolini the fascist, saw in him a 'man of faith', a serious revolutionary, one of those men who 'speak their minds, and act like they speak, and who for that reason carry so much of Italy's destiny within them.'[14] Confirmation that Mussolini's personality provoked admiration comes from private comments. Mussolini, as one of Salvemini's associates wrote, was 'a piece of good fortune for the nation'.[15]

For these intellectuals, the myth of Mussolini was not undermined when the myth of Mussolini the socialist collapsed. On the contrary, his support for intervention and his expulsion from the Socialist Party reinforced his mythical status amongst avant-garde intellectuals and revolutionary interventionists. They admired the 'handsome and heroic figure of Mussolini', the young revolutionary who had renounced the powerful position he had reached in a great party and had defied the hatred of the masses so as to follow the voice of his conscience. Not only was the myth of the 'new man' reinforced by the collapse of the socialist myth, but another myth was perhaps also bolstered: that of Mussolini as the 'regenerator of the nation'. This myth was largely the creation of interventionist intellectuals who rejoiced when Mussolini joined their ranks. Some of those associated with *La Voce* sent him a rhetorical telegram: 'Socialist Party expels you. Italy welcomes you.'

Intellectuals of this kind made an important and largely spontaneous contribution to building the myth of Mussolini as a 'new man'. In the years before the Great War, many young people hoped that the advent of *new men* would transform society: the mediocrity of bourgeois society would be overcome; the banality of liberal democracy would be opposed; a new order would be created; and, above all, the nation would be regenerated and led on towards new greatness. This younger generation established a renewed cult of heroes which expressed the desire for a guide, 'the need to touch real beings, capable of responding to them and leading them', as two French intellectuals wrote in 1913.[16] In the early years of the twentieth century, the writer Giovanni Papini sketched out an 'ideology of the Leader', of a charismatic duce: 'a thousand ties bind him to the soul of the *patria* . . . and he is at one with the *patria* in the same way that a mystic is at one with God . . . guide and chief . . . He must be like the pillar of fire leading

Jehovah's people through the wilderness: he must light the way and point out the goal . . . the pilot, eagle-eyed and iron-fisted, destined to lead his people towards a higher destiny.'[17] As he himself waited to take on the role of charismatic leader of the new Italy, D'Annunzio constructed new mythologies of national greatness, invoking the advent of the 'necessary Hero' in his poetry.[18]

In a cultural atmosphere which favoured the creation of real or presumed charismatic personalities, Mussolini became an emblematic hero for the new generation. It was hoped that a revolution would overthrow the status quo which was judged to be corrupt and inefficient, and was symbolically personified in the old statesman Giovanni Giolitti.[19] In a letter dated 15 November 1914, the painter Carlo Carrà wrote that in Mussolini 'resides the drama of our whole generation. We admire him, if for nothing else, then certainly for the courage that he keeps demonstrating.'[20] The mythical Mussolini perceived by young interventionist revolutionaries is vividly illustrated in the first biographical profile of Mussolini published early in 1915 by a revolutionary socialist who later became an anti-fascist. Mussolini is described as a 'steely spirit at the service of a formidable will', an 'invulnerable man', a 'cultivated and convinced Marxist', the '*homo novus*' of Socialism, 'the beating heart of the Party', an idol for the masses who 'instinctively see their own best qualities of enthusiasm, faith and sacrifice embodied in him'.[21]

In the eyes of revolutionary interventionists Mussolini kept his charisma intact in a new mythical transfiguration that represented him as one of the architects of the new Italy to be born from the experience of the Great War. In October 1915, Filippo Corridoni, leader of the syndicalists who supported intervention, saluted the interventionist Mussolini as 'our spiritual duce'. A young interventionist who met a wounded Mussolini at the front, was given 'an impression of extraordinary strength, of a man destined to dominate'.[22] He saluted him as the future duce of the new breed of Italians: 'Benito Mussolini, you . . . must give Italy its new people.'[23]

THE MYTH ECLIPSED

Unlike the myth associated with Mussolini the socialist however, this new myth did not manage to become a mass phenomenon. Nor was it even the prelude to Mussolini's becoming a charismatic leader when, after the war, he attempted to take up the political struggle again and created a movement of his own based on an appeal to revolutionary interventionists, veterans, *arditi* and Futurists.

After the war, the Mussolini myth was eclipsed. It remained alive only perhaps in a small circle of friends and contributors to his newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia*. He was at that time considered to be a 'straggler', as his closest associate of the time, Cesare Rossi, defined him.[24] His personal magnetism was not translated into any form of charismatic authority even amongst the meagre, scattered group that made up the first fascists. In any case, his prestige was certainly not increased by conspicuous political failures, like the lack of solidity shown by the new *Fasci di*

combattimento movement he founded, and the defeat in the 1919 elections. Mussolini was not at all a charismatic leader within the fascist movement itself. He was only a member of the Propaganda Office of the Executive Commission. His proposals were discussed like any other leader's, and they were not always accepted.

Mussolini was certainly prominent in nationalist revolutionary circles; he was something of a mythical figure especially for the youths and young men who had been involved in the fighting; he was admired for his interventionist campaign, for his role in the war, for defending Italy's victory. But he did not seem to be a charismatic leader. It was not Mussolini but the man behind the Fiume episode, Gabriele D'Annunzio, who played the role of charismatic leader amongst the heterogeneous veteran movements propelling revolutionary nationalism in the period after the war.

Fascism's success after 1920 was not due to Mussolini, even though he made timely and overbearing bids to take the credit for it. Squadrism exploded into life and fascism became a mass movement for reasons that were not related to Mussolini's actions, let alone to his personal charisma. Mussolini was certainly the most important figure in the new fascist movement: he undoubtedly stands out from all of its other exponents because of his national notoriety, his skill as a journalist and politician, and his captivating oratory. And, after the eclipse of the Mussolini myth, as fascism grew, a new Mussolini myth was born from the older images of the 'new man' and the 'regenerator of the nation'. However, Mussolini's prestige and his mythical status were not yet evidence of personal charisma. Fascists did not feel themselves to be subordinated to their leader by a charismatic form of devotion. For a long time, for the fascists who were closest to him who had shared his experience of political struggle from the time when he was a socialist, Mussolini remained simply a friend or 'comrade Benito'.[25] He was a captivating and evocative figure for the majority of fascists, but he was not yet venerated as a duce. As one account from memories of the period puts it: 'We Fascists were an off-hand bunch. Our leader was still "Prof. Benito Mussolini" to us.'[26]

CONTESTED CHARISMA

The new fascists certainly admired Mussolini; they applauded him at their demonstrations; they were enthralled by him and willingly acclaimed him Duce. But they were not yet prepared unconditionally to recognize his authority as founder and leader of fascism in the way that Mussolini himself claimed when he invoked his personal charisma. Indeed, when Mussolini tried to exercise his supposed charismatic authority by imposing the pacification pact and the demilitarization of the movement on fascists, most of them rebelled against him and turned to D'Annunzio to acclaim him as the new Duce. Probably it was only the poet's refusal to accept this offer which prevented fascism's splitting permanently with Mussolini. The anti-Mussolini revolt involved the bulk of squadrists and provincial fascist leaders. Even Mussolini's claim to be the father of fascism was

contested. Dino Grandi, one of the leaders of the revolt, wrote in his newspaper: 'although devotion and affection tie us to Mussolini, we deny him the exclusive right to do as he wishes with this movement of *ours*, as if he had the authority of a master and an ancient Roman *pater familias*. We all owe our souls, our youth and our lives to this movement.'[27] Grandi's paper proclaimed in block capitals that 'Fascism is not one man, it is an Idea'.[28] During the revolt against Mussolini, some fascists recalled Mussolini's history as a socialist: 'someone who has betrayed in the past will betray again'.[29]

Only after the Fascist Congress of November 1921, when the movement was transformed into a party, did Mussolini manage to achieve recognition as leader of fascism, and then only because of a compromise with the provincial leaders which effectively institutionalized their power in the new structure of the party-as-militia (*partito milizia*).

The end of the revolt against Mussolini did not mark the triumph of his personal charisma. When he came to power his mythical status and his prestige were undoubtedly strengthened. But he still did not have charismatic power within fascism. During his early years in government, some fascists still resisted and rebelled against the Duce's claims to be recognized and obeyed as the absolute and unquestioned leader. The crisis that afflicted the party until the end of 1924 was effectively due in large part to the clash between Mussolini and the various fascist factions which refused to obey his orders without discussion or to stick to his policy, albeit often for conflicting motives. For two years there was a continual confrontation, conducted in terms which echoed those used during the revolt of 1921, between Mussolini, who aimed to impose his personal charisma on the Party, and a substantial section of fascism which aimed to subordinate even Mussolini to the Party's collective charisma.

In the eyes of most of its adherents, fascism was a new political religion and the fascist movement was a militia at the service of the nation. Fascists thought of themselves as new men forged in the experience of war, the only legitimate exegetes of the will of the nation which was mystically embodied in their movement. Thus fascism laid claim to its own collective charisma which was not the same as or derived from Mussolini's personal charisma. The movement's charisma came instead from the Idea which animated it. As a Fascist intellectual argued in 1924, 'a great political uprising, or a nation on the march, can never be encapsulated totally in a Leader. Thus fascism is not encapsulated in you.'[30] One fascist newspaper hostile to 'Mussolinianism' (*mussolinismo*) wrote that Mussolini was not placed at the helm of fascism because 'he was appointed by God Almighty': rather he was there 'because Fascists want him to be there'; 'Mussolini is where he is, and has the power that he has, because Fascists put him up there, because he is an interpreter of Fascism' and not because he is 'the Word, the Sun, the absolute Lord and everything must bow to his approval'.[31]

The majority of the most politically active fascists and a large number of the squadrist leaders were not prepared to identify fascism with 'Mussolinianism', even thought they professed their loyalty and obedience to the Duce. The term

Mussolinianism itself entered circulation in that period and was used by the various revisionist and dissident fascist factions to dispute the tendency to identify fascism exclusively with Mussolini. It was also disputed by the opposing intransigent and fundamentalist fascists who advocated a totalitarian revolution against Mussolini's collaborationist policy.[32]

Many Fascists also rebelled against the nascent cult of personality. They viewed the Mussolini myth as harmful to fascism: at the end of 1922 a Tuscan squadrist wrote, 'The thing that harms Fascism is idolatry. People have adored the man in himself for his qualities and virtues, and not to the degree that he has contributed to the Party and been useful to the idea. In this way we have managed to identify the idea with the man without recognizing that men change and make mistakes while ideas remain and are immortal. If they are going to be politically mature, Fascists must think of themselves as the apostles of a faith, the soldiers of an idea, and not the mercenary foot soldiers of one man.'[33]

THE DUCE'S VICTORY

Nevertheless, it was precisely the Fascist Party's internal crisis, the clash between its factions, and the conflicting ambitions and interests of its officials both big and small, that helped Mussolini's personal charisma to victory. This was because the Duce's authority was the only thing capable of keeping the rivalries between leaders in check and uniting the heterogeneous forces within the movement. This unifying effect was one of the major reasons why the Duce's charismatic authority conclusively established itself during the years of the fascist regime. The myth of the Duce became essential to maintaining cohesion between the 'little duces' who could not work together unless they were all subordinated to the Duce: 'Their individual issues and cases could only be resolved though Mussolinianism and "Duce-ism" (*ducismo*),' as a fascist intellectual observed.[34]

In his efforts to win the conflict over charisma within fascism, Mussolini was able to call on more than his power as head of government. He could also rely on the spread of his myth beyond the movement: it reached into the social strata who benefited most, or expected to benefit most from his policies, and into the ordinary masses who saw in the new, young, dynamic head of government the 'strong man' who would bring peace and prosperity after a decade of upheaval. After the 'march on Rome' his prestige and the Mussolini myth rapidly asserted themselves. As the anti-fascist Ferruccio Parri wrote in 1924, he was put on 'a pedestal of unconscious trust, naive, almost physical admiration, and ecstatic stupor where a good part of the Italian people watched their dynamic Duce strut and fret'.[35]

Most Italians applauded Mussolini without being fascists and without thinking of him as a charismatic leader. They were influenced by a state of mind which made them inclined to welcome the arrival of a 'new man', a 'regenerator of the nation', a dictator able to impose discipline within his own party, as long as he

ensured law, order and progress for the nation. An old liberal and anti-fascist described this state of mind in 1921 and prophetically warned that it would bring a dictator to power who would destroy the liberal regime: 'Everyone is warning that Italy is on the way to civil war . . . and so, as if in a moment of extreme danger, everyone is invoking the providential intervention of a Man, with a capital M, who will finally call the country to order.'[36] The warning was ignored and the supporters of order greeted Mussolini's arrival in power as if their entreaty had at last been granted. As a non-fascist member of the Senate said in 1923, 'One of Fascism's most important merits was that it showed the inspiration of one man in its organization and permitted the advent of such a man as it developed. So now the man we have been waiting for has arrived.'[37]

After the murder of Matteotti, revolutionary fascists once again questioned their Duce's charisma. Outside the movement, the Mussolini myth was also profoundly shaken and seemed about to topple: 'if a myth existed, it has undergone a powerful downward tilt,' Mussolini admitted in August 1924.[38] However, once the crisis had been overcome and his power had been consolidated, the myth grew again, boosted in its rise by the ever more widespread and efficient use of propaganda. The popular myth of Mussolini was an almost constant aspect of the fascist regime, although it was not evenly spread across the social classes. The Mussolini myth became the object of a devoted and superstitious cult accompanied by almost miraculous expectations, as an anti-fascist observed in the mid-1930s: 'There are cases where people conceal a critical attitude to the regime behind homage to the leader because they fear their criticism is too bold. But even setting aside these cases, the "cult of the Duce" still has a strong influence on people's minds. It keeps up faith in the man's infallibility, even in the face of the facts, so that the idea of his infallibility is still accepted without question.'[39]

TOTALITARIAN CAESARISM

Mussolini's charismatic authority was pivotal to the whole complex organization of the totalitarian regime, just as the Duce myth was the regime's principal way of gathering support beyond the Fascist movement.[40] Within the Party, Mussolini's personal charisma was conclusively installed after 1925. There were no further challenges to his authority until 25 July 1943. The Party was also the main creator of the Duce cult. As the general secretary of the PNF Augusto Turati asserted, the Duce was the architect of the 'national revolution' after 1915, the leader of fascism, the interpreter of the Italian people's will, 'the one and only helmsman who cannot be replaced by any yobbish crew';[41] he was 'intent on moulding the new Italian being' with his 'brilliant and powerful mind'.[42] The Duce's dominant position was gradually codified in PNF statutes. In 1926, the Duce was placed at the top of the Party hierarchy as 'supreme guide'; in 1932 he was raised above and placed beyond the hierarchical scale; and finally, in 1938, he was formally defined as 'Leader of the PNF'. The fascist catechism of 1939 read, 'the DUCE, Benito Mussolini, is the creator of Fascism, the renewer

of civil society, the Leader of the Italian people, the founder of the Empire'.[43] In the process of constructing the totalitarian State, the figure of the Duce also assumed constitutional characteristics as 'Supreme Leader of the Regime which is now indissolubly identified with the State'.

The victory of Mussolini's personal charisma was not only due to the man's own exceptional gifts, to his indispensable function as Duce in unifying the Party and the regime, and to the fact that the myth surrounding him was irreplaceable as a way of gathering support. In actual fact the figure of the Leader was inherent in the culture and mentality of fascism. It was also in tune with its totalitarian conception of the state in that fascism was a regime founded on the concentration of power in a single 'high command' and on a hierarchical organization with military and mystical characteristics. The fascist political system constituted a *totalitarian Caesarism*, as I have defined it, in which the figure of the Leader was a permanent institution independent of Mussolini as a person.[44] In the fascist way of thinking, the totalitarian state, by its very nature, needed a Leader invested with charismatic authority at the top of its governing hierarchy. Fascists were unanimous in the belief that 'at the centre of the life of the fascist State there cannot be an assembly which decides between the various alternatives by means of voting or compromise. Rather, there must be a Man, who sees, judges and wills.'[45] One of the regimes' authoritative jurists observed that the problem of the Leader was 'the most delicate problem opened up by the organization of the new state', and it should not be confused 'with the problem of the Duce, that is the founder of he regime', the 'exceptional man on whom history has conferred the task of creating the new order'. 'If the new state,' he went on, 'is to become a permanent way of being, that is a "life system", it cannot do without the role of Leader because of its hierarchical structure, even if this Leader does not have the extraordinary magnitude of the Man who promoted the revolution in the first place.'[46] The Duce's successor, even if he did not have personal charisma, would nonetheless have the role of Leader conferred on him by a Fascist Party which would be able to reclaim its own charismatic authority after Mussolini's death.[47] The model for the fascists to imitate was the Catholic Church, a charismatic institution with a Leader who did not need to have his own personal charisma.

A REASON FOR LIVING

The figure of the charismatic leader was assimilated by fascist culture and ideology. In order to define the role of the Duce as an institution essential to the new totalitarian State, Fascist Party ideologists turned directly to Max Weber's theory of charismatic power, which had been introduced into Italy by the sociologist Robert Michels.[48] A text used in the training of future officials asserted that 'in reality, Fascism has been the first complete realization of the "charismatic" theory of national societies'.[49] Mussolini, explained one of the regime's major jurists, was an incarnation of Carlyle's hero; he was an 'exceptional historical figure'; his government 'is

an ideal form in itself . . . it is a "state of grace" of the spirit'; it is 'a *heroic* dictatorship, a historical or, if you will, philosophical form, rather than a juridical one. And as such it is exceptional and supernatural, unrepeatable and unreproducible, not ordinary and common.'[50] Mussolini, argued the philosopher Giovanni Gentile, was 'a hero, a privileged and providential spirit. The idea itself is embodied in him, and throbs incessantly with the powerful rhythm of a youthful, flourishing life'.[51]

It goes without saying that such sentiments are evidence of the spread of fawning conformism and rhetorical exaltation under fascism. Nevertheless, it should be recognized that the rituals of the Duce cult are consistent with the nature of Fascism: with what is intuited about the nature of man and the masses; with its conception of modern mass politics; and above all with its notion of the charismatic relationship established between the Duce and his followers. It was that relationship which gave rise, beyond mere propaganda and rhetoric, to the fascist ruling class's convinced and conscious participation in the Mussolini myth.

Displays of devotion to Mussolini's personal charisma echo continually both in public declarations and in private relationships between leading officials and the Duce. Giovanni Giuriati, PNF General Secretary from 1930 to 1931, wrote to Mussolini in 1923 to show his 'utterly steadfast faith that you are the "Hound" foretold by Dante'.[52] When Giuseppe Bottai was obliged to resign from his post as Minister of Corporations in July 1932, he wrote to Mussolini stating that he accepted the leader's decision with 'serenity of mind': 'It is only that, sometimes, nostalgia for the Leader will seize me, nostalgia for his presence, his orders. I will try to overcome it with the thought that, as has now been the case for many years, Mussolini will act as an incessant force for growth and improvement in my private life as well.'[53]

It would probably be a difficult task to discover the boundary between the genuine believer's exaltation and courtly adulation in statements like these. Nevertheless, personal writings and memoirs published since the collapse of the Mussolini myth allow us to confirm that his closest collaborators had a sincere faith in his charisma, even when they knew of his worst features as a man and a leader.

Giuriati, for example, distanced himself from power and Mussolini for good at the beginning of the 1930s. In memoirs published after the fall of fascism, he gives a detailed analysis of the crisis of the Mussolini myth and the degeneration of the regime. Yet he confirms that he had believed that Mussolini was 'the man predestined, as Dante believed, to re-unite in Rome the two sacred symbols, the Cross and the Eagle, and fated to banish moral and civil disorder, heresy and war, not just from Italy, but from the face of the earth'.[54] The posthumous memoirs of one leading fascist official from a very humble background provide an even more significant account. He was appointed as a Minister in 1943, when the Mussolini myth was teetering and his charisma beginning to dissolve following military defeats. The official accepted the job enthusiastically, and was able to lay aside all his doubts about the Duce and the disappointments accumulated over the years because he was dazzled anew by the allure of Mussolini's charisma:

I am one of Mussolini's Ministers, I told myself. I am standing beside a great figure in History, an authentic History-maker. I loved this enchanting man so much, and undoubtedly I still love him. There have been disappointments over the last twenty-one years, but life is more than just flowers and perfume. Mussolini is perhaps the most disconcerting *condottiere* in history: he talks like a genius, but slips into puerile banality; he sets off with determination, and plays around like a spoiled, capricious child; he preaches like a great convert, and leaves people confounded with a cynical expression; he imposes a frightening workload on himself for his people's sake, and shows off his contempt for men in general; he invokes God, but delights in heretical pronouncements. Despite all of this he is still a great man to whom you willingly offer the best part of yourself.[55]

In his diary at the beginning of 1941, Bottai shows his torment and anguish in a description of the crisis of his faith in the Mussolini myth: 'Something which has been beating in my heart for more than twenty years has suddenly stopped: a Love, a loyalty, a devotion. I am now alone, without my Leader . . . A Leader is everything in a man's life: origin and end, cause and goal, starting-point and destination; if he falls, it creates an atrocious solitude inside. I would like to rediscover the Leader, put him at the centre of my world again, reorganize this world of mine around him. But I am afraid, afraid that I now won't manage it. Now I know what fear is: the sudden collapse of a reason for living.'[56]

There are many accounts which show how strong the influence of Mussolini's personal charisma was on fascist leaders, despite the fact that they were close to him over many years and had, over time, come to know those traits of his—weakness, pettiness and cynicism—which bore no relation to the heroic image created by the myth. Yet for a long time the *gerarchi* remained enslaved by his personal charisma. They were convinced that, with Mussolini and thanks to his genius, they were taking part in a great undertaking: the construction of a new civilization which would represent a model of state structure for the whole western world and would mark an epoch in world history. Until the military defeats of the Second World War, Mussolini's political successes, whether real or only apparent, confirmed his charismatic authority: they were proof of his 'greatness', his 'genius', his 'mission'.

CATASTROPHE OF A MAN POSSESSED

Senior fascists began to lose their faith and enthusiasm when Mussolini himself began blindly to believe in his own charisma and feel that he was an infallible genius. Contemporary accounts and the subsequent judgement of historians identify the conquest of the empire as the moment when Mussolini, the great inventor and activator of myths, became the prisoner of his own myth. In reality, Mussolini had always been possessed by the myth of himself as a man of destiny. In 1935, he confided to a biographer and confidant that he had had 'the feeling of being called to herald a new era' for the first time in 1909, when he made contact with the group of intellectuals around *La Voce*. And he added, 'Predestination! Something that seizes us, that takes control of us, of our lives. When we

don't notice it, it becomes, so to speak, "destiny". When we do notice it, it becomes "fate".'[57] Right from the time when he was an obscure political agitator, Mussolini felt that he was called to achieve great things. To those who knew him as a young man, Mussolini seemed obsessed by aspirations to supremacy, by the fixation with 'going down in history', tormented by the craving to 'become a man out of the ordinary . . . I think I will become a great politician.'[58] One police inspector showed rare insight into Mussolini's character when he described him as follows in a report from 1919: 'He is extremely ambitious. He is motivated by the conviction that he represents a considerable power in Italy's future, and he is determined to make that power count. He is a man who will not settle for a subordinate position. He wants to be outstanding and dominant.'[59] Power only worsened his mania for greatness. It did not satisfy the ambition, which tormented him like 'a physical illness', to 'engrave a mark in time with my will, like a lion does with his claw'.[60] After the myth had collapsed and his power had come to an end, Mussolini gave a final justification for the catastrophe that his ambition had created, confessing that he had been 'a spirit possessed' by the will to power, 'a poison that penetrated so deeply that it bathed my whole spirit'.[61]

The story of Mussolini's charisma ended in catastrophe. Just how Mussolini actually experienced the collapse of his myth and charisma can only remain a subject for conjecture. However, it is possible to imagine that total defeat did not destroy his conviction that he had been a 'man of destiny' all the same. Indeed we could say that, paradoxically, it was from his very defeat that the fallen Duce perhaps drew that last shred of faith in his ill-starred greatness. 'All men of action,' he had asserted in 1939, 'necessarily move towards catastrophe as their conclusion. They live and end with this aura, either for themselves or for others.'[62]

NOTES

Reprinted by permission of Routledge from Emilio Gentile, "Mussolini's Charisma," trans. John Dickie, *Modern Italy 3,* no. 2 (1998): 219–235. This chapter is in part derived from my earlier studies of fascism's 'ideology of the leader', the myth of Mussolini, the cult of the Duce, and the function of the Leader in the totalitarian state. For a more developed treatment and more substantial documentation of the themes I deal with here see: *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista,* Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1975 (new edition, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1996); *Il mito dello Stato nuovo,* Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1982; 'Il mito di Mussolini', *Mondo Operaio,* July-August 1983, pp. 113–28; *Storia del partito fascista, 1919–1922. Movimento e milizia,* Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1989; *Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista,* Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1993 (translated as *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1996); *La via italiana al totalitarismo. Partito e Stato nel regime fascista,* NIS, Rome, 1995.

1. D. Biondi, *La fabbrica del duce,* Vallecchi, Bologna, 1967; P. Melograni, 'The cult of the Duce in Mussolini's Italy', *Journal of Contemporary History,* 1976, pp. 221–37; M. Ostenc, 'La mystique du Chef et la jeunesse fasciste de 1919 à 1926', *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome,* 1, 1978, pp. 275–80; A. B. Hasler, 'Das Duce-Bild in der Faschistchen Literatur', *Quellen und Forschungen,* 60, 1980, pp. 421–506; R. De Felice and L. Goglia,

Mussolini. Il mito, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1983; J. Petersen, 'Mussolini: Wirklicheit und Mythos eines Diktators', in *Mithos und Moderne,* Frankfurt a. M., 1983, pp. 242–60; L. Passerini, *Mussolini immaginario,* Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1991; A.M. Imbriani, *Gli italiani e il duce. Il mito di Mussolini negli ultimi anni del fascismo (1938–1943),* Liguori, Naples, 1992.

2. See for example: L. Hamon and A. Mabileau (eds.), *La personnalisation du pouvoir,* Université de Dijon, Paris, 1964; D. A. Rustow, *Philosophers and Kings. Studies in Leadership,* G. Braziller, New York, 1970; J. MacGregor Burns, *Leadership,* Harper & Row, New York, 1978; L. Cavalli, *Il capo carismatico,* Il Mulino, Bologna, 1981; J. Held, *The Cult of Power. Dictators in the Twentieth Century,* Boulder, New York, 1983; A. Schweitzer, *The Age of Charisma,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984. An exception is M. Bach, *Die charismatischen Führerdiktaturen,* Nomos, Baden-Baden, 1990.

3. M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization,* Free Press, New York, 1964, p. 358.

4. R. C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary,* Chatto and Windus, London, 1974, chapter 2.

5. R. C. Tucker, 'The rise of the Stalin personality cult', *American Historical Review,* 2, 1979, pp. 347–66.

6. Quoted in G. Megaro, *Mussolini dal mito alla realtà,* Milan, 1947, p. 365.

7. *Ibid.,* p. 366.

8. On Gramsci's 'Mussolinianism', see S. F. Romano, *Antonio Gramsci,* Einaudi, Turin, 1965, p. 281.

9. I. Toscani, 'I giovani, il socialismo e la guerra', *Avanti!,* November 29 1914, quoted in R. De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario,* Einaudi, Turin, 1965, p. 281.

10. G. Zibordi, 'Continuando a discutere di cose interne di famiglia', *Critica Sociale,* 1 August 1914.

11. G. Zibordi, 'La logica d'una crisi', *Critica Sociale,* 16 November 1914.

12. Quoted in L. Rafanelli, *Una donna e Mussolini,* Rizzoli, Milan, 1975, p. 33.

13. *La Voce,* 13 December 1913.

14. *L'Unità,* 19 June 1914.

15. Letter from Rodolfo Savelli to Giuseppe Prezzolini in the Archivio Prezzolini, Lugano, quoted in E. Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo dall' antigiolittismo al fascismo,* Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1982, p. 122.

16. 'Agathon' (pseudonym of Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde), *Les jeunes gens d'aujourd' hui,* Paris, 1913, pp. 144–5.

17. G. Papini, 'Crispi', *Il Regno,* 29 May 1904.

18. G. D'Annunzio, *Elettra,* Mondadori, Verona, 1953, p. 108.

19. See E. Gentile, 'From the Cultural Revolt of the Giolittian Era to the Ideology of Fascism', in F. J. Coppa (ed.), *Studies in Modern Italian History. From the Risorgimento to the Republic,* Lang, New York, 1986, pp. 103–17; and 'The Myth of National Regeneration in Italy: from the Modernist Avant-Garde to Fascism', in M. Affron and M. Antliff (eds.), *Fascist Visions,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997, pp. 25–43.

20. Quoted in Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo,* p. 128.

21. Reproduced in E. Gentile (ed.), *Mussolini e La Voce,* Sansoni, Florence, 1976, pp. 163–75.

22. Letter from Arcangelo Di Staso to G. Prezzolini, 26 February 1917, in G. Prezzolini, *Il tempo della Voce,* Vallecchi, Milan-Florence, 1960, p. 719.

23. *Il popolo d'Italia,* 29 November 1914.

24. C. Rossi, *Mussolini com'era,* Rome, 1947, p. 75.

25. See E. Gentile, *Storia del partito fascista, 1919–1922. Movimento e milizia,* Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1989.

26. M. Gradi, *Il sindocato nel fascismo,* ISC, Rome, 1987, p. 45. The allusion is to Mussolini's experience as a teacher (translator's note).

27. D. Grandi, 'Pensiero di Peretola', *L'Assalto,* 6 August 1921.

28. *L'Assalto,* 13 August 1921.

29. See Gentile, *Storia del partito fascista,* chapter IV.

30. C. Pellizzi, *Fascismo aristocrazia,* Alpes, Milan, 1925, p. 8.

31. 'Riforma burocratica', *Polemica Fascista,* 21 October 1923.

32. The crisis within the Fascist Party and the challenge to Mussolini's personal charisma can be seen as a specific case of the relationship between charismatic leadership and 'factional conflicts', in the sense that the phrase is used in the analysis of National Socialism by J. Nyomarkay, *Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party,* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1967.

33. A. Bencini, 'Le ragioni della crisi', *La Scure,* 23 December 1922.

34. M. Rivoire, *Vita e morte del fascismo,* Milan, 1947, p. 107.

35. *Il Caffè,* 11 July 1924.

36. G. Fortunato, *Dopo la guerra sovvertitrice,* Laterza, Bari, 1922, now in G. Fortunato, *Il Mezzogiorno e lo Stato italiano,* Vallecchi, Florence, 1973, vol. II, p. 702.

37. *Atti parlamentari. Senato del Regno,* Legislatura XXVI, Sessione I, 1921–23, Discussioni, Tornata dell'8 giungo 1923, pp. 49–98.

38. Quoted in R. De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista,* Einaudi, Turin, 1966, p. 78.

39. *Quaderni di 'Giustizia e Libertà',* 6, March 1933, p. 103.

40. See R. De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista,* tomo II, Einaudi, Turin, 1968, pp. 69–73.

41. A. Turati, *Ragioni ideali di vita fascista,* Rome, no date, p. 79.

42. A. Turati, *Una rivoluzione e un capo,* Rome-Milan, no date. Turati, *Ragioni ideali,* p. 58.

43. *Il primo libro del fascista,* Rome, 1939, pp. 17–20.

44. Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo,* p. 148: 'a Caesaristic type of charismatic dictatorship which was integrated into an institutional structure based on a single party and on the mobilization of the masses. It underwent a continual construction process aimed at making it correspond to the myth of the totalitarian state. This myth was consciously adopted as an organizational model for the political system and functioned in a concrete sense as a fundamental credo and behavioural code imposed on both individuals and the masses.'

45. C. Pellizzi, *Il partito educatore,* Rome, 1941, p. 30.

46. C. Costamagna, *Storia e dottrina del fascismo,* Turin, 1938, p. 419.

47. At the end of the 1930s there was an important debate amongst the regime's jurists and ideologists around the problem of the Duce role in a fascist state 'after Mussolini': see Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo,* pp. 203 ff.

48. See R. Michels, *Corso di sociologia politica,* Milan, 1927.

49. *Il partito nazionale fascista,* Rome, 1936, p. 50.

50. Panunzio, Teoria generale, p. 518.

51. G. Gentile, *Fascismo e cultura,* Milan, 1928, p. 47.

52. Quoted in E. Gentile, introduction to G. Giuriati, *La parabola di Mussolini,* Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1981, p. XXVII. For Dante's enigmatic allegorical figure of the Hound destined to vanquish the she-wolf of covetousness and greed, see *Inferno,* I, 101ff (translator's note).

53. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Segr. pari. del Duce, Carteggio Riservato, b. 65.
54. Giuriati, *La parabola di Mussolini,* p. 39.
55. T. Cianetti, *Memorie,* Rizzoli, Milan, 1983, p. 373.
56. G. Bottai, *Diario 1935–1944,* G. B. Guerri (ed.), Rizzoli, Milan, 1982, pp. 246–7.
57. Y. De Begnac, *Palazzo Venezia. Storia di un regime,* Rome, 1950, p. 131.
58. Rafanelli, *Una donna e Mussolini,* p. 52, p. 103.
59. Quoted in De Felice and Goglia, *Mussolini. Il mito,* p. 99.
60. M. Sarfatti, *Dux,* Mondadori, Milan, 1930, p. 134.
61. O. Dinale, *Quarant' anni di colloqui con lui,* Clarrocca, Milan, 1962, p. 192.
62. N. D'Aroma, *Mussolini segreto,* L. Cappelli, Bologna, 1958, p. 194.

Chapter 8

I Fasci Italiani all'Estero: The "Foreign Policy" of the Fascist Party[1]

ORIGINS AND AIMS

From the very beginning one of the aims of the fascist party in power was to spread the fascist influence and ideology among Italian communities abroad. With this purpose in mind the fascist policy operated in every European and extra-European country where Italian communities could be located. The Fascist Party concentrated its greatest effort in countries such as the USA and Argentina having the largest number of Italian immigrants and their descendants. This policy was carried through by the organization of "Fasci Italiani all'Estero" (Italian Fasci Abroad). It was first set up as an institution of the Fascist Party and later, when the fascist regime was consolidated, it was incorporated into one general organization of the Italians Abroad, reporting to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Fascism justified the organisation of the Fasci Abroad as an effort to protect the social, economic and juridical interests, of the Italian emigrants and to promote Italian culture as well as stimulating foreign trade with Italy. However, the main intentions of fascist policy overseas was always to diffuse fascist ideology and fascist influence and force some control upon the Italian communities abroad. From 1923 to 1926, the Fascist Party therefore tried to pursue its own ideological "foreign policy," as we may call it, and with own personnel organize a strategy for its implementation in foreign countries.

The experience of a political party that, after seizing power in its own country, did set up a network of its branches abroad and keep under control and organize Italian immigrants in foreign countries, was an unprecedented event. It thus raised contrasting reactions both in Italy and in the foreign countries where fascist organizations were organized, operating under the direction of the Fascist Party and government. Though this aspect of fascist policy was such a new and

important element of fascist totalitarianism, *Fasci Italiani all'Estero* have neither so far been thoroughly studied.[2]

However in this essay I do not fully intend to fill this gap. I shall limit myself to outline the main development and the policy of this organization by examining the steps it took in diffusing spreading fascism outside Europe, in the first decade of fascist regime. I also want to point out another limitation of this essay. The problem of the export of fascism abroad obviously involves the foreign policy of the fascist Government, accounting for the complex relationship between Italian diplomacy and the ideological "foreign policy" Fascist Party's. I shall discuss this relationship in the first years of the fascist regime in order to show the challenges of authority and competence between the Fasci and the official Italian diplomacy.

In the efforts to spread its influence among the Italians abroad, from the beginning the Fascist Party did not operate according to a prearranged strategy. The working out of a policy, aiming to turn Italian communities into fascist strongholds, actually took place after many difficulties and obstacles. This was caused by the attitudes of both Italian immigrants, foreign governments and by vicissitudes internal to the Fascist Party, as well as by different tendencies and changes in the foreign policy of the fascist State.

The organization and spread of fascism abroad was carried out in different stages. From the beginning, after the march on Rome, it was marked by conflicts between the Fascist Party and Mussolini's government. It was also characterized by the different criteria and methods used by the successive leaders of the Fasci. Their aims can be summarized as follows:

a) to keep the Italian communities and their already existing social, cultural and charity associations under control, claiming the monopoly abroad for the fascist organization as the sole representative of "Italianness" (Italianità);
b) to react to the policy of denationalization and naturalization of the Italians, stirring up with huge propaganda the sense of Italian identity in the Italian citizens and emigrants' descendants abroad;
c) to oppose the propaganda and the activities of the Italian antifascists abroad and reduce their influence upon the Italian communities;
d) to advance the importance of economic and political measures which would create a public opinion favourable to fascism, among them encourage the celebration of Italian past and forward fascist ideology and the regime as expressions of a renewed Italian glory.

The first Fasci Abroad rose spontaneously between the years of 1921 and 1922, thanks to the initiatives by young fascist emigrants who tried to exploit the new feelings of patriotism aroused by the Libyan war and the Great War among the Italians abroad. On May 1, 1921, while announcing the setting up of a Fascio in New York, Mussolini declared that the formation of Fasci abroad was an integral part of the fascist program.

In November 1921, on the eve of the congress for the foundation of the fascist party, "Il Popolo d'Italia" proposed to initiate the development of the Fasci abroad.[3] The first statute of the National Fascist Party, however, did not contemplate on any particular external institution. Only after Dino Grandi and Italo Balbo's suggestion, on the eve of the march on Rome, at the meeting held in Milan on 14 August 1922, did the party decide to organize a special office to increase the birth of "Fasci Italiani all'Estero".[4] The fascist program to be spread among Italian communities abroad was tied to the problem of emigration. This was also an important issue the fascists used to attack the liberal State. The fascists blamed the liberal ruling class that it never cared for the Italian emigrants, while they propagated a more active policy of protection and even special representation for them in Italian Parliament.[5] However, the ideological aim, rapidly was introduced to the problem of emigration. Before the march on Rome, Giuseppe Bottai, clearly pointed out the need for "an expansion of fascism abroad".[6] Bottai suggested an approach of "flexibility", depending on the different situations within the foreign countries. He also mentioned the need of close control of the Fasci abroad exercised by the central authority of the Fascist Party. Only by such a control could fascism in power "incorporate them into the State structure and in addition direct efforts towards expansion of the Italian race, defend the national identity of Italians abroad, and stimulate the activities of official Italian institutions in foreign countries".

GUISEPPE BASTIANINI'S AMBITIOUS POLICY

After the fascists seized power, the Fasci abroad increased as a result of the wave of fascist success in Italy. That made it necessary for the PNF to control and coordinate their organization and activities, and to set the rules for the formation of new branches. In order to promote and control the Fasci, the leaders of the PNF decided in December 1922 to appoint *delegates* ("delegati") in the most important foreign capitals.[7] Each Fascio was to have an office for technical matter, an office for practical assistance and one for propaganda. Membership was open to all Italians (men over twenty years old, women over 17) with a high standard of morality and who were not members of any other political party. The Fasci abroad had, through the local delegate, to follow the instructions given by the PNF on whom they were depended. They were not allowed to take initiative on their own on important matters without first having consulted the PNF leaders, and they were expected to respect the law in the foreign country where they were living and not try to interfere in its internal policy. On February 16. and on July 28. 1923 the Grand Council, the new ruling institution of the PNF, reasserted these general guidelines for Fasci abroad. They stressed that Italian fascists abroad ought to avoid getting involved in local politics and instead dedicate themselves to unite the Italians abroad and to cultivate the new "Italianness" of fascism.[8]

In the first stage of its development, Giuseppe Bastianini was the director of the institution of "Fasci Italiani all'Estero". He was born in 1899, a young leader of fascism in Umbria, vice-secretary of the PNF and one of the foremost representative of the intransigenti (intransigent wing) of the fascist party. Bastianini's leadership was under Mussolini's supervision but he enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. His actions as leader of the "Fasci Italiani all'Estero," were based on the idea that fascism was a revolution and the beginning of a new Italian civilization that revived, in modern times, the universal Roman civilization.[9] By opposing the Communist International Bastianini did however not exclude also the setting up of a Fascist International. Such an organisation should not aim at upsetting foreign governments, but instead by exalting the principle of authority and patriotism,[10] contradict the influence of Communist ideology. At the same time, Bastianini pointed out that fascism had nothing in common with the reactionary movements, which tried to imitate fascist style of politics and labelled themselves as fascist. None of the European and extra-European right-wing movements, which called themselves fascist—Bastianini maintained—could "be considered similar to our movement from an ethical and political view point". They were too conservative such as British Union of Fascists, or they were overtly anti-Semitic such as Hungarian Arrow Cross. Fascism—Bastianini added—had nothing in common with the "racist obsession" of the Ku Klux Klan, but it was more similar to the patriotism of the American Legion.[11]

According to Bastianini, fascism was a spiritual and a political revolution aiming at creating a new regime and a new way of life for civilized people.[12] Being a revolution movement, fascism should not limit itself by the Italian boundaries, but spread its ideology all over the world. It should diffuse its principles to Italian immigrants in foreign countries, hold them together in a joint community of believers and as missionaries of the fascist political religion. Camillo Pellizzi, one founder of the Italian Fascio in London, said that the "Fasci Italiani all'Estero" were to become "an important power of influence that was on one hand, a guarantor of continuity and stability of the fascist State. On the other hand they were an organization for the military training of Italians abroad. A voluntary civic army ready, when necessary, to gravitate towards the mother country and to mobilize and take action to defend Fascism".[13]

Bastianini's policy gained at first considerable success. In March 1923, for instance, the Lega Italiana per gli interessi nazionali all'estero (Italian League for the protection of national interests abroad), set up in 1920 by the nationalist Giovanni Giuriati and presided over by the former prime minister and liberal conservative Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, was dissolved by Mussolini to favour his own fascist organizations.[14] Though the League had supported the establishment of the first Fasci abroad, it was sacrificed to further Bastianini's hegemonic ambitions. In this way, the fascist organization by October 1923 became an institution more or less independent of the PNF,[15] even though Bastianini still was a member of the Grand Council.[16] After May 1924 a bulletin *Fasci Italiani all'Estero* (from January 1925 it was renamed *Il Legionario*) was issued giving instruc-

tions to the fascists abroad and reporting about the development of the Fasci in the different countries. The office of the organization also dealt with export and import and thus tried to promote trade and Italian export abroad.

REACTIONS, RESISTANCE AND DIFFICULTIES

The first Fasci abroad had only few members and did not last long. Many of them were first founded, then dissolved to be reorganised again. Most of them were hampered by internal struggle due to conflicting interests and ambitions of the local leaders. From the social point of view, these Fasci were made up of young people, war veterans, professionals, journalists, adventurers and profiteers who tried to exploit the opportunity for private purposes. The new patriotic enthusiasm aroused in Italian communities by the victory in the Great War and coming from the war was the evolving myth of Mussolini as the strong man of a new Italy.[17] In fact, from the beginning the PNF rejected over a hundred requests to set up Fasci abroad, maintaining that the quality of members was far more important than their quantity.[18] In their reports both fascists and representative of the Italian diplomacy agreed on the precarious situation of fasci abroad and their quarrelsome nature. At the Grand Council meeting on February 16. 1923, Bastianini reported that there were 150 Fasces abroad, organized into twenty-six delegations, scattered throughout the Italian colonies, and set up in Austria, Anatolia, Argentina, Albania, Bulgaria, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, France, England, Ireland, Panama, Romania, Spain and USA. In the summer this year, Bastianini reported the existence of approximately 280 Fasci abroad.[19]

These figures are however not reliable since at this first stage the Fasci abroad, even in countries like Argentina and the United States with large contingents of Italian immigrants, had worked hard to spread their ideas and to build up a network of fasces, but with meagre results. According to the report of a police commissioner who was on a secret mission in the USA in the Spring of 1923, the setting up of fasces was not welcomed by most Italians. They ignored Italian events or knew them only through the antifascist press:

When Mussolini seized power, the mood of the Italian and American public in USA changed. It turned into an approval and even enthusiasm for Mussolini. He was praised by conservatives as the person who saved Italy from Bolshevism, even though Americans were firmly convinced that fascism could not be exported to the USA. However the Fasci were strongly opposed by antifascist organizations and they were quite few. One report by a police commissioner of the Italian government from the USA stated that the Fasci "could not provide an useful and practical program, thus they were bound to disappear, or just become the centres of sheer Italian propaganda. [. . .] Here the Italian middle class that should give some support, was made up of small shopkeepers, modest industrialists and professionals with no political ideas, unwilling to risk their small and recent fortune, not even eager to call themselves Italian, afraid of all that might cause them troubles and responsibilities which they are not able to

face. They will never be openly fascist though they may be fascists at heart. The vast majority of the Italians of a higher social and financial standing are American citizens and do not find it convenient to declare themselves fascists as such they would risk to be said to belong to an American fascist movement."[20]

After all, the police commissioner did not approve of an overt policy in favour of Fasci abroad. On the contrary he believed that "to encourage officially the setting up of Fasci in the USA and to finance them" would be "two great mistakes that might lead to unpleasant consequences." However, the diffusion and the organization of the Fasces in the USA went on. In 1923 they did set up the Central Fascist Council, which was the Fascio in New York, and at the end of 1923 it was approved and officially accepted by the PNF.[21]

The situation was not very different in Argentina. A member of the leading group of the Fascio in Buenos Aires reported in September 1923 that the organization was struggling on for its survival. It was opposed by the local Italian press, and among its founders were many ambiguous and suspicious elements.[22] When it was dissolved and reorganized by the "delegate" Ottavio Dinale, the new section found it difficult to take off. The leading personalities in the colony, although of fascist persuasion, did not want to accept leading positions in the organization in order to avoid troubles and the struggles involved.

AN UNEASY DUALISM BETWEEN THE PARTY AND THE STATE

Another reason for the difficult start of the Fasci Abroad was the conflicts between Bastianini and Italian diplomacy. From the very beginning they opposed his claims to carry out the "foreign policy" of the party in the Italian communities abroad. This policy was autonomous or even in conflict with consulate authorities, on which the Fasci abroad claimed to control politically. These conflicts triggered off continuous clashes between the Secretariat of Fasci Abroad and the Department of Foreign Affairs.[23] The dualism between State and the Fascist Party, which troubled Italian policy from the first years of fascist government, was thus reflected in the relationships between the consular authorities and the representatives of the Fasci abroad. Bastianini was responsible for the diffusion of fascism in the world, but was also a representative of the most intransigents among the fascists, which after the march on Rome claimed the absolute seizure of power. They wanted to occupy all the leading State institutions under the Department of Foreign Affairs. In 1925 Bastianini endorsed the totalitarian politics of Roberto Farinacci, the secretary of the PNF, who was seen as the national leader of the fascist intransigents. In the first international meeting of the "Fasci italiani all'Estero," which was held in Milan and Rome on October 30–31, 1925, Bastianini set forth the new goals for his organization: a) They wanted that all Italian diplomats had to be committed fascists; b) all Italian antifascists abroad should be denied Italian citizenship and have all their property in Italy confiscated; c) the State was to grant his organization "the sole representa-

tion of Italy abroad" and have the control over the offices and competence of the Department of Emigration.[24]

Since fascism identified itself with the nation, and Italianism meant fascism, Farinacci and Bastianini claimed that only a true fascist was a true Italian. Italians abroad who were opposed, or were not favourable to fascism, should be treated as traitors and enemies of the Motherland and as such they were to be persecuted. Consequently Bastianini maintained that Italian diplomacy and even the official representatives of the Italian State in foreign countries had to be under fascist control and had to commit themselves to the diffusion of fascist influence among the Italian immigrants.

However Bastianini's ambition was hampered by the hostility of the career diplomats who resisted his aim to carry out the "foreign policy" of the party, independent and often in conflict with consular authorities and the Department of Foreign Affairs. Thus a continuous stream of conflicts of competence and, even worse, that could deteriorate the diplomatic relationships between Italy and the foreign countries was set off. The spreading of the Fasci Abroad, being supported by the political party which was anchored at the head of the Government, obviously raised suspicions in public opinion and in the foreign governments. Mussolini and Bastianini's public declaration that the Fasci Abroad was not intended to have a political nature and that they should respect local laws were not enough to clear up these suspicions. Therefore, the spread of the Fasci overseas met with many difficulties due to the reactions and the mistrust from domestic governments. The conflicts of competence and authority between leaders of Fasci Abroad and representatives of the Italian diplomacy, added to these difficulties. Salvemini wrote there was a dual hierarchy: the officials of the government, and that of the officials of the Fascist Party. The ambassadors, consuls and consular agents, were the official representatives of the Italian government, and they were bound by rules of diplomatic behaviour. The secretaries of the fasces, although they were representatives of the fascist regime, had no diplomatic duties, and were free to carry out activities forbidden to the former. The abnormal situation of the Fasci in America and in all foreign countries, grouse precisely from this situation. According to the law of the countries where the Fasci were established, they were regarded as private associations, but according to Italian law they were organs of the Fascist regime. Their highest officials were all appointed by Rome, their constitutions were dictated by the head of the Italian government, and they had as their basic duty to pay "obedience to the Duce and to the fascist law.[25]

The dualism between traditional State rules and the rules of the Fascist Party was reproduced in the relationship between consulates and leaders of Fasci Abroad. Whenever the latter carried out directives of Bastianini it ignored or went against the directives of the diplomatic authorities. At the meeting of February 16, 1923, the Grand Council had officially declared that Fasci Abroad were not political sections of the Fascist Party. Fascist leaders abroad always relied on this declaration, but in reality it was a mere cover to the PNF's totalitarian ambi-

tions. Fasci Abroad were in fact directly organized by the Fascist Party through its "delegates" and followed its instructions and directives. Officially they appeared however as private associations that did not want to interfere with the internal policy of foreign countries and that they respected their constitution and institutions. In a secret circular of July 17, 1923, Bastianini himself admitted:

> No country in the world would accept that a foreign political party settle and organize sections in public within its own boundaries. You will understand that it was a sound political move to declare that Fasci abroad were not sections of the Fascist party. In reality they are not since the General Secretary is a member of the Executive Board of the PNF and of the Great Council, but this cannot be publicly declared without causing suspicions in some countries.[26]

Between 1923 and 1926, diplomats who were faithful to the tradition of the liberal State either did not approve of fascism or were not favourable to the setting up of Fasci Abroad. Antonio Grossardi, the general consul in Australia, with socialist inclinations tried also to oppose the activity of fascist "delegates."[27] Other consuls often considered the Fasci abroad as an element of splitting the Italian communities and a source of conflict with the domestic governments.

THE DIPLOMAT VERSUS THE PARTY LEADER

Diplomats who sympathized with the Fasci and who were open to favour the spreading of fascist ideas among Italian immigrants also shared this attitude. That was for instance the case of Gelasio Caetani di Sermoneta, a nationalist who had joined the Fascist Party and had been appointed by Mussolini as ambassador in Washington soon after the march on Rome.[28] Caetani had lived and studied in the USA. Therefor he knew American society well. A true supporter of fascist government, and a trustworthy but not a passive executor of Mussolini's directives, Caetani did not tolerate the way Bastianini was carrying out his own "foreign policy." Although he was not opposed in principle to organizing the Fascist abroad, he was deeply convinced that these new institutions would neither be useful to the Italian communities nor to the foreign policy of the fascist government.

According to Caetani, the activities of the Fasci Abroad were to be confined to ideology, sports and philanthropic field. Under no circumstances they were to become active political organizations because that would stir up a strong opposition from the people and the government of the USA.[29] The setting up of the Fasci Abroad was to appear as the result of spontaneous local initiatives and not as a movement organized and led by the Italian government or by the Italian embassy. On the contrary, the Fasci in the USA operated in contrast with Caetani's directives. He pointed out to Mussolini, quoting Bastianini's circular of July 31. 1923, that the Fasci Abroad were "political organizations headed by Bastianini and channelled to him by the Fascist Grand Council that Your Excellence

presides."[30] Owing to this ambiguous situation the American government blamed the Italian government for acting contradictorily to the official statements that the Fasci Abroad were not political organizations. In secret they were organized and directed with distinct political aims, which was a direct interference with the sovereignty and the internal affairs of the USA. The ambassador claimed absolute authority over the official representatives of the Italian government and over representatives of Fasci Abroad: "One of the greatest dangers is the directives, permissions and rush orders that are given by fascist leaders in Italy or by important personalities unaware of how delicate the situation is over here and of the American psychology which is hostile to any foreign interference."[31] Caetani did not want to suppress the fascist movement in the USA, but to restrain it. The vicissitudes of the first Fasci in the US convinced Caetani that neither the Italian community nor the image of the fascist government profited by the presence of Fasci in the USA. In fact, the ambassador reported that the fascists in the US lived "in a terrible situation of inferiority", isolated by public opinion, opposed even by the Italian press and "whenever they try to attract attention, they are humiliated and cause damage to Italy."[32] In spite of the good intentions and the enthusiasm of some generous young activists, the Fasci did not contribute to improve the image of Italy in the USA and they did not favour greater unity within the Italian community:

> "Fascists tend to become an element of further division within our colonies, which are already only feebly united. They have caused a problem within the greatest Italian organization, the *Order of the Sons of Italy*. They have made their relationship with representative of the King more difficult by interpreting the necessary diplomatic reserve as an evidence of a lack of Italian feeling. They have broken that feeling of agreement and cooperation that the eldest and most influential members of our colonies had for Fascism. They have stopped the steadily rising positive feelings that the Americans had for Fascist politics operating inside Italy and thus being a benefit to the world. They have enabled those who dislike the Italian race to undermine the fine prestige that our country has gained with extraordinary bloodless Fascist revolution, and with the patient work of propaganda that for months that every Italian had been carrying on in America."

There was also a rising hostility in the American government and within American public opinion regarding the spreading of Fasces since they were considered members of a disorderly, foreign political party. According to ambassador Caetani, "Fascists in the US can be useful neither to Italy nor to the Italian Fascist Party. It is therefore better to give them up."[33]

One judgement similar to Caetani's, regarding the diffusion of fascism in Latin America, was expressed by Giovanni Giuriati, the former leader of *League for the interests of Italian abroad*. In his report to Mussolini, after a long mission in Latin America in 1924, he maintained that fascism abroad "cannot carry out a proper fascist policy or activity, because it would clash with the laws of the State in which it had been set up." And therefore they were "a new colonial association that very often contributes to divide our communities. In some countries, fascists

use to wear black shirts and shout the fascist battle cry "alalà" but cannot reach practical and important results."[34]

Bastianini answered to these accusations saying that they threatened his institution and he in turn accused the officers of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the official representatives abroad of being enemies of fascism. They were opposed to the setting up of Fasces abroad because they did not believe that a fascist government would last long. On June 28. 1923, he wrote a letter to the head of the Cabinet in the Department of Foreign Affairs that diplomats abroad "by their own will are anti-fascist, and all our representatives abroad do directly boycott Fascism" because most of them "believe that Mussolini's power will soon end". The Department of Foreign Affairs "does not in any way favour the organization of Fascism abroad. On the contrary, they are firmly opposed to it and thus represent an important hindrance to our official representatives."[35] The main target of Bastianini's accusations was the ambassador in the USA. In particular, Bastianini accused Caetani not only of boycotting the diffusion of or the setting up of Fasci abroad, but also of encouraging the formation of groups of veterans and nationalists, declaring that he would not support fascist groups directly dependent on Rome. These accusations were based upon a report of an agent sent to the USA by the Secretary of Fasci Abroad. He claimed that consuls and agents of the consulates were ordered by the Italian Embassy to "strongly oppose the development and the organization of Fascism and prepare on the contrary propaganda against it . . . Fascists are continuously hindered and their work is basically unsuccessful . . . In New York the Fascist organization is quite weak compared to the number of immigrants and far from any external manifestation that is worth mentioning."[36] Bastianini declared to Mussolini that under these conditions "it is no longer possible for us to carry on our important mission since we are met by hostility of our official representatives who constantly intervenes." Two years later, when the fascist regime was already well settled, Bastianini reiterated his accusations against the consuls and the ambassadors who kept going their resistance against the formation of fascist organization or did not recognize their supremacy over the associations of Italians abroad.[37] The continuous clashes between the secretary of Fasci Abroad and the representatives of the diplomacy originated from Bastianini's claims to take the lead over the Italian communities abroad and direct his own "foreign policy." According to fascist totalitarianism, Bastianini identified fascism with Italianness, and he claimed for his organization the monopoly of representating Italians abroad. He also claimed the right to exert political control over the activity of career diplomats as well carry out the "fascistisation" of Italian diplomacy.

THE DUCE AND THE FASCI ABROAD

Apparently Mussolini pretended to listen to the accusations of the official diplomacy against the policy of Fasci Abroad. He replied to Caetani's accusation declaring that the Fascist Party was ready to consider the possibility of dissolving

the fascist organization in the US if it by any means should upset the relationship between the two States, a relationship the Duce wanted to keep friendly.[38] Mussolini however avoided to take a firm position and Caetani who was very clear in his favour of the dignity of Italy, did not hesitate to state that "if not the government and the Fascist Great Council insist in favouring Fascist activities abroad, our national interest would be seriously compromised."[39]

The ambiguity of Mussolini's policy is clearly demonstrated by the circular of the Department of Foreign Affairs issued on May 7, 1923. The representatives of the diplomacy were here given instructions to cautiously favor the setting up of fascist divisions abroad.[40]

> Fascists must be wisely advised and if necessary defended by the King's representatives abroad who are responsible for the Italians in the individual countries and have the task of protecting. On the other hand, Fascists must be totally free to fulfil their main aim, that is to say—to carry out propaganda, organizational assistance, cultural development of the Italians etc.—and under no circumstances must they look as dependant on the King's diplomatic representatives.
>
> All the sound and active elements of the italians in foreign countries should be members of the Fasci, and their guidance must be entrusted to competent, honest persons who are fully aware of their own responsibilities and convinced by patriotic feelings.
>
> Fascists abroad have to restrain from any sort of interference in the policy of the guest country, and it is the duty of the King's representatives to control that they conform to these instructions.
>
> Finally, the King's representatives must report to his department on the work of Fascists in the countries under their jurisdiction and to their superiors.
>
> On the basis of this information, the King's representatives should make the necessary proposal for the better organization of their work and for the working of the Fascist organizations.

Mussolini as leader of the government and Minister of the Department of Foreign Affairs could neither favour Bastianini "foreign policy" nor could he reduce the authority and the prestige of the official representatives of the Italian government. However, as the Duce of the Fascist Party, he had difficulties in openly refusing Bastianini's policy, that was after all approved by the Grand Council. Mussolini also did not want to give up his plan of spreading fascism abroad and asserting its hegemony among the Italian communities overseas. Both Mussolini as well as Bastianini wanted to further totalitarian aims imposed abroad, as the Fascist Party was aiming at in Italy. They supported the idea that "Italianness" and fascism were the same thing, thus defining all Italians who were anti-fascist as enemies of the nation. Mussolini however tried to balance both the fascists abroad and the representatives of the diplomacy, for his own purposes.

The solution Mussolini adopted to overcome this dualism was a solution typical of fascist totalitarianism in its early phase. He subordinated officially the fascists abroad to the diplomatic authority, while he at the same time replaced career diplomats with fascist believers, entrusting the latter with the task of

spreading Fascism among the Italian communities abroad. Dino Grandi, appointed under secretary for Foreign affairs, was entrusted to carry out this policy.[41] He soon took position against the claims of Fasci all'estero who wanted to be autonomous and independent from consular authorities. He started to interfere with their functions and he controlled their policy. By reforming and widening the competence of diplomats as well as strengthening the network of the consulates, Grandi set about turning diplomacy into a fascist body. Through new rules of selection, 120 new consuls were appointed in 1927, most of them being members of the Fascist party. In this way, he furthered the diffusion of Fascism into the Italian communities abroad. He entrusted the steering of this policy to the official diplomacy who then came to preside over the fascist organizations abroad. Grandi's policy on the Fasci all'estero and on their relationships with the diplomatic services was clearly expressed in a speech he gave to the House of Representatives on May 19. 1926.[42] He said that the Fasci were "private organizations having no public function at all." Being Italian citizens, Fascists abroad had to respect both the domestic laws and the Italian diplomatic authorities. Therefore no contrast could possibly exist between the official delegates of Fascist state and of the Fasci all'estero: "The Consul is the very first Fascist abroad. He does not represent the fascist Government. Does he not depend on a Department whose leader is the Duce of Fascism? Consuls are civil servants of the Fascist state. They execute the orders of the fascist minister. When the central Government is Fascist, the organs that carry out its orders must act according to the goals and ideals of Fascism. Should a delegate of the Government fail to execute these directives, the Government itself would take steps to implement its orders".

The guidelines Grandi gave to the policy of Fasci all'estero, within the general frame of the party being subordinate to the State in the new Fascist regime, definitely obliterated the "foreign policy" of Bastianini. At the end of 1926 he resigned as secretary of Fasci all'estero. In his letter to Mussolini he was proud of himself as having paved the way to an organization that "will enable fascism to get hold of life among italians in foreign countries and of all activities concerning them in the same way as Fascism has seized all their activities in Italy."[43]

A NEW COURSE

When Cornelio di Marzio was appointed new secretary, the "Fasci Italiani all'Estero" underwent a gradual change that eventually led to the end of the dualism between the organization and the diplomacy. Di Marzio was a journalist and a former nationalist. Since 1923 he had maintained that Fascist organizations abroad were subordinate to consular authorities. In his first speech as secretary of Fasci all'estero, he declared that the Fascist delegates abroad had to obey and cooperate with the official representatives of the Italian government.[44] But Di Marzio occasionally also complained to Grandi about the tiny support given by diplomats to the development of the Fasci abroad. He worked to overcome, as

he said to Mussolini, "the disappointing results of confusion, indecision, interference in other fields and of conflicts between organizations and individuals."[45] But at the same time he also tried to strengthen and broaden his organization to the entire field of the Italian emigrants. In his report to the Grand Council on November 7. 1927, Di Marzio said that the Fasci abroad comprise over 600 units. The members as well as leaders of the units had been carefully selected, conflicts with consular authorities had been avoided and there had been an increasing activity of propaganda and organization to include all the Italians abroad. However Di Marzio complained about the lack of adequate funds and of leaders capable to promote the diffusion of Fascism abroad.

Despite his zeal and discipline, Di Marzio led the "Fasci all'estero" only for one year. He too had to tackle the continuous conflicts between Fascist delegates and career diplomats which were blamed for not wanting to promote the diffusion of Fascism. Among the rumours of why he had resigned, the fact came up that he had appointed leaders of the "Fasci all'estero" trustees who claimed authority over the consuls. On January 7. 1928 Mussolini appointed Piero Parini as the new leader of Fasci all'estero. He was a fascist from the early phase who had just been appointed consul. He held the office until 1937 and was probably the most competent leader of Fasci all'estero. Under his command the organization was transformed and came under the jurisdiction of the Foreign Office according to a new statute drawn by Mussolini himself in 1928.[46]

The statute defined the "Fasci Italiani all'Estero" as "the organization of the Italians who are residents abroad and who have chosen to obey the Duce and the fascist laws both in their private and public life and who want to gather around the symbol of *Littorio* the Italian communities in foreign countries." Fascists abroad had to respect the rules set by Mussolini and the laws and Constitution of their host country. They had to defend "Italian-ness" and to help their compatriots. Their main function was to help Italian immigrants under the supervision of the Fascist state. The local organizations depended directly on the General secretariat in Rome who appointed the fascist local leaders and decided sanctions against fascists who caused conflicts with consular authorities. Delegates, as leader of the Fasci abroad, were abolished. Since April 1928 a "Foglio d'Ordini" (official directives) of the secretary of Fasci all'estero was issued to give instructions to the local sections. On the other hand, a circular of March 1. 1928 recognized definitely that the Fasci all'estero "ranked first among other associations of the Italian community" and they had the competence to lead all ceremonies and demonstrations. That ended eventually a "troubled period of settlements and led to affirmation of the complete and unquestionable authority of the Consul who is the sole delegate of the State and the Fascist Regime".[47]

The new statute met with the approval of foreign diplomats in Rome, as a "clear proof that Fascism outside the Italian boundaries, would no longer tolerate any sort of demonstrations that the Italian government had been obliged to tolerate in the past".[48] In his inaugural address as leader of the Fasci all'estero, Parini confirmed that the relationship between the Fascists abroad—"Fascists leaders

included"—and diplomatic and consular authorities were to be confined to strict discipline and to total confidence. "Ambassadors and Consuls of His Majesty are the only deputies of the Italian state. The diplomatic corps is quickly turned into a Fascist body. In a short period of time there will be no contrast or misunderstandings".[49]

As a matter of fact, the ambiguity and duplicity that characterized the first stage of the establishment of Fasci all'estero, came to an end as soon as they were subordinated to the consular authority. The General secretary of Fasci all'estero was awarded the rank of consul and he was also given the role as supervisor of the Italian schools abroad. By 1929, he also became leader of the Italian emigration office and in 1932 he should direct the management of Italian business abroad. The Fasci abroad and all the offices of Italian emigration and of cultural propaganda abroad were united and put under the control of the "Direzione Generale degli Italiani all'Estero".

These changes in the organization and function of Fasci all'estero did not modify their essential aim of diffusing fascism within the Italian communities abroad. On the contrary, this policy was stimulated and was fully supported by the diplomatic officials under the new leadership. Consuls indeed became the real promoters of the diffusion of fascist influence in the Italian communities by securing the fasci a leading role among the associations of Italian communities abroad, promoting propaganda in favour of fascism while at the same time controlling anti-fascist Italian immigrants.

NOTES

Reprinted by permission of the editor in a revised translation as reproduced here from Emilio Gentile, "I Fasci Italiani all'Estero: The 'Foreign Policy' of the Fascist Party," trans. Saura Riva Cotena, in *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, ed. Stein U. Larsen, Boulder Social Science Monographs distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 2001, pp. 95–105.

1. An expanded version of this chapter was published in: E. Gentile, "La politica estera del partito fascista. Ideologia e organizzazione dei Fasci Italiani all'Estero (1920–1930), *Storia Contemporanea*, December 1995, 897–956.

2. Cfr. P. Parini, *Gli italiani nel mondo*, Milano, 1935; G. Bastianini, *Gli italiani all'estero*, Milano, 1939; E. Santarelli, *Il fasci italiani all'estero (Note ed appunti)*, in "Studi urbinati de storia, filosofia e letteratura", n. 1–2, 1971, 1307–1328; D. Fabiano, *I fasci italiani all'estero*, in *Gli italiani fuori dall'Italia*, a cura di B. Bezza, Milano, 1983, pp. 221–236.

3. M. Risolo, "Gli Italiani all'estero", in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, Novembre 6, 1921.

4. E. Gentile, *Storia del partito fascista. 1919–1922. Movimento e milizia* (Rome-Bari, 1989), 387-ff.

5. "La relazione dell'On. Grandi", in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 27 Ottobre 1922.

6. G. Bottai, "Il Fascio di Salonicco", in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, August 10, 1922.

7. "Costituzione della sezione fascista di Parigi", in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, December 5, 1922.

8. *Il Gran Consiglio nei primi dieci anni dell'era fascista*, (Rome, 1933), 33–34; 94–96.

9. "Fascismo all'estero", in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, February 17, 1923; G. Bastianini, *La gloria di Roma*, (Rome, 1923).

10. "L'on Bastianini e gli sviluppi dell'azione fascista oltre confine", in *I Fasci italiani all'estero*, May 2, 1925.

11. Speech at the House of Representatives, November 15 1924, in *I Fasci italiani all'estero*, Novembre 20, 1924.

12. *Rivoluzione*, (Rome, 1923).

13. "I fasci all'estero", in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, August 1, 1923.

14. D. Fabiano, "La Lega Italian per la tutela degli interssi nazionale e le origini dei Fasci italiani all'estero (1920–1923)", *Storia contemporanea*, XVI (April 1985), 203–250.

15. Letter to Bastianini, October 18, 1923, see *Bollettivo della Segreteria Generale dei Fasci all'estero e nelle colonie*, 2 (July 1926), 6.

16. *Il Gran Consiglio nei primi dieci anni*, 109.

17. A. Cassels, *Fascism for export Italy and the United States in the Twenties*, in "American Historical Review", aprile 1964, pp. 707–712; P.V. Cannistraro, *Fascism and Italian Americans*, in *Perspectives in Italian immigration and ethnicity*, New York, 1977, pp. 51–66; G. Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, a cura e con introduzione di P.V. Cannistraro, New York, 1977: G. Cresciani, *Fascismo, antifascismo e gli italiani in Australia*, Roma, 1979; J.W. Borejsza, *Il fascismo e l'Europa orientale*, Roma-Bari, 1981, pp. 102–108; P. Milza, *Le fascisme italien a Paris*, in "Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine", luglio-settembre 1983, pp. 241–278; L. Bruti Liberati, *Il Canada, l'Italia e il fascismo 1919–1945*, Roma 1984; R. Schor, *Il facismo italiano nelle Alpes Maritimes 1922–1939*, in "Notiziario dell'Istituto storico della Resistenza in Cuneo e provincia", dicembre 1984, pp. 21–56; R.F. Harney, *Dalla frontiera alle little Italies. Gli Italiani in Canada 1800–1945*, Rom, 1984; M. Cerutti, *Fra Roma e Berna*, Milano, 1986; E. Gentile, *L'emigrazione italiana in Argentina nella politica di espansione del nazionalismo e del fascismo*, in "Storia contemporanea", giugno 1986, pp. 335–396; C. Wiegandt-Sakoun, *Le fascisme italien en France*, in *Les Italiens en France de 1914 á 1940*, a cura di P. Milza, Roma, 1986, pp. 431–469; A. Morelli, *Fascismo e antifascismo nell'emigrazione italiana in Belgio (1922–1940)*, Roma, 1987; D. Francfort, *Etre mussolinien en Lorraine: les fasistes italiens face aux associations (1921–1939)*, in "Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine", aprile-giugno 1991, pp. 313–336; R.C. Newton, *Ducini, prominenti, antifascisti: Italian Fascism and the Italo-Argentine Collectivity, 1922–1945*, in "The Americas", luglio 1994, pp. 41–66, and the special issue: "Gli italiani all'estero e il fascismo: aspetti politici, culturali e sociali", *Storia Contemporanea*, December 1995.

18. Interview in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, February 17, 1923.

19. *Il Gran Consiglio nei primi dieci anni*, 94–97.

20. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero della Cultura Popolare (hereafter ACS, MCP), Gabinetto, report 71, "Fasci e fascismo agli [sic!] Stati Uniti", New York, June 6, 1923.

21. See G. Salvemini, *Italian Fascist activities in the United States*, cit., 11–50; G.G. Migone, *Problemi di storia nei rapporti tra Italia e Stati Uniti* (Torino, 1971), 25–43; P.V. Cannistraro, "Fascism and Italian Americans", in S.M. Tomasi, ed., *Perspectives in Italian immigration and ethnicity*, (New York 1977), pp. 51–66. C. Damiani, *Mussolini e gli Stati Uniti 1922–1935*, (Bologna 1980), P.V. Cannistraro, "Per una storia de' fasci italiani negli stati uniti (1921–1929), *Storia contemporanea*, December 1995, pp. 1061–1144..

22. E. Gentile, "L'emigrazione italiana in Argentina", cit., 389–392.

23. A. Cassels, "Fascism for Export: Italy and the United State in the Twenties", *American Historical Review,* LXIX (April 1964), 707–12; Id., *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy,* (Princeton 1970), 377–389; G. Rumi, *Alle origini della politica estera fascista* (Bari 1968), 241–45.

24. *Fasci italiani all'estero,* Novembre 7, 1925.

25. Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities,* cit., 61.

26. The circular is quoted in a report of the Italian consul in Boston to the Italian Foreign Office, June 28, 1923, in ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, report 71.

27. Cresciani, *Antifascismo,* cit., 23–25.

28. G. Migone, *Problemi di storia,* cit., pp. 25–41.

29. ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, report 71, Caetani to Mussolini, January 28, 1923.

30. ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, report 71, Caetani to Mussolini, November 23, 1926.

31. ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, report 71, Caetani to Mussolini, January 28, 1923, appendix "B".

32. Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (hereafter ASMAE), Ministero della Cultura popolare, b. 312, Caetani to Mussolini, July 7, 1923.

33. ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, report 71, Caetani to Mussolini, March 22, 1923.

34. Archivio Giuriati, Giuriati to Mussolini, October 12, 1924.

35. ACS, Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio Riservato, b.37, f. "G. Bastianini".

36. ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, report 71, Bastianini to Mussolini, March 24, 1924.

37. ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, report 71, Bastianini to Grandi, March 17, 1926.

38. Cassels, "Fascism for Export", cit.; C. Damiani, *Mussolini e gli Stati Uniti* (Bologna 1980), 12–29. D.F. Schmitz, *The United States and Fascist Italy 1922–1940,* (Chapel Hill and London 1988), 60–84.

39. ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, Caetani to Mussolini, July 6, 1923, cit.

40. ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, report 71, Italian Consul in Boston to the Minitery of Foreign Office, June 28, 1923.

41. G. Carocci, *La politica estera dell'Italia fascista,* (Bari 1969), 25–31; P. Nello, *Dino Grandi. La Formazione di un leader fascista,* (Bologna 1987), 246–265.

42. ASMAE, Ministero Della Cultura Popolare, b.79, fasc. "S E. Grandi, Servizi Notiziari.

43. ACS, Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio Riservato, b.37, fasc. "G. Bastianini", Bastianini to Mussolini, December 2, 1926.

44. *Il Legionario,* January 27, 1927.

45. *Bidem* Carte Di Marzio, b.47, fasc.2.

46. *Il Legionario,* February 4, 1928.

47. ACS, Ministero degli interni, Divisione Polizia Politica, 1927–1944, b. 100, fasc. "Segreteria Fasci Italiani all'estero". Rapporto informatore anonimo 5 febbraio 1928.

48. ACS, Ministero degli interni, Divisione Polizia Politica, b.103, Roma 8 novembre 1929.

49. *Il Legionario,* 14 gennaio 1928.

Chapter 9

Impending Modernity: Fascism and the Ambivalent Image of the United States

The fascist portrayal of the United States in the interwar period followed a parabolic trajectory. From a casual interest in the regime's early years there followed, in the second half of the 1920s, a growing curiosity. But it was above all in the following decade, and especially as a result of the 1929 crash and the coming of the New Deal, that interest in American politics, culture and society on the part of various intellectuals, writers, men of letters, journalists and occasional travellers, both fascist and non-fascist, increased rapidly, only to decline again during the war. A brief enquiry shows that ten books on the United States were published in Italy between 1922 and 1929, fifty-one between 1930 and 1940, and seven between 1941 and 1943. The majority of these books, like most of the articles published by fascist political and cultural magazines, projected directly or indirectly a certain image of 'American civilization'. It is not my aim to give a complete survey of these images, nor to evaluate the extent to which they were rational, realistic or revealed a real knowledge of the country which lay behind the images and which, in many cases, was rather limited. I will restrict myself to outlining some of the principal aspects of the image of the United States, in order to suggest how it was significant to fascist culture, especially in relation to the fascists' attitude towards modernity. If American civilization was 'the most stupendous and powerful phenomenon of modernity in the world', as Luigi Barzini, Sr. wrote in 1931,[1] Americanism was, for fascist culture, one of the main mythical metaphors of modernity, which was perceived ambivalently, as a phenomenon both terrifying and fascinating. The controversy about different images of America can be regarded as a variation of the controversy among fascists over the question of modernity, because in their portrayal of Americanism they actually define their attitude towards the modern world.

A further note of clarification should be added. The fascist portrayal of the United States was neither uniform nor static. It developed from a nucleus of common stereotypes, through different and even contrasting images, in which positive and negative judgements on American politics, culture, society and customs were to be found side by side or mixed together. This variety of images had different causes, both political and cultural. There is no doubt that the state of political and economic relations between the two countries influenced these images, as did fascist propaganda plans aimed at Americans and Italian-Americans, the attitude of the American government and of American public opinion towards Mussolini and his regime. However, it would be wrong to argue that the fascist portrayal of the American world was determined only by political relations or by propaganda needs. In fact, the images of American civilization do not always seem to reflect the state of political relations between the two countries, or the official attitude of the fascist government. Even during periods of friendly understanding between Italy and the United States, the anti-Americanists publicly hurled curses against Americanism. In the same way, the fascination which some aspects of American civilization held for other fascist intellectuals did not disappear, even when the regime launched a crusade against American plutocratic democracy, witness Margherita Sarfatti's book, *Alla ricerca della felicità*, published in 1937. It is also significant that under the entry 'United States' in the *Dizionario di politica*, a sort of 'ideological summa' of fascism published in 1940 by the Fascist Party, there are no vulgar anti-American stereotypes, and even the critical observations generally lack polemic acrimony. In actual fact, independently of the political situation and the relations between the two countries, the portrayal of the United States, which Mussolini defined as 'absurd, strange, unique in the world',[2] oscillated continually between contrasting perceptions and feelings. Until now, however, only anti-Americanism has attracted the attention of scholars.[3] The other attitude ignored until now—which could be generally defined as 'fascist Americanism', was present in fascism in a far from marginal way.[4] Its significance and importance, in what it reveals of the fascist attitude towards modernity, may become more evident precisely when compared to anti-Americanism.

The *Enciclopedia Italiana* defined Americanism as 'the admiration, whether naive or reasoned, but mostly excessive, for American (United States') ideas or things; an admiration which at times even becomes a fashion, in contrast to European cultural traditions'.[5] The fascist polemic against Americanism and what was considered typical of 'American civilization' had no particularly original traits. Fascism inherited stereotypes which were already widespread and established in both Italian and European culture, but it presented them in new ways, which fitted in with the fascist vision of mankind and history.[6] All the anti-American images were based on the antithesis between 'quality' and 'quantity', 'spirit' and 'matter', 'man' and 'machine'. The myth of the primacy of European classical civilization (which for the fascists coincided with the primacy of Italian civilization), and the contrast between the 'civilization of the spirit' and

the 'civilization of the machine' provided the various versions of anti-Americanism with the basic judgement categories for defining American civilization as a degenerate derivation of European civilization. According to this concept, America, born out of the rebellion against the European mother-culture, had developed and radicalized in the new world the ideologies of Protestant sectarianism, of democratic liberalism and of materialistic hedonism, ideologies which had already undermined the classical order of Roman and Catholic tradition in the Old Continent. The synthesis of America's fundamental characteristics as seen by the anti-American fascists was expressed as follows by Francesco Coppola, an authoritative expert on foreign policy:

> Moralistic and pedagogical Puritanism, individualist materialism, an elementary and closed simplistic ideological outlook, proud certainty of the infallibility of their own judgement, deep conviction of their own superiority and their own rights as the chosen people, ignorance of and contempt for Europe.[7]

The various versions of fascist anti-Americanism agreed that American civilization was inferior and hostile to European civilization. Political anti-Americanism, for example, attributed to the United States an anti-European imperialistic intent which supposedly started with Wilsonianism and was animated by an arrogant crusading spirit and the proud assumption that it had a mission of regeneration to carry out in the Old Continent, while aiming to conquer it and subjugate it economically. During the 1932 international convention organized by the Accademia Italiana on the theme of Europe, Francesco Coppola launched a ferocious attack against American politics and a civilization which, having originated in Europe, had later become a distortion and therefore 'a negation of European civilization'.[8] Some fascist intellectuals advocated a united front of European nations, or even of the Latin countries of Europe and America, against American imperialism.[9] With the Monroe Doctrine and pan-Americanism, the United States had already stated its hegemonic intentions towards the American continent, but it aspired to world domination and mobilized its immense resources and wealth to deprive Europe, weakened by the first world war, of power, and to subject her to the domination of American finance capital.[10] America represented, in the words of Bruno Spampanato, a typical exponent of anti-bourgeois fascism, 'the most ruthless dictatorship of the final phase of the bourgeois process', the dictatorship of capital.[11]

For many fascists, however, American economic and political imperialism was less dangerous than the moral contagion engendered by the fascination which the 'American way of life' exerted on Europe. This was the main target of moralistic anti-Americanism, which was perhaps the most widespread. It denounced the imitation of the American lifestyle or the preference for American products, considering these alarming symptoms of an incipient infection, which corrupted Italian customs and had negative economic consequences:

'Unfortunately I must agree'—wrote Luigi Barzini, Sr. to Arnaldo Mussolini from New York on 7 May 1929:

that a kind of American snobbery has developed in Italy, as a result of which many people believe that it is supremely desirable to ape Americans. How America has even managed to introduce the custom of chewing gum into Italy is a mystery. Here only very low-class people chew gum, and it is considered bad manners to do so. In Italy it seems *chic*. There are many Italians who buy those horrible American cigarettes because they are American. Why there are people in Italy who buy American cars, which are inferior to ours in every way, is a phenomenon of elegant perversity.[12]

'Americanizing snobbery' was a serious threat to the preservation of the Italians' traditional morality. 'Moralism', a fundamental component of fascist education for the making of the 'new Italian', condemned American society as a modern Sodom where sexual freedom, the disintegration of the family, the practice of contraception, the search for material well-being, the cult of wealth, ruthless capitalism, dehumanizing technology, urban neurosis, corrupt politics, racial discrimination and organized crime were rampant. By identifying modernity as degeneration, fascism's moralists saw Americanism as the most serious manifestation of the morbid nervousness of modern life, which threatened the health of the nation and destroyed traditional order by infecting men and women with a craving for novelty, independence and wealth. The crisis of the family, attributed mainly to the emancipation of women, was considered one of the most regrettable consequences of this modern neurosis. The 'half ridiculous and half criminal' activities of the feminist movement were, according to *Critica Fascista*, the clearest confirmation of the moral degeneration of American society.[13] The intellectuals of the traditionalist *Strapaese* movement believed that Americanism would pollute, corrupt and destroy the 'thousand-year-old treasure' of the Italian race because American civilization was the product of a 'bastard, international, external, mechanical' modernity; it was 'a concoction brewed by Jewish bankers, pederasts, war profiteers and brothel-keepers'.[14]

The greed for wealth, the craze for speculation, individualistic hedonism, the neurotic 'search for happiness' were typical traits of Americanism and the main causes of degenerate American modernity. Individualism and capitalism, behind the hypocritical façade of liberalism and egalitarianism, celebrated the greatest triumph of 'an excessive and insatiable greed for material goods, a devouring and destructive lust', to the extent that even the Bolshevik danger paled before the threat of Americanism, 'the incarnation of the anti-Christian revolution of our time'.[15] America was a 'star-spangled Babylon'[16] where different races and peoples from all over the world, attracted by the mirage of El Dorado, were enslaved to the interests of a privileged few and the domination of the Anglo-Saxon race, a Babylon which even resorted to eugenics laws for the 'defence of the race and of the blood'.[17] The problem of coloured people and discrimination towards immigrants were proof of the hypocrisy of American egalitarianism. The working masses were regimented and their minds standardized by the mechanisms of a dehumanizing system of production, which sacrificed man to the machine. The reality of a new slavery was masked by the ideology of freedom and Puritan solidarity. A film magazine recommended Chaplin's *Modern Times* to the Italian

public, describing it as the lyrical expression of the 'inability of mechanical progress to give happiness to men'. Chaplin, as the little factory-worker, symbolized the victim of the 'tragic contradictions between the proud conquests of machines and the dying areas of human society', which were typical of 'capitalist civilization in decline'.[18]

The definition of Americanism as the civilization of machines was which modernity was identified with machines and anti-Americanism was identified with anti-modernism. The ideological premises of fascist spiritualism, which formed the basis of its vision of man and history, became radical in condemning the American system of production as a way of organizing the economy which transformed man into a cog in the machine. Americanism was the advent of a new barbarism which dissociated civilization and culture (understood as the supremacy of the spirit) and led humanity towards the abyss, driven by a relentless activism which entrusted the realization of its Faustian desire for power to the primacy of science, industrial development and the dominion of machines over men.[19] The American myth of a mechanical civilization was an 'invisible monster truly to be feared', because it gave man the illusion of power while rendering the individual impotent, and destroyed his creative faculties and aesthetic sense of beauty.[20] The civilization of machines meant the death of the spirit, that is, the negation of civilization itself; and the United States was 'the experimental ground in which all the deviations of the spirit bore abundant fruit', where 'the mechanical and technical civilization of our times celebrated its greatest triumph' by deforming every aspect of human life, 'by removing it from the spontaneous rhythm of nature and from the soothing dominion of the spirit'.[21] According to Ardengo Soffici, one of the major fascist artists and leader of aesthetic anti-Americanism, the 'so-called American civilization' was a 'false civilization', 'transitory and ephemeral', its rational architecture was the typical expression of a 'reinforced concrete civilization', that is, of 'a non-civilization',[22] where the spirituality of art was suffocated by the barbaric vulgarity of a people without history and without tradition, and incapable, therefore, of creating a true civilization.

For the moralists of the regime and for the followers of integral traditionalism, American civilization represented the incarnation of an 'impending modernity', as Soffici defined it, which was the 'most resolute and violent negation' of the Italian genius.[23] It was necessary to wage a holy war against the American monster to save Italian civilization. For some fascist intellectuals, the identification of Americanism with 'impending modernity' took on a semi-historical and semi-political significance. The extreme consequences of what Curzio Suckert (Malaparte) called the 'tragedy of modernity', which began with the revolt of the Nordic critical, individualistic, heretical spirit against the dogmatic, Latin, Catholic spirit, were realized in American civilization.[24] Protestantism, individualism, liberalism, bureaucratic collectivism were the stages which marked the development of Nordic modernity against Mediterranean, Latin and Catholic civilization. For Catholic reactionaries like Giovanni Papini and Domenico

Giuliotti, the discovery of America had been willed by God 'as a repressive and preventative punishment for all the other great discoveries of the Renaissance: i.e. gunpowder, humanism and Protestantism'.[25] Julius Evola's meta-political anti-modernism was even more radical. He was a neo-Pagan philosopher who preached revolt against the modern world and the restoration of a mythical civilization of superior castes of 'Ascetics' and 'Warriors'. For Evola, Americanism was an even more dangerous kind of barbarism than Bolshevism, because in the United States the last stage of the 'sanctification of the temporal and the secularization of the sacred' was being completed, the catastrophic conclusion of the cycle of degeneration of the human organism, begun by the Protestant revolt, with the advent of mass man, the 'beast without a face'.[26]

Given these premises, it was quite natural for fascist anti-Americanism to interpret the 1929 crisis as confirmation of the prophecies of the catastrophic destiny awaiting American civilization, overwhelmed by the fatal rhythm of its perverse modernity. 'Taylorism', mechanical industrialism, the identification of civilization with the economy—the pillars of Americanism—had led to the collapse of the American economy and the tragic end of its materialistic hedonism. The capitalist and bourgeois myth of American civilization was disintegrating, while from the 'tunnel of mechanical civilization' emerged the hungry crowds of the unemployed, the 'modern army . . . led by the Fifth Horseman of the Apocalypse, whose giant figure has no visible contours, whose dark shadow is the only thing we perceive of him in the troubled eyes of the unemployed'.[27]

In the following decade, anti-Americanism continued to reiterate its stereotypes and its condemnation of American civilization, judging it to be a 'race in agony', morally and socially rotten, hurtling towards a 'dishonest collapse' under the guidance of 'possessed madmen', as Asvero Gravelli, a loud and popular propagandist of the regime, claimed in 1939.[28] When Italy entered the war against the United States in December 1941, a great deal of material had already been prepared to build an image of the enemy which could be held up for the Italians to despise and hate.

Anti-Americanism was certainly very widespread in fascist culture. I should point out that the prejudices against Americanism as a mechanical and dehumanizing civilization, inferior to European civilization because it was devoid of culture, tradition and history, were also shared by non-fascist or anti-fascist intellectuals, although for different reasons. For example, Mario Soldati, a writer who was not a fascist militant, set out to demolish the 'American myth' which had deluded and continued to delude millions of European migrants, in a written account of his impressions after a stay in the United States in 1935. According to Soldati, American society was a 'spiritual barbarity', where Italian emigrants lost the sense of dignity they had inherited from 'a most ancient civilization'. In the 'organized American barbarity', which was condemned to an 'invincible aridity', 'there is only one step between the average man and the bandit. The mechanical commercial ability and the frightening aridity of businessmen clearly cross over into the mathematical bleakness and bloodthirsty madness of the gangsters'.[29]

Alberto Moravia returned from the United States with similar impressions in 1936. He considered the United States 'a very great fact', but 'there are many things in America which disgust me and seem to me to be infinitely worse than in Italy'.[30] Americans were unhappy because they were afflicted with 'fundamental insensitivity and sterility'. Their civilization appeared seductive and was imitated by other peoples, but it was an 'Alexandrian civilization, very poor in creative elements', in which there prevailed an 'excessively hedonistic, materialistic and decadent tone of life', a 'slavish and exploitative mentality', 'rationalized inhumanity and lack of love for the earth and generally for all values which cannot be translated into money'.[31] To Moravia, as well as to anti-American fascists, America seemed a civilization without culture.

These examples show that it is not correct to consider anti-Americanism as typically and exclusively fascist. Michel Beynet has also shown that the interest and liking of young intellectuals for American literature and cinema, which had been introduced into Italy without too many objections from the censors, were not a simulated form of protest against the regime or of anti-fascism, as some people have maintained.[32] For example, Elio Vittorini, one of the creators of the 'American myth' in the 1940s, before discovering his 'ideal of America' when confronted with the reality of fascism in its death-throes, had made his own contribution to anti-Americanism.[33] It is well known that one of the admirers of American cinema was Mussolini's son, Vittorio Mussolini.[34] Besides, traditionalist and anti-modernist anti-Americans found it easy to use the realistic and ruthless self-portrayal of America as drawn by American writers and directors, to reinforce their attacks. One such, for example, was Emilio Cecchi, an influential literary critic.[35] The 'American myth' of Vittorini and Cesare Pavese did not include acceptance of modernity either. In fact, in their 'ideal America', as has been observed, one finds some cultural values which were typical of the anti-modernism of *Strapaese*, even if they were experienced with a different moral feeling: 'the superiority of the countryside over the city; the healthy vitality of the common man who has not been led astray by bad culture; classicism as the prerogative of true civilization'.[36] These observations are not meant to minimize the presence of anti-Americanism in fascism, or to diminish the value of Americanism in the new anti-fascist culture. However, it is necessary to point out that anti-Americanism was not exclusive to fascism because, by keeping this in mind, the presence within fascism of attitudes not wholly hostile towards Americanism or modernity becomes even more significant.

Anti-Americanism based on a total aversion to modernity was only one aspect of the fascist perception of the United States. Many other fascists neither considered modernity an evil in itself nor saw Americanism as a nightmare which threatened the future of Italian civilization. Massimo Bontempelli, the main theoretician of the *Novecento* modernist movement, reacted against the 'fear of Americanism', which he considered 'one of the many commonplaces of an obsessive nature'. The superiority of Italian civilization, with its fertile power to assimilate, had nothing to fear from the influence of the lifestyle of a civilization

which was barely in its embryonic stage. Fearing Americanism meant not having faith in the eternal supremacy of Italian civilization and in fascism's ability to imprint its lifestyle on modern civilization.[37]

Together with a different 'sense of modernity', a positive image of the United States as a dawning civilization developed in fascism, at least up to 1938, even if it retained the myth of Europe as the mother of civilization and the centre of the world, the supremacy of classicism, the contrast between 'spirit' and 'matter', together with the usual criticisms of mechanical industrialism, urbanism, etc. However, American civilization also contained characteristics similar to the fascist spirit, as an expression of what we could call a 'good modernity', understood as dynamism, a desire for renewal and realization, a pragmatic spirit, the will to conquer and to ascend. The renewal and rejuvenation of a lifestyle with a modern rhythm dates back to the early days of the fascist regime. For example, the newspaper of the Neapolitan fascists wrote in 1923, in order to extol the coming to power of fascism: 'It was necessary that a little "Americanism" should come to breathe life into the closed circles of Italian public life and to rejuvenate them'.[38] What was attractive in Americans, Bontempelli explained in 1927, was 'their state of spiritual virginity', which could be 'very useful to free us from what endures in us that is half-dead'.[39]

One attributed to Americans attitudes which were shared and appreciated by fascism, such as enthusiasm for the future, activism, the cult of youth and sport, the heroic ideal of adventure, the willingness to experiment, the drive to be first, the mystical sense of nationhood.

An interesting instance of this different perception of Americanism is the book *Incontro col Nord America*, which was published in 1929 by Franco Ciarlantini after a journey to the United States. Ciarlantini was an important propagandist and organizer of fascist culture, who at the time declared himself a sincere admirer of the United States, although later he converted to anti-Americanism.[40] He painted an almost idealized portrait of the American character, in fascist terms. For example, in American dynamism Ciarlantini saw Mussolini's maxim 'live dangerously'[41] being put into practice, and he praised the American religious spirit which exalted 'the individual's vitality in order to place it at the service of society'.[42] Ciarlantini did not see the disrupting effects of liberal-democratic ideology or the flat spirit of conformity of the standardization of souls in American collective life, but rather the demonstration of a strong sense of community that manifested itself in the 'noble spectacle of an immense crowd of people united by the almost mystical idea of national political and economic greatness'.[43] The fusion of the qualities of different European peoples in the American melting-pot was producing a 'new awareness of collective duty' which was neither 'the collectivism of the herd nor brute hedonism', but a positive awareness of group life, which was similar in some ways to the fascist sense of collectivity.[44] American individualism was 'social individualism',[45] because 'reasons of State are placed above individual criteria':[46] 'in the United States a kind of mysticism exalts the supreme rights of preservation and progress of the commu-

nity above individuals', in order to guarantee the integrity and 'the physical future of the race',[47] even by resorting to eugenics.

It seems that even Mussolini shared this positive view of the American public spirit, at least until 1937. In 1926, in a first message to the American people, he had called himself 'a sincere admirer of America's civilization', stating that it was not ruled only 'by mechanical and material factors' but that it had 'made a sizeable contribution to the spiritual activity of the world', because there was in it, 'despite its European origins, a new form which was rich in powerful and entirely original elements'.[48] We have reason to believe this declaration to be sincere, even if it was made for reasons of political convenience. Fulvio Suvich, who was Under-Secretary in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and ambassador to Washington, states that Mussolini had a 'decided liking' for North Americans, and that he was happy to receive many of them.[49] Another of Mussolini's collaborators states that he used to praise 'American sociableness', their 'splendid collective sense that always wins over individual selfishness': 'American individuals have given themselves a school, a language, a magnificent collective morality, so that their mass feeling is awareness and power compared to the individualist and decadent particularism of Europe'.[50] By projecting onto the image of the American public spirit the ideal of a citizen entirely dedicated to the collective life of the State, which fascism wanted to create in Italy, Mussolini was privately expressing his admiration for 'this singular America in which every American always owes something to his countrymen, to his city, to the State, to the nation, in both a civic and a social sense', not because it is imposed by law 'but as solidarity, as an obvious fact, as a moral duty. I love that wholly American sense of the majority which decides and which everyone, with no exception, must follow.'[51]

Seen from this different point of view, the 1929 crisis was no longer perceived as the fatal damnation of American civilization which was paying for all its sins, but was welcomed as a hard and salutary lesson which should have driven the American people back onto the straight and narrow path, as they abandoned the perverse idols of soulless modernity. Guilty of having 'impoverished their individual resources by becoming machines of flesh and soulless automata', the Americans now had the chance to redeem themselves by returning to the 'sources of humanity', relying on 'the old wisdom of the Latin world' to draw 'the hope of salvation from the Old World's example'.[52] Relations between Europeanism and Americanism should not necessarily be antagonistic and hostile. In this connection, it is significant that it was not the dominant theme. America, according to Roberto Michels, was an 'overseas Europe' which shared with the old continent 'most of the evils which plagued it', but which also enjoyed 'the blessings of a shared civilization'.[53] Between the two continents there should be collaboration which would strengthen the spiritual ties of a shared civilization. Vitetti, the diplomat who had been First Secretary to the Italian embassy in Washington, indirectly rejected Coppola's theory, praised the spiritual and cultural links between the American and European civilizations, and maintained that it was

Europe's task to persuade the Americans to overcome their 'secessionist ideology'.[54] There were some fascist intellectuals, like the philosopher Emilio Bodrero, vice-president of the Chamber of Deputies in the Italian parliament, who could not resign themselves to the inevitability of antagonism between Americanism and Europeanism, and who instead called for a new solidarity between the two civilizations, a common crusade to defend the dominance and the destiny of Western civilization and the white race against the 'yellow peril'.[55]

Praise for the American public spirit and appeals for a new solidarity between America and Europe, which were in such clear contrast to the anti-Americanists' attitude, were, however, consistent with the cornerstones of fascist ideology and with a certain view which fascism had of history and of the political system in the United States, which was considered a kind of 'organized democracy' in which one could perceive similarities to the fascist regime.[56] This view was supported with authority by the *Dizionario di Politica* of the Fascist Party. The political constitution of the American republic—according to the entry under 'United States'—had been developed with 'considerable expert wisdom', drawing inspiration not from abstract ideologies but from 'the fundamental value of experience'. It had 'quite clearly aristocratic characteristics, since it distrusted government by the masses' and, like fascism, it placed executive power on a solid base. This power had strengthened with the passing of time until it reached 'the semi-dictatorial forms of Theodore Roosevelt, of Wilson, of the second Roosevelt. There is no other modern constitution which grants so much power to the executive.'[57] The historian Delio Cantimori, pointing out that 'democracy is not liberal',[58] claimed that 'that particular kind of American democracy, where the strength of the average opinion, dominated by religious communities, has shown itself to be more despotic than an absolute constitution',[59] derived from Calvinist and Puritan traditions. Mussolini also praised the 'intensive culture of dictatorship, to which President Roosevelt devotes himself with technique and single-mindedness', because he saw in Roosevelt's policies the confirmation that 'the trend towards fascism overflows from the old continent'.[60] Positive comparisons between the two countries were frequent during the first years of Roosevelt's presidency. *Gerarchia* described Roosevelt as 'a new man', with 'manly virtues' and the 'noblest disposition',[61] who was trying to tackle the economic crisis and to regenerate America by using State intervention and collective mobilization measures similar to those practised by fascism. Fascist culture presented the New Deal as an experiment in revising the hedonistic and individualistic values of American civilization, taking fascism and corporatism as models.[62] Beniamino de Ritis, a journalist who had lived for some time in the United States, wrote that after the 1929 crisis, America, which had become 'more unitary and more organic', welcomed 'the message of the century from Mussolini'.[63] The fascists maintained that with the New Deal the Americans were acknowledging in practice the superiority of the fascist solution for saving modern civilization from the perverse effects of modernity.

In this different perception of Americanism, not even the advent of the machine civilization seemed to be a fatal threat to European civilization. There were fascists who rejected the apocalyptic fatalism of Oswald Spengler and his gloomy forecasts for the West,[64] judging his theories to be worth nothing.[65] Other fascists reacted against the attraction of the 'great catastrophic comet', to which many European intellectuals were being drawn, and did not believe the prophecies of civilization's fatal decline in a world doomed to chaos. The 'new Italian' of fascism could dominate the modern rhythm of history with the strength of his will and of his faith, looking to the future with enthusiasm because it rested on the solid spiritual tradition of Roman classicism and Catholicism.[66] From this point of view, there was also a different attitude towards technological modernity. The progress of the machine, Ciarlantini stated, was a reality of the modern world which had to be accepted and conquered in order to win the challenges of the future: 'To arrest such movement would be to arrest the march of civilization itself'.[67] The machine and technology were fundamental components of modern civilization which fascism could not consider rejecting without giving up its ambitions for power. We must live in our time, wrote the industrialist Alberto Pirelli in *Gerarchia* in 1932, on his return from the United States, and accept all the benefits of modernity because 'nothing can stop the advance of machine civilization. It is the sign of the power of modern nations'.[68] This position was confirmed by the Fascist Party's *Dizionario di Politica*. Fascism could not 'contravene a natural law of civilization', should recognize that 'civilization in the twentieth century also means railways, cars, motor-ships, telephones, radio telephones, reinforced concrete'; therefore 'to wish away the machine is insane as well as naive'.[69] Mussolini himself denied that he was an admirer of the past or that he despised the technology and the civilization of machines. The 'age of machines' was a fundamental and irrevocable stage in the course of humanity. 'I believe that the machine contributes to the progress of our age, as much as everything else in the modern world', stated Mussolini in 'Technocracy', an article published on 4 February 1933 in the *New York American*.[70] This statement reflected Mussolini's cultural outlook. It should be pointed out that in his youth Mussolini had been enthusiastic about industrial and technological progress, had praised the advent of a 'multiple, harmonious, dizzy, universal life',[71] and had sung the praises of the exploits of the first aviators, hailing them as heroes of a new age of human conquests marked by the 'acceleration of the rhythm of our life'.[72] Even if he had tempered his youthful modernism when he came to power, particularly as he came under the influence of Spengler, Mussolini remained aware of the attraction of modernity. For example, when the 'Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution' was planned to celebrate the first ten years of the 'fascist era', he ordered it to be 'a thing of today, therefore very modern, and daring, with no melancholy memories of the decorative styles of the past',[73] because the exhibition had to be 'the expression of the kind of art and aesthetics which reflect our yearning, dynamic, escapist and fevered times'.[74] Mussolini,

moreover, was pleased to display publicly his passion for machines, speed and flight. In 1940 he decided to hold a 'day of technology'.

Although defenders of the *rural world,* Mussolini and fascism were not anti-industrialists and did not reject technological progress. The regime's propaganda boasted loudly about the technical records Italy held. There were also those who contested a 'supposed North American superiority', 'as regards the most modern kinds of scientific and industrial progress, and of individual acts of triumphant daring':

> We are still awaiting proof that Marconi is Edison's fellow-countryman, although he is, like Edison, a citizen of humanity; or that the fastest ships in the world are built on the shores of the Hudson rather than in the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic shipyards; or that all the pilots who fly across the oceans are born beyond our shores. Action and work, those great strengths of North America which form . . . its religion and philosophy, are the solid base of all Italian life, poor in raw materials, but rich in tenacious willpower.[75]

The Italians lost nothing in comparison with the Americans in the world of machines, but could, in fact, show the way to arrest excessive mechanical growth. As Arnaldo Mussolini stated,[76] fascism reacted against 'those who would like to turn the universe into a workshop' and "those who are mad about machines", but this did not mean that it sided 'with the sick decadents who love the streams that carry away the images, dreams and life of restless time'. Fascism believed it had discovered and was successfully putting into practice the formula for fighting the dehumanizing effects of technology and for re-establishing a balance between man and machine. The great power which would tame the forces of technological modernity was the 'corporate State', which would subdue machines and return them to their role of 'serving man and the community as instruments of liberation, not as a means of increasing misery', as Mussolini stated at the second quinquennial assembly of the regime on 18 March 1934.[77] Some fascist intellectuals went even further in the searching for a new balance between men and machines. Margherita Sarfatti, perhaps the most modernist of the fascist intellectuals who were fascinated by America, talking of the American cult of the machine, wrote that 'only the blind can refuse to acknowledge that machines free men, and women even more, from the curse of hard labour'. The Americans, who were 'religious and child-like spirits, close to the age of mythical creations', loved machines for 'the mystical sense of their possibilities, for the ecstasy of power', but it was right to ask oneself if this was 'the idolatry of a primitive people, or wisdom'. Machines were 'our creations without a soul', 'docile, wonderful and very human servants', which provided white civilization with the means to hold on to its supremacy and to throw itself into conquering the future.[78] A new alliance between man and machine could become the meeting-point of an American civilization returning to the source of western humanism, and a European civilization renewed by fascism. Sarfatti rejected the anti-modernists' anti-Americanism, and dreamed instead of an alliance between Americanism and Europeanism in a 'new spiritual unity of many souls' of white

civilization, to face the challenges of 'this hard and glorious modern world, where one had to live with Dionysian enthusiasm, rushing towards new conquests'.[79] Italo Balbo and Charles Lindbergh could be pointed to as heroes who symbolized the new humanity of a modern civilization which had thrown off the evil effects of modernity and reformed in a fusion of man's daring and the power of machines.[80]

Collapsed at the end of the 1930s, when political relations between the two countries deteriorated. Liking for the United States quickly lessened, as the contrast between Americanism and fascism became more radical and was portrayed as a struggle not so much between modernity and anti-modernity, but between two different concepts of modernity struggling to decide what form the 'new modern civilization' would take in mass society. The Americans could not consider themselves to be 'the inventors and exclusive guardians of the formula of modern civilization', wrote *Critica fascista* on 15 January 1939. For its part, fascism claimed to have invented a 'formula for modern civilization' which could save Western civilization from the threat of industrialism's decline, of the rule by machines, of urbanism, of hedonistic individualism. However, the indispensable condition for salvation was the relinquishment of freedom and of the search for individual happiness, in the name of the supremacy of the nation and the State. Fascism pointed to totalitarianism as the only modern formula for building a new mass civilization, founded on a sense of tradition but also able to face and overcome the challenges of modernity. The 'civilization of the spirit' would regain control over the 'civilization of machines' by establishing the supremacy of 'integral politics', seen as the highest expression of man's spirituality. The fascist 'new humanism' was founded not on the emancipation of the individual as a free subject, but on his integration into the service of the national community, by identification with the totalitarian State. In the 'harmonious collective'[81] of the totalitarian community, the individual and the masses, who had been brought up in the ethics of sacrifice and dedication to the State, were sheltered from the corrupting temptations of hedonistic individualism, and from the restlessness and alienation of modern life, and were therefore better equipped to face the challenges of the modern world with a sound mind, in the fight between peoples for the conquest of the future.

Through totalitarianism, fascism believed it could revise modernity, destroying its perverse tendencies and taming its positive strengths in order to place them at the service of the nation. The crisis of the liberal-capitalist system, the decadence of parliamentary democracies, the rise of movements and regimes which followed the pattern of fascism were taken by fascists as confirmation that their formula for modern civilization was viable and successful. Even the United States, at the beginning of the New Deal, seemed ready to follow the example of fascism. But its attempt had been an 'experiment' which had not changed into a 'regime'.[82] The experiment had proved a failure. The Americans had not had the courage nor the ability to give up the myths of freedom and the neurotic 'pursuit of happiness' in hedonism. Therefore a true catharsis of American civilization

was impossible, because the New Deal had not embraced the totalitarian concept of the State, 'that deep ethicalness and humanity and the impetus of faith which are typical of the fascist system'.[83] The anti-totalitarian statements of President Roosevelt, the 'pacifist fire-raiser',[84] in the autumn of 1937, confirmed that Americanism was not only unable to remedy the perverse effects of modernity, but also helped to spread and aggravate them, like a contagious virus which threatened the very existence of the 'civilization of the spirit'. Mussolini, converted to anti-Americanism, now privately attacked America, 'a country of Negroes and Jews, an element which disrupts civilization',[85] a country which had been built 'with the most abused and worn-out spiritual material in Europe'.[86] His admiration for the American public spirit changed into contempt for 'this boring Taylorized American, dominated by a tyrannical morality, with whom it is and always will be difficult to do business, agree contracts or settle disputes; since he feels and thinks exactly the opposite to us Europeans'.[87] With this new negative perception of America, in his vision of the future world order under the protection of the Axis, Mussolini did not even consider the risk of the United States' hostility to nazi-fascist imperialism. 'American threats', he said to von Ribbentropp on 6 November 1937, 'are always insubstantial: they seem to be mountains and are pimples'.[88]

With the war, all the anti-American stereotypes were relaunched in the propaganda of the enemy's image, together with the more recent elements of anti-Semitism. The United States was represented as the home of financial capitalism dominated by Jews who for a long time had been plotting the downfall of European civilization: 'To destroy Europe, and establish the dictatorship of money throughout the world, means to promote the world-wide dictatorship of the Jewish race', claimed a leaflet of the National Institute of Fascist Culture.[89] The war of the Axis against the United States was the crusade of 'blood' against 'gold' for the salvation of Europe from the plans of conquest of Anglo-Saxon plutocratic Judaism, led by the United States. The Axis powers had torn away the mask of humanitarianism 'from the Jewish and Jew-influenced face' of the 'Great Paralytic', and revealed to the world the 'morbid imperialistic ambition' of American democracy, wrote Alessandro Pavolini, Minister for Popular Culture, in 1942.[90]

Inevitably, war wiped out any remaining ambivalence in the image of America, but it did not completely eradicate the traces of a different vision. In 1941, for example, before Italy declared war against the USA, while propagandists of the regime such as Ezio Maria Gray were railing on the radio against the plans of 'American aggression' of the 'great General Staff of Jewish capitalism',[91] the National Institute for Fascist Culture published a leaflet claiming that in the United States there were 'socially constructive ideas, actions, organisms and motives for work, that looked to the future. These have many points of contact with those in operation in our country' and the war was preparing 'the symbiosis of American (and perhaps English) life and the revolutionary upheavals taking place in the principal countries of continental Europe'.[92] Not even after 1941 was the image of the United States always represented with the same hatred as

'perfidious Albion'.[93] And even on the eve of the collapse of fascism there were those who imagined that 'the painful experiment' of war could have redeemed America from 'its moral inferiority and civil shortcomings' to 'reconcile it with its original civilization, against which it has taken up arms'.[94]

As we have seen, the relationship between Americanism and fascism is complex, and should be studied on various levels. The contrast between the different versions of this relationship cannot be explained simply by the incoherency of fascist ideology. Perhaps it would be more useful to seek other answers by linking the debate over Americanism once again with fascist attitudes towards modernity. Fascist reactions to modernity were not uniform, and it is the task of the historian to define the different attitudes and evaluate their importance in fascism's general attitude towards modernity. This article, within its limits, has tried to put forward some ideas in this new direction, emphasizing what seems to be less obvious in the general views on fascism; but there remains a vast area still to be explored.

We said at the beginning that in fascist culture the verdict on America was a verdict on modernity. We must now add that through the image of Americanism, the fascists tried to represent their own image of modernity. This leads us to conclude that one should perhaps reconsider the problem of the fascist attitude towards modernity from a different angle. As a descendant of early twentieth-century modernist nationalism,[95] fascism does not identify with anti-modernism but, in its own way, as we can also see from 'fascist Americanism', it had a certain passion for modernity not inconsistent with its harking back to the traditions of the past. The fascist cult of *romanità* and tradition has been interpreted in a monolithic way, as an idealization of the past through fear of modernity. Fascism certainly exalted Roman classical culture and national tradition, but it used them as the mythical foundation of its 'sacred history', in order to legitimize its claim to be the creator of a universal 'new civilization' of the modern age, as Rome had been in ancient times. The fascists saw themselves as the modern 'Romans'.[96] The originality of fascist Rome, Mussolini claimed, was the 'simultaneity of the ancient and the modern'.[97] In this way, the myth of *romanità* became compatible with the myth of the future and with fascism's ambition of revising modernity in order to leave its mark on the new civilization in the age of the masses. Besides, even the champions of the anti-modernism of the *Strapaese* movement justified their hatred of Americanism by pointing out that they did not intend to abolish modernity but wanted a 'modernity of our own, an Italian modernity'.[98]

In fascism, the mythic use of tradition, which is a typical aspect of modern mass politics, did not draw on a pessimistic regret for the lost past, but went hand in hand with an attitude of 'tragic and active optimism'[99] towards modern reality, seen as a 'new age' of expansion of life through struggle, characterized by a speeding-up of the rhythm of time, an unprecedented explosion of human and material energy, by the movement of emergent nations, driven by their desire for power. Fascism considered itself part of this modern reality, the expression of its

dynamism and quick and violent rhythm. It declared itself to be an avant-garde political movement which looked to the future: how could it claim to be the 'new civilization' of the twentieth century if it tried to escape the challenge of modernity? The challenge was inevitable but the outcome was not a foregone conclusion. The fascist perception of 'American civilization', swinging between fanatical revulsion and fascinated attraction, reveals in this restless ambivalence the internal tension between fear of and fascination for 'impending modernity'.

NOTES

This article is the revised version of a paper presented at the 1991 National Convention of the American Historical Association held in Chicago from 27 to 30 December 1991.

1. Introduction to L. Barzini, Jr, *Nuova York* (Milan 1931).

2. N. D'Aroma, *Mussolini segreto* (Rocca san Casciano 1958), 200.

3. Cf. G. Spini, G.G. Migone, M. Teodori (eds), *Italia e America dalla Grande Guerra a oggi* (Venice 1976); M. Beynet, 'L'image fasciste de l'Amérique', *Aspects de la culture italienne sous le fascisme* (Grenoble 1982); P.G. Zunino, *L'ideologia del fascismo* (Bologna 1985); B.P.F. Wanrooij, 'The American "Model" in the Moral Education of Fascist Italy', *Ricerche storiche*, 2, 1986; M. Nacci, *L'antiamericanismo in Italia negli anni Trenta* (Torino 1989); P.P. D'Attorre (ed.), *Nemici per la pelle* (Milano 1991). The three volumes by M. Beynet, *L'image de l'Amérique dans la culture italienne de l'entre-deux guerres* (Aix en Provence 1990), are of fundamental importance.

4. The only exception, as far as we are aware, are the above-mentioned studies by M. Beynet. There is some mention of the positive portrayal of the United States in G. Massara, *Viaggiatori italiani in America (1860–1970)* (Rome 1976), 132, and in G.P. Brunetta, *Cinema italiano tra le due guerre* (Milan 1975), 66–71.

5. E. Rosa, 'Americanismo', in *Enciclopedia Italiana*, II (Rome 1929).

6. An essential synthesis of the anti-American motifs in the 1920s can be found in P.G. Zunino, op. cit., 322–32; for the 1930s see M. Nacci, op. cit.

7. Regia Accademia d'Italia, *Convegno di scienze morali e filosofiche. L'Europa*, 14–20 November 1932 (Rome 1933), 237.

8. Ibid., 137.

9. See, for example, G. Baldazzi, 'La Latinità in lotta nell'America', *Augustea*, 17 July 1928; C. Villa, *L'America latina problema fascista* (Rome 1933).

10. See, for example, A. Spaini, 'Gli Stati Uniti alla conquista del mondo', *Gerarchia*, January 1927; 'Il duello anglo-americano', ibid., January 1928; V. Gayda, 'Il mondo è in vendita? Gli Stati Uniti lo comperano', ibid., April 1929; 'Italia e Stati Uniti. Il pericolo di un proibizionismo economico', ibid., July 1929; 'Dal presente all'avvenire dell'accordo di Washington', ibid., October 1929.

11. B. Spampanato, *Democrazia fascista* (Rome 1933), 73.

12. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Ministero della Cultura Popolare, Gabinetto, rep. 78/2.

13. A. Spaini, 'Femminismo in America e altrove', *Critica fascista*, 1 September 1929.

14. Maccari, 'Breviario', *Il Selvaggio,* 30 January 1927.
15. G. Bronzini, 'Il fascismo e la difesa dell'Europa', *Critica fascista,* 1 September 1929.
16. L. Olivero, *La Babilonia stellata. Gioventù americana d'oggi* (Milan 1941).
17. Fermi, 'La tradizione del cimento', *Gerarchia,* March 1932.
18. D. Lombrassa, 'Perché Charlot non potrebbe essere cittadino italiano', *Lo Schermo,* December 1936, reprinted in C. Carabba, *Il cinema del ventennio nero* (Florence 1974), 180–2.
19. E. Sulis, 'Accuso la civiltà meccanica', *Quaderni di Segnalazione,* August-September 1934.
20. M. Scaligero, 'Pericolo di un mito contemporaneo', *Critica fascista,* 15 July 1931.
21. G. Bronzini, op. cit.
22. A. Soffici, *Opere,* V (Florence 1961), 158.
23. Ibid., 160.
24. C. Suckert, *L'Europa vivente* (Florence 1923), 12–14.
25. G. Papini and D. Giuliotti, *Dizionario dell 'Omo salvatico* (Florence 1923), 149.
26. J. Evola, 'Due facce del nazionalismo', *Vita italiana,* March 1931; 'Americanismo e Bolscevismo', *Nuova Antologia,* May-June 1929.
27. E. Sulis, op. cit., 18.
28. A. Gravelli, *Razza in agonia* (Rome 1939), 294.
29. M. Soldati, *America primo amore* (Florence 1935).
30. Letter to G. Prezzolini, now in A. Moravia and G. Prezzolini, *Lettere* (Milan 1982), 19.
31. Ibid., 20–1. Even Antonio Gramsci, who ridiculed fascist anti-Americanism as a manifestation of provincialism, and who dedicated far from banal reflections to the transformation of American society, believed that American culture 'does nothing but turn over the old European culture', because the elements of a 'new culture' and of a 'new way of life' were barely in the first stage: Americanism was nothing but 'an organic extension and an intensification of European civilization, which has simply donned new clothing in the American climate'. A. Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere,* ed. by V. Giarratana, III (Turin 1975), 2178–80.
32. On this thesis, see especially D. Fernandez, *Il mito dell' America negli intellettuali italiani dal 1930 al 1950,* Italian translation (Caltanissetta-Rome 1969).
33. See M. Beynet, op. cit., I, 161.
34. V. Mussolini, 'Emancipazione del cinema italiano', *Cinema,* 25 September 1936, reprinted in C. Carabba, op. cit., 128–31.
35. E. Cecchi, 'Introduzione' to *Antologia Americana. Raccolta di narratori dalle origini ai giorni nostri,* ed. by E. Vittorini (Milan 1942).
36. N. Zapponi, *I miti e le ideologie. Storia della cultura italiana* (Napoli 1983), 196.
37. M. Bontempelli, *L'avventura novecentista* (Firenze 1974), 35–6.
38. 'Valori nella concezione fascista', *L'azione fascista,* 21 January 1923.
39. M. Bontempelli, op. cit., 25.
40. See F. Ciarlantini, *Al paese delle stelle* (Milano 1931); *Roma—New York. Tragedie dell'americanismo* (Milano 1934).
41. F. Ciarlantini, *Incontro con il Nord America* (Milano 1929), 143.
42. Ibid., 80.
43. Ibid., 127.
44. Ibid., 159.
45. Ibid., 127.
46. Ibid., 82.

47. Ibid., 82 and 67.
48. Message from Mussolini to the American people, broadcast on 14 December 1926, in Mussolini, *Opera omnia* (Firenze 1951–63, 1957), XXII, 290–1.
49. F. Suvich, *Memorie 1932–1936* (Rizzoli 1980), 24.
50. N. D'Aroma, op. cit., 116.
51. Ibid., 131.
52. M. Ardemagni, 'Gli italiani nel Nord America', *Gerarchia,* July 1934.
53. *Convegno di scienze morali etc.,* 333.
54. Ibid., 521–7.
55. E. Bodrero, 'Il Pacifico', *Gerarchia,* July 1934.
56. P. Chimienti, 'Il regime degli Stati Uniti ed il regime fascista'. *Gerarchia,* February 1933.
57. E. Dupré Thesaider, 'Stati Uniti', *Dizionario di politica,* IV, 366–7.
58. D. Cantimori, 'Calvinismo', *Dizionario di Politica,* I, 367.
59. D. Cantimori, 'Puritanesimo', ibid., III, 589.
60. 'Sindacalismo americano', *Il popolo d'Italia,* 14 July 1937, in Mussolini, *Opera omnia,* XXVIII, 224. On Mussolini's interest in the New Deal and Roosevelt, see ibid., 10, 22–4, 88–9, 103–84, 133–6, 300–2, 348–9; Y. De Begnac, *Taccuini mussoliniani,* ed. by F. Perfetti (Bologna 1990), 606–14.
61. G.P. Maranzana, 'L'avvenire del dollaro cosi come è visto da Londra', *Gerarchia,* September 1933.
62. See M. Vaudagna, 'New Deal e corporativismo nelle riviste politiche ed economiche italiane', G. Spini, G.G. Migone and M. Teodori, 101–40.
63. B. De Ritis, *La Terza America* (Firenze 1937), 148.
64. M. da Silva, 'La morale schiavistica di Spengler', *Critica fascista,* 1 January 1934.
65. F. Battaglia, 'Oswald Spengler', *Dizionario di politica,* IV, 332–3.
66. A. Messina, 'Psicosi catastrofica', *Critica fascista,* 15 August 1929.
67. Ciarlantini, op. cit., 175.
68. A. Pirelli, 'Luci ed ombre della moderna civiltà meccanica', *Gerarchia,* July 1931.
69. N. Madau Diaz, 'Macchine', *Dizionario di politica,* III, 4–5.
70. Quoted in E. Dorn Brose, 'Il nazismo, il fascismo, e la tecnologia', *Storia contemporanea,* 2 (April 1987), 403.
71. B. Mussolini, 'Bleriot', *Il Popolo,* 28 July 1909, in *Opera omnia,* II, 194.
72. Mussolini, 'Latham', *Il Popolo,* 22 July 1909, ibid., 187.
73. Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi (eds), *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista. Guida storica* (Roma 1933), 8.
74. Ibid., 65.
75. B. Pellegrini, 'Panamerica e latinità', *Il Popolo d'Italia,* 21 June 1931.
76. A. Mussolini, 'L'uomo e la macchina', *Il Popolo d'Italia,* 25 February 1931.
77. B. Mussolini, *Opera omnia,* XXVI, 186.
78. M. Sarfatti, *Alla ricerca della felicità* (Milano 1937), 286.
79. Ibid., 226–7.
80. A. Pirelli, art. cit.
81. This expression was Mussolini's, in D'Aroma, 238.
82. G. Borgatta, 'Due politiche: Inghilterra e Stati Uniti', *Gerarchia,* November 1933.
83. E. Dupré Thesaider, 'Stati Uniti', *Dizionario di politica,* IV, 381.
84. E. Maria-Gray, *L'Italia ha sempre ragione* (Milano 1938), 247.
85. G. Ciano, *Diario 1937–1943,* ed. by R. De Felice (Milano 1980), 34.

86. Ibid., 200.

87. D'Aroma, 215.

88. Mussolini's conversation with the Foreign Minister von Ribbentropp, Rome, 6 November 1937, in R. Mosca, *L'Europa verso la catastrofe,* I (Milano 1964), 240.

89. *Plutocrazia e bolscevismo* (Roma 1942), 13.

90. Preface to G. Puccio, *Lotta fra due mondi* (Roma 1942).

91. E.M. Gray, *Ramazza* (Milano 1942), 187 (radio conversation on 17 March 1941).

92. O. Por, *Il divenire panamericano* (Roma 1941), 42–3.

93. See P. Cavallo, 'Sangue contro oro. Le immagini dei paesi nemici nel teatro fascista di propaganda' in A. Lepre (ed.), *La guerra immaginata* (Napoli 1989), 137–46.

94. B. Spampanato, *Dentro la storia* (Roma 1943), 187.

95. For the definition of 'modernist nationalism', see E. Gentile, 'Il futurismo e la politica. Dal nazionalismo modernista al fascismo (1909–1920)' in R. De Felice (ed.), *Futurismo, cultura e politica* (Torino 1988), 107.

96. See E. Gentile, 'Fascism as political religion', *Journal of Contemporary History,* 25, 2–3 (May–June 1990), 245.

97. Speech to the 2nd assembly of the regime in *Opera omnia,* XXVI, 187.

98. Maccari, 'Breviario', *Il Selvaggio,* 30 January 1927.

99. C. Pellizzi, *Problemi e realtà del fascismo* (Firenze 1924), 121.

Conclusion: The End of a Myth

Fascists looked on the totalitarian State as the new order capable of solving the economic, social, and spiritual problems of the masses and of the State in modern society; of reconciling order and change; and of achieving a dynamic synthesis between tradition and modernity. In the totalitarian State, the individual and the masses, who were brought up with the ethics of sacrifice and dedication to the national community, were sheltered from the corrupting temptations of hedonistic materialism and from the nervousness and alienation of modern life.

Fascism pointed to totalitarianism as the only modern formula for building a new mass civilization able to face and overcome the challenges of modernity. Through totalitarianism, fascism believed it could revise modernity, destroying its perverse tendencies and taming its positive strengths in order to place them at the service of the nation. Fascists were convinced, as if possessed by frenzy, that they had a will power that could overcome all limitations and a resistance to objective reality that could mold reality and the nature of man in the image of their own myth. Following this aim, fascism led the Italians to the Second World War. It wanted to conquer new countries and spread the empire of the totalitarian "new civilization" all over the New Europe. What fascism really achieved was suffering, death, and destruction. This was eventually the failure of a Utopia whose purpose had been to solve the conflict of modernity by sacrificing open society to the primacy of a modern Leviathan, degrading the individual and the masses into mere instruments of its will to power.

Using the totalitarian State and organizing and mobilizing the intellectuals, fascism apparently seemed to improve the process of nation building by forming a solid and homogeneous national consciousness and strengthening the political unification of the national State. Actually, after 20 years of totalitarian rule, fascism had succeeded in destroying that pinch of national feeling, which the tradi-

tion of humanistic and liberal nationalism had succeeded in spreading among the Italians since the Risorgimento. In 1941, even Mussolini realized that in comparing the attitudes of the Italians during the First World War with that of the Second World War, it was clear that those Italians who had been educated in the liberal State had a stronger sense of national solidarity than those Italians trained in the fascist State.[1] The Italians raised in the liberal State also had a stronger sense of duty and were more capable of resisting the trials of war than the Italians raised in the militaristic fascist regime.

The military catastrophe, the fall of the fascist regime, the disintegration of the national State following the Italian surrender, the birth of the neofascist social republic, and the civil war between the fascists and the partisans set up the conditions for a rapid decline of the presence and influence of nationalism in the culture and politics of the Italians. Even if the war of liberation was fought by the antifascist parties in the name of the nation and the nation-State, bringing back to mind the ideals of freedom, independence, and the unity of Risorgimento nationalism paved the way to the foundation for the new republican democracy.

Fascist ideology, however, was not totally eradicated. During the last several decades, a neofascist tree has been growing up from its heritage, with the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Italian Social Movement, MSI) as its trunk and many small groups as its boughs and branches.

Though the Republican Constitution outlawed fascist parties, the MSI originally defined itself as the heir of historical fascism. Most of its leaders were minor intellectuals or officials in the fascist regime and in the puppet fascist government during the Nazi occupation and most of the MSI's early militants were veterans of the fascist Social Republic. The MSI's youngest members, who had not directly experienced the fascist period, were attracted by its zealous sense of nationalism, by its idealistic activism, and by its revolutionary and antidemocratic mythology. To establish its ideology, neofascism gathered most of its content from fascist tradition but the predominant motif of the neofascist identity has long been nostalgia: nostalgia for the lost fascist grandeur, the lost colonial Empire, and the lost genius of the Duce imbued its political rhetoric. Neofascist identity had long been grounded more in emotional than ideological and historical motifs. Neofascists thought of themselves as true believers of the religion of the nation, who had passed through terrible ordeals, and who were ostracized in a world of turncoats and infidels. This self-image still marks the identity of most ultra-right militants and of the MSI.

Many essential elements of fascist culture, along with anticommunism, antiliberalism, antiparliamentarianism, and antiegalitarianism, have survived the humiliating defeat of fascist ambitions and have been fostering neofascist movements since the 1950s. Despite its vicissitudes, the ideological core of Italian radical nationalism has remained almost unchanged from modernist nationalism to the present neofascist permutations. For example, the spiritual concept of life, the primacy of mythical thought, the predominant role of the nation as organic totality, the idea of a strong State, the worshipping of heroic fighting minorities,

the myth of revolution as national palingenesis, and the pretension to be a "third way" different from and superior to both capitalism and communism. To this core, neofascism added, among other things, the belief in the cultural and racial primacy of the so-called European nation and the neo-socialist idea of the workers' national State intended as the promoter of a complete partnership between employees and employers.

Although postwar right wing nationalism has never denied its fascist roots, it has not accepted its heritage completely. For instance, the militia party, the totalitarian State, the new civilization, and the mania for mass organizations were buried under the rubble of the fascist regime. There is another remarkable difference in the neofascist attitude towards modernity. The strengthening of liberal democracies, the unbounded expansion of technology, the ever-increasing mass conformity to fashion, and the search for well being have radically changed the nationalist perception of modernity.

As we have seen, modernist nationalism and fascism shared an aggressive attitude towards modernity and modernization, one of challenge and conquest. Both perceived modernity as an epoch of expansion dominated by the will to power of young nations run by new elites. They also aimed to modernize the country in order to hurl Italy into international struggle and to conquer a new empire. They did not oppose mass society and technology but wanted to tame and use them for the nation's greatness. On the contrary, among neofascists, the prevailing attitude toward modernity is a defensive one. Neofascists have no enthusiasm for modernity, which they consider to be an epoch of corruption and degeneration dominated by mass conformity, materialistic-oriented cultures, the civilization of the machine, egalitarianism, and denationalizing cosmopolitanism.

One might say that today, after the fall of communism, Americanism has become the main enemy for most neofascists, such as the left wing of the MSI, which denounces the moral contagion engendered by the fascination that the American way of life exerts on Europe. They identify modernity with Americanism, that is, materialism, hedonism, the cult of wealth, ruthless capitalism, urban neurosis, and dehumanizing technology that transforms human beings into cogs in a machine. Right wing radicalism actually flees from modernity toward an ideal world remote from mass society and technology. Such an ideal world is dreamed up as the mythical tradition of archaic civilization ruled by an aristocracy of warriors, the Nordic sagas, or the fantasy world of J.R.R. Tolkien.

For many years since its foundation, the neofascist party wavered between conservatism and radicalism, between the tendency to integrate itself into the parliamentary system and the tendency to present itself as the sole radical alternative to the system. But since the 1990s, the MSI came out of the political ghetto and was gradually integrated into the parliamentary system. The participation of the MSI, the parliamentary majority that was supported in Berlusconi's government, was the climax of its long march through the institutions. At the same time, the MSI ceased to be regarded by ultra-right militants as the sole heir of fascism.

Since the 1970s, Italian extreme neofascism has consisted of a myriad of political, cultural, and even terroristic factions, such as New Order and National Vanguard, coming together from fascist roots or neonazism and often opposing the MSI's politics as too conservative. Young generations of right-wing radicalism, moreover, have been strident critics of the MSI's cult of the fascist past. Their strategy is to achieve consent in civil society instead of political power, aiming to build up a new national *Gemeinschaft* by stressing the role of sacred values experienced through myths, rites, and festivals while minimizing the State and mass organizations as means to improve national identity. They fight against the Americanization of the world and the capitalist consumer society. One might characterize this new right as postmodern right-wing political existentialism to distinguish it from the political modernism of fascism. On the opposing side of this new right are fringe groups of rightist extremists who identify themselves as Nazi-skins. Their ideology combines nationalist extremism with the Nazi-inspired ideas of racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia.

The MSI hastened to dissociate itself from these extremists, condemning political violence, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia but until the 1994 national elections and its XVII national convention, the party had never denied its fascist roots. However, during the 1980s, the neofascist party went through a process of cultural and ideological change. This process of change culminated at the XVII national convention of the MSI, held in January 1995. By a large majority the conference decided to end the experience of the MSI and to transform the old neofascist party into a new conservative party, *Alleaurza Nazionale* (National Alliance). Only a small minority opposed the metamorphosis of the MSI and they seceded from the National Alliance to remain faithful to the fascist heritage. This new right-wing post-fascist party claims to renounce its fascist heritage, repudiate any form of dictatorship and totalitarianism, condemn political violence, xenophobia, and racism, and accepts freedom and democracy as indispensable values of modern society. It also claims to favor a moderate federalism to reform the national State.

Since the end of World War II, nationalism has been marginalized in the culture and political arena of Italy. For almost a century, from the unification of Italy up to the early years of the Italian republic, this myth had inspired the public education of the Italian population. Patriotism was seen as loyalty to the nation-state, the civil ethic for the citizen. Philosophy, historiography, literature, and the arts were all conditioned by nationalism. Historians, political scientists, philosophers, musicians, painters, poets, and novelists as well as politicians felt it was their duty to promote national consciousness.

The collapse of fascism meant for the majority of Italian people the end of the myth of the nation as a supreme value. One reason for this is the very idea of associating the nation with fascist and neofascist nationalism. In the cultural, political, and daily life of Italians today, the idea of a national myth has not been present since the 1970s; in the same way, it seems that patriotism has disappeared as a sentiment of loyalty owed to the nation-State. Historian Adrian Lyttelton

affirms that the only symbol of national identification for the right-wing as well as left-wing Italians is football.[2]

The failure of fascism also ruined the prestige of the national State. Following the Second World War, many intellectuals and politicians were convinced that the national State was an idol of the previous century and had by now exhausted its faction. It needed to fight all types of nationalism, destroying the seed that had generated it, in other words, the myth of the nation. In the field of culture as well as in every day life, new ideals that no longer considered the national State a value and an institution that had to be respected and defended were coming into existence. Today, to most Italians nationalism and even patriotism sound like an out-of-date ideology and a continually increasing number of Italians consider the State as an enemy, an institution based on the national myth and bereft of legitimacy and authority.

Although antifascist parties attempted to revive the ideals of good nationalism and the prestige of the nation-State, the national myth of the Resistance had a transient short-lived existence and it extinguished itself with the breakdown of the antifascist union and the beginning of the Cold War. The new ideological civil war between communists and anticommunists deepened the antagonism that divided the antifascist parties and the Italians who identified themselves with those parties. The parties, which founded the new Italian State, were in competition in order to present themselves as supporters of the Italian nation and defenders of its unity and independence. Each of them claimed to be the only true representative of the nation by identifying the national myth with their own ideology while condemning opposing parties as traitors and enemies of the country. For the Christian Democrats, the communist party was a fifth column serving Soviet imperialism while for the communists the Christian Democratic party was composed of national traitors serving American imperialism. In this way, the national patriotism of the Resistance alliance was replaced with party patriotism.

As a consequence, the political parties of the Italian Republic, even if they praised the concepts of the nation and the nation-State, did not succeeded in transmitting to the Italians a new national consciousness, a love of the country, or a sense of Statehood uniting these ideals with the principles and values of a social democracy. "We no longer have a nation, a homeland, and a common ideal," an antifascist priest had already written back in 1950.[3] During the 1950s and the 1960s the myth of the nation was almost inadvertently set aside even if appeals to the fatherland and to the national State were still present in official speeches and party rhetoric.

Today in Italy, more and more often we hear intellectuals and politicians debating about a crisis concerning the Italian nation.[4] Some of them maintain that the Italians have already lost or are losing their sense of national identity. Yet, others believe that the Italian crisis is connected to a general crisis of the nation-State and national patriotism, which is common in all countries in the

Western world. The old European nation-States, Rosario Romeo wrote in 1979, are "mostly reduced to a fossil State without any real moral or political vitality."[5] The Italian State appears to many Italians solely as a rusty, invading, and demanding bureaucratic machine that absorbs more and more sources of energy and money from each citizen only to produce inefficiency, waste, and corruption. Among Italian intellectuals, a conviction prevails that nowadays the Italians have lost the feeling of belonging to a common national entity while among many of them is spreading the cult of *piccola patria*—local patriotism as against national patriotism, identifying the homeland with a region, a city, or a village. The feeling of hatred toward the nation-State has produced the birth of the separatist movement of the Northern League.

During the 1980s, doubts regarding the future of the Italian nation were becoming more and more pessimistic. The socialist philosopher Norberto Bobbio affirms that present-day Italy "is no longer a nation, because, more or less, in the younger generations no longer exists a sense of national identity."[6] The liberal historian Renzo de Felice had also reached the same conclusion. "The Italians," he wrote in 1987, "have lost their sense of national identity because they have lost the sense of their past. We are living in a country which is going towards an existence without historical roots."[7] "Italian-ness," wrote Giuliano Bollati, a left-wing intellectual, "has become only a folkloristic trait not a national identity, the Italians have become cosmopolitans and tourists in their own country."[8]

Actually, in no other European country does the crisis of the national State seem so serious and deep-seated as in Italy today. There are democratic intellectuals who, because they fear the disintegration of the nation-State and consider national sentiment a fundamental basis for democracy, hope for the rebirth of a national myth that will give Italians a feeling of belonging to a common historical entity. There are also other intellectuals who consider the nation-State a constant threat against democracy because it has the tendency to always subject individual liberty to the authority of the State in the name of the nation. Yet other intellectuals hold a more radical view: they deny the fact that the Italian nation has ever existed and they doubt the objective existence of other nations as well because they consider a nation simply an ideological invention devised to legitimize the power of a centralized State.[9] Many predict that Italy could once again return to existing simply as a geographical entity only to be a peninsula where its inhabitants do not feel united by a common past and destiny, in other words they no longer consider themselves as forming a nation. Personally speaking as an historian, I would rather not make prophecies.[10]

NOTES

1. Y. De Begnac, *Taccuini mussoliniani*, edited by F. Perfetti, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), 39–40.

2. See A. Lyttelton, "Italy: The Triumph of TV," *The New York Review of Books*, August 11, 1994.

3. P. Mazzolari, "Patria: terra di nessuno", *Adesso*, 15 July 1950.

4. See G.E. Rusconi, *Se cessiamo di essere una nazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993); *Identita nazionale, democrazia e bene comune* (Torino: Editrice AVE, 1994); G. Spadolini (ed.), *Nazione e nazionalità in Italia* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1994); R. De Felice, *Rosso e nero,* interview with P. Chessa (Torino: Baldini & Castoldi, 1995), E. Galli della Loggia, *La morte della patria,* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1996); E. Gentile, *La grande Italia. Ascesa e declino del nuto della razione relventesimo secolo* (Milano: Mondadori, 1997).

5. R. Romeo, "Nazione," in *Enciclopedia del Novecento,* IV, (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1979), 537.

6. J. Petersen, *Quo vadis Italia?* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1996), 45.

7. Interview in *Il Borghese,* 14 June 1987.

8. G. Bollati, "L'Italia s' è persa," *L'Espresso,* 6 December 1987.

9. See Petersen, *Quo vadis Italia?* 44–54.

10. This conclusion was written at the end of 1998. Since then, a revival of the national myth is going on in Italy. It is encouraged mainly by the incumbent president of the Italian republic, who attempts to build up a civil religion grounded on the tradition of the *risorgimento* and *resistenza* (the antifascist war of liberation, 1943–1945). Whether this revival is an enduring new permutation of the Italian myth of the nation and nation state is still a matter of debate. (August, 2003).

Index

About the Author

EMILIO GENTILE is a contemporary historian of international reputation and a leading scholar of Fascism, totalitarianism, and political religions. He is the author of twelve books, and his major works and articles have been translated into English, French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese. He is co-editor of *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* and is on the editorial boards of *The Journal of Contemporary History* and *Modernism/Modernity*. He currently teaches in the Department of Political Studies at the University of Rome.