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John Cabot University

Department of Art History

Bachelor of Arts in Art History
Minor in Art and Design

The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana: A New Iconic Architecture for a Model City

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Abstract

Benito Mussolini changed Rome drastically during the Fascist Regime from 1922 to 1943. His ambitions included wide scale architectural projects, the most ambitious of these urbanistic projects was the Esposizione Universale Roma (EUR). There nested amongst the fascist architecture we find the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. The Palazzo, also referred to more colloquially as the square coliseum was built to celebrate Italy's colonization of Ethiopia, and therein to welcome art exhibitions that celebrated and promoted Italian-ness. With its multiple styles, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana and the E42 as a whole emphasize many other aspects of Mussolini's propaganda, above all the war in Ethiopia, the concepts of Expansion, Colonization and Civilization. As the art historian Kirk discusses, these three important concepts were incorporated in the EUR project especially in the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana- and are the keys with which we can understand Mussolini's propaganda. Moreover, Mussolini had many other secondary aims in his ambitious EUR project, for example the aims to expand Rome to the sea to attain control of the Mediterranean. Another reason why he built the EUR was to give Rome a new more modern city centre that could be viewed as the continuation of the New Italian Empire from that of Augustus. As a consequence of these elements, it is possible to understand why Mussolini considered the E42 complex as the beacon for his fascist ambitions and colonial expansion. Therefore, how did the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana become the public image of colonization, an articulation of fascism, and seek to reinforce the Italian sense of cultural identity? In addition, how does this architectural complex represent the ideologies of the war in Ethiopia?

Dedication

Ho solo due persone da ringraziare. In primis ringrazio mia madre Nicoletta Santovito che con il suo amore di mamma mi ha saputo riportare sulla strada giusta ogni volta che uscivo dai binari. Ma il ringraziamento più grande lo darò a mio padre, Marcello Mioni, architetto, designer, padre, migliore amico, e insegnante di vita. Papà mi ha sempre spinto a dare sempre il meglio di me, mi ha insegnato i trucchi della vita e mia ha trasmesso l'amore per la storia e l'arte fin da quando ero piccolo. Se non fosse per lui, io qui non ci sarei mai arrivato, per tanti motivi. Grazie papà!

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Introduction

The Third Rome of Mussolini is the basis of modern Rome. The Fascist Regime modernized Rome, but at the same time, Mussolini brought to light the ancient area of the city trying to connect the Roman Empire of Augustus to his new and modern Italian Empire. Mussolini changed the urban plan of Rome to create a historical connection between the two Empires. Indeed, Mussolini changed the urban plan of Rome, especially of the city centre, to visually, historically and ideologically connect buildings and roads. To give the Italian people platform to “whiteness” the glory of ancient Rome, and simultaneously admire the power of its modern success, the Fascist Regime. Mussolini also “renewed” Rome by expanding his empire as the Romans had. For this reason, Mussolini started an expansionistic campaign in Ethiopia in 1935. What the Fascist Regime wanted from Ethiopia was that Italy regain power over territories lost in previous wars, and to exploit this political idea, Mussolini justified the invasion of Ethiopia by calling a “civilizing mission” and rebuilding its capital, Addis Ababa. According to Fascist ideology, civilization is gauged architectonic and planimetric urban planning. This thesis argues that the E42 is profoundly linked to the colonization of Ethiopia. Moreover, it will be discussed why Mussolini needed something that was able to represent the magnificence of the Fascist Empire’s undertaking inside the E42. Thus, on the highest point of the new neighbourhood there is the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana (Figure 1) that summarizes everything Mussolini and the Fascist Regime propagated. This architecture was built to host an exhibition about the *Civiltà* that in reality intended to glorify the conquest of Ethiopia and the colonization of Addis Ababa. The style of this architecture is both modern and “classical” and embodies

Mussolini's idea of civilization using a connection with the Roman Empire of Augustus that Mussolini himself created. With the continuing of the ancient Rome through the Italian Empire, Mussolini justified his figure of colonizer, and the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana was the perfect building to host an exhibition on Italia-ness. Therefore, how did the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana become the public image of colonization, an articulation of fascism, and seek to reinforce the Italian sense of cultural identity? In addition, how does this architectural complex represent the ideologies of the war in Ethiopia? All these questions will be analysed in the following three chapters. On chapter one *Politics and Arts: The Creation of a New Form of Classicism*, I will explain through the analysis of multiple articles and books, how Fascism slowly approached arts as aim of propaganda and how the fascist's style was born. On chapter two, *The Square Colosseum as The Eternal Modern-Classical Architecture*, will follow a deep analysis of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana that includes a general description of the structure, a compare and contrast with the older building of the E42, Palazzo Uffici, and the explanation of the meaning of the building connected to the colonization of Ethiopia. Lastly, on chapter three, there will be a clear explanation of all the political content that let the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italia be the building that mostly represent the E42 as a Colony of the Fascist regime. This thesis will examine and argue many contents that surround the iconicity of the Square Colosseum that are assumed by a simple view of the building as a war trophy.

Chapter 1: Politics and Arts: The Creation of a New Form of Classicism

Kallis' landmark book, *The Third Rome*, introduces the importance of urban planning in the Fascist era by arguing that under the Fascist Regime, Rome was drastically transformed.¹ The urbanistic changes and renewals meant that Rome not only underwent topographical restoration, but also a new look and meanings. Between the 1920 and 30s, Rome was largely renovated. Later, Mussolini and the architects of the fascist regime dubbed this "the third Rome."² Rome became a city that theatricalized its own history, starting from the ancient world, and glorifying its ideology through urbanism. Mussolini's intention was to give a new capital to a young Italy, and create a landmark for the Fascist Regime. Rome is both ancient and modern capital of Italy, and fascists wanted to emphasize this aspect. This can be defined as a Fascist utopia of an ideal city, where Rome exemplified the fascist ideology and culture. The plan of the city changed quite drastically because of Mussolini's dreams of connecting ancient with modern, creating a utopian city. Urban planning became a fundamental science so much that became the means to glorify the ancient city. To do this, the renewal of Rome was so drastic that Mussolini destroyed many medieval constructions, except for those that could follow his rewriting of history; as seen in Christian churches. The historical eras between the Fascist and Augustus a Rome were largely destroyed. From now on, the ancient became the base of a "style" that culminated in Modern

¹ Aristotle Kallis, *The Third Rome, 1922-1943: The Making of the Fascist Capital* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

² Traditionally, the History of Rome is divided in three periods, the First Rome is the one of the Roman Empire, the Second Rome is the Rome of the Popes (medieval ages) and the Third is the one of Mussolini

Rome and its newest model district, the E42. This is the case for the construction of the EUR (Esposizione Universale Roma) or E42 (E is for exhibition and 42 is for the date of its expected opening).

In the literature on this period in architectural history, according to Terry Kirk, Fascism boomed as an extreme-right political movement of a strong nationalism. Mussolini was a dictator who never command the arts; for this reason, the role of the artists during the Fascist regime was to use art as a form of propaganda to represent the regime and the nation.³ Urban renewal also contributed to this. These projects ranged vastly and are not easily classified or defined as being of a specific order, style, or movement. After the end of the World War I, a young architect, Giovanni Muzio studied all round Europe, mostly in England, France, and Germany. His studies brought him to understand that Italy needed a “return to order” and against the “exasperated and arbitrary individualism” that characterized late renaissance architecture and culture.⁴ According to Kirk, the return to order was the beginning of a rebirth for a style that later characterized the main ideas of the Fascist Regime. Many other architects and designers contributed to an urban return to order. Gio Ponti, Emilio Lancia, and Giuseppe de Finetti followed Muzio’s idea. They also created, on Via Sant’Orsola, a studio for thoughtful group discussions. They did not write a manifesto as happened in many other cases, such as for Futurism, but their ideas were written in Muzio’s articles on 18th century Milanese neoclassicism. Muzio affirmed:

An absolute Italianità was desired and zealously sought . . . to have always remained faithful to our own great tradition, alive and continuous through the centuries, seems to me a great virtue.⁵

³ Terry Kirk, *The Architecture of Modern Italy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), p. 68

⁴ Kirk, *The Architecture of Modern Italy*, p. 69

⁵ Kirk, p. 69

This means that since the end of the 18th century, Italians claimed for a strong identity of their tradition. For Muzio, Classicism was the way to redress free artistic expression and planned exhibitionism.⁶ Moreover, Muzio's Sant'Orsola studio contributed to a call for a return to classical order.

A few years later, architect Camillo Boito adhered to the idea of a return to order. For this reason, in 1926, Boito founded a circle named Gruppo 7 which was intended to emphasize a "new spirit," in order "to witness the birth of a new order of ideas." Gruppo 7 defined itself as Rationalist. It proclaimed:

The new architecture, the true architecture must result from a rigid adherence to logic, to rationality... We do not pretend at all to create a style (similar attempts of creation from nothing led to results such as the Liberty style); but rather from the constant use of rationality, from the perfect correspondence between the structure of the building and the purpose it serves, to allow a style to be born through a process of selection.⁷

According to Kirk, Roberto Papini predicted that "pure rationalism" would begin and be followed throughout Europe. Gruppo 7 predicted cultural disagreement by recognizing regional variations. Gruppo 7 firmly believed that Italy would not just assume a significant role in the growth of contemporary architecture but would also restore its previous position as a world power, and impose its own sense of design on all other countries. Following Gruppo 7, another architect who gave his help to arrive at Fascist's multiple styles is Adalberto Libera. In 1930, Libera gave birth to the Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale, or MIAR. With members and regional coordinators throughout Italy, MIAR purposefully factionalized the avant-garde to present a sober, professional alliance that resembled a Fascist corporate structure. When one of the Rationalist exhibitions took place in 1931 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, one of the youngest architects and designer of the Rationalists group stated:

⁶ Kirk, pp. 69

⁷ Kirk, p. 74

We based ourselves on a syllogism which went roughly like this: Fascism is a revolution, modern architecture is revolutionary, therefore it must be the architecture of fascism.⁸

The process of evolution that starts with Muzio and ends with Libera, brought to light a common commitment to “rationality” that emphasized the imagined origins of Italian culture and orders so much that Fascism could base its ideologically loaded forms on it. The rational style would be one of the main characteristics for almost every kind of architecture supported by the Fascist regime. Kirk further argues that rationalism and the “return to order” do not want to break with their past; thus, make sense about tradition was broadly defined in the Italian context as essentially Mediterranean⁹.

Richard Etlin also argues that, as a consequence of the return to order, Mussolini preferred the Rational style for his new, ideological, city.¹⁰ Thus, as Etlin says a Rational style was used by the fascist regime for several buildings and new areas. The EUR was a completely new neighbourhood that was born as a new city centre for the eternal city. For these reasons, Etlin reminds us, the EUR was also called “Roma Nuovissima.”¹¹

There are many reasons why the E42 was built. One of Mussolini’s aims was to connect his new Empire with the Empire of Augustus. For this reason, the plan of Rome drastically changed, because he wanted to mix the ruins and the finds of ancient Rome with the modern one. The EUR connected ancient Rome to the sea through the Via Del Mare, a long road that runs from Piazza Venezia to Ostia.

Doordan too argues that Rationalism characterizes much of the architecture of the Fascist regime.¹² Indeed, Doordan state that the Rational style uses Greco-Roman architectural elements,

⁸ Kirk, p. 83

⁹ Kirk, p. 84

¹⁰ Richard A. Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture, 1890-1940* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991).

¹¹ Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*, p.481

¹² P. Dennis Doordan, “The Political Content in Italian Architecture during the Fascist,” *Art Journal* (Summer 1983): 121-131.

and therefore such as columns, arches, statues, and precious materials that are mixed with modern elements, it creates a strong visual identity for Fascist architecture. Mussolini's ideology about the Italian Empire, Doordan argues, is made visible in their projects. This is the case for the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana because its component reveal many political aspects and Greco-Roman architectural elements; moreover, the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana is the "key building of the E42,"¹³ according to its ability to rise to the "challenge of official building programs" politically representing the Fascist Regime.¹⁴ Indeed, according to Doordan, "the iconic content of many buildings and projects of the period is one of the most obvious manifestations of the impact of Fascism on architecture."¹⁵ Doordan emphasizes the changes in styles and ideas for architectural aims during the twenty years of the fascist regime, and he does so by affirming that there is a powerful connection between architecture and politics.

In addition to the arguments of Doordan about the stylistic changes, Diane Ghirardo discusses how Mussolini controlled the arts and used exhibitions as political propaganda. Many exhibitions took place during the twenty years of the Fascist Regime. The Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista, then the Mostra Augustae, and the Esposizione Universale Roma (EUR, E42) were the most important Fascist exhibitions. These exhibitions were further opportunities for urban organization and architectural renovation and renewal. Cini wanted a style that could frame ancient monuments for modern viewers.¹⁶ Architects and designers created many projects that, in addition, used elements recalling and modernizing Greco-Roman architecture. One of these projects is the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana. Indeed, the Square Colosseum is a

¹³ Doordan, "The Political Content," p. 125

¹⁴ Doordan, p. 125

¹⁵ Doordan, p. 123

¹⁶ Diane Ghirardo, "Architects, Exhibitions, and the Politics of Culture in Fascist Italy," *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-) 45, no. 2 (1992): p. 73.

monumental structure whose elements recall classical art while at the same time being a Rationalist building. Together, these represent the fascist regime. According to Ghirardo the fascist regime did exert influence on artistic and architectural production.¹⁷ Unlike Kirk, she analyses the historical facts that brought the architects of the fascist regime to use the Littorio style, defined as a multitude of styles encompassing Rationalism and a return to order. While Ghirardo analyse that Mussolini used Rationalism to direct architectural evolution.

To better understand the project of the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana, Giorgio Ciucci and Jessica Levine explain Mussolini's connection between the conquest of Ethiopia and the construction of a new colony outside Rome. Mussolini announced the foundation of the Fascist Empire in 1936. Civilization was the key battle-cry of the war in Ethiopia, a country Mussolini repeatedly qualified as uncivilized and non-modern. Indeed, the excuse that Mussolini gave to the League of Nations for the invasion was that Fascism was able to civilize the country. Later, Mussolini had the idea of creating a new neighbourhood outside Rome that showed fascist concepts of Expansionism, Colonization and Civilization. The EUR was born as a huge art exhibition of the Fascist Regime, but the deeper meaning and ideas are summarized in the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana. This structure is the symbol of the nation's power and references ancient design and monumentality. According to Ciucci and Levine, the EUR was for Mussolini a New Rome, "a city conceived in the grand style."¹⁸ Moreover, Ciucci and Levine affirm that the E42 was the demonstration of Mussolini to connect the Ancient Rome with the Fascist regime and the Modern world. The monumental square was the winning project, emphasizing the power of the fascist regime, where each floor was an exhibition venue. In addition to this, the

¹⁷ Diane Ghirardo, "Architects, Exhibitions, and the Politics of Culture in Fascist Italy," *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-) 45, no. 2 (1992): 67–75.

¹⁸ Giorgio Ciucci, and Jessica Levine, "The Classicism of the E 42: Between Modernity and Tradition," *Assemblage*, no. 8 (1989): 82

Square Colosseum, according to Ciucci, could also reveal the aim of bringing Rome to the sea because of the political statement made in the inscription, especially as it refers to *transmigratori*.

The E42 was a project based on political and stylistic positions. Mussolini was influenced by the idea of researching the past; indeed, Italian architecture of those years, preserved the past for propagandistic purposes. Mussolini was so passionate about ancient Rome that he repeatedly likened his empire to the Roman one. He constructed a connection between himself and Augustus from the Jans-Julia family. As Augustus did, Mussolini changed Rome's plan. He almost copied the same actions of propaganda as Augustus, argues Lazzaro. Mussolini changed Rome's plans to build one of the most important art exhibitions of "Italianness," in the EUR, intended to be as eternal as Rome. Ciucci writes about the EUR that it was conceived as an eternal exhibition of the highest values of the Fascist Regime, and representative of Mussolini's aims. In addition to "Italianness," another key aspect of the E42 is the "romanità." Ciucci and Lavine explain this term as a word that emphasizes fascist conception of culture. The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana, with its rational style referred to classical Roman forms, but with modern style and function. Compared to an ancient art and architecture, Ciucci state that the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana change by function and local materials.¹⁹

The Fascist Regime's power was such that it changed Italian law, and also ways of thinking. How did Mussolini achieve this? First, it is important to consider that according to Fascist ideology, Fascism destiny was to expand their ideologies and themselves as saviour and rebirth.²⁰ This idea relied on pseudo-science: Expansionism was not based on political desire for

¹⁹ Ciucci and Lavine, "The Classicism of the E 42: Between Modernity and Tradition," p. 85

²⁰ Aristotle A. Kallis, *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922-1945* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 39

control or on policy of ruthlessness, but on a natural order of the human being, a “scientific” and natural extension of moral values. In order to be able to expand his empire, Mussolini considered violence to be moral. Kallis discusses the idea of violence as part of a larger scientific order, to expand national territory was the way to influence Italians giving them the mentality of strongly warriors. From this point of view, Mussolini connected the word Fascism to the word “elite.” Indeed, the author states that elitism for the fascist regime was based on three categories: “elite of leadership, elite of nations, and elite of the race.”²¹ According to Kallis, these three ideas of elite emphasize and explain the meaning of Expansionism for the Fascists that wanted to claim ethical supremacy. It was also a way to manifest Fascist “transcendental power.”²² In addition, Kallis quotes from Mussolini’s speech describing the fascist leadership as “the greatest force of the Nation.”²³ Indeed, Mussolini introduced a “fascist’ nation (that) was *de facto* an elite among the community of nations.”²⁴

The notion of the fascist elite covers two other fundamental keywords, colonialism and civilizations. These are fundamental to understand the multiple meanings of the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana. According to the fascist idea of expansionism, it is possible to understand the way in which fascists used to arrange schematic geometrical spaces. Kallis affirms that at the very first stage of the construction of the EUR there was the war in Ethiopia.²⁵ Actually, this war is the reason that prompt us to explore, in this thesis, the EUR as an ideological city and colony.

Kallis in another source, provides another element to understand fascist expansionism.

²¹ Kallis, *Fascist Ideology*, p. 41

²² Kallis, p. 41

²³ Kallis, p. 41

²⁴ Kallis, p. 41

²⁵ Kallis, p. 42

Another aspect of the fascist regime that Kallis discuss are the differences between proper “fascism”, “para-fascism,” and “fascistization.”²⁶ Kallis focuses on the use of the word “fascism” to understand how it is applied and used through history. After the W.W. I, the interpretation of a dictatorship changed drastically and the view on those ideologies changed too. Both “fascist” and “para-fascist” regimes were born from an idea of the élite experimentation with new aspects of political domination. In Italy, at the beginning of the 1920s, a strong pattern for sympathetic or crisis-ridden élites arrived throughout Europe.²⁷ Furthermore, fascism has three different perspective: voluntarily appropriating fascist trappings from above; preventive co-opting of fascist constituencies, under overall élite control; and, finally, fascistization as the last move, through the sharing of fascist and traditional élites in a messy and unusual power that comes out in the domination of the fascist partners.

Thanks to the explanation of Kallis on expansionism, the fascist regime can be better understood. Continuing on this aspect, Mia Fuller writes about the idea of colonization and civilization of the fascist regime.²⁸ At the beginning of the invasion of Italy in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa was the capital city of Ethiopia, but this changed after Mussolini’s decision to colonize in 1935. The Italian Empire transformed Addis Ababa into the capital of the *Africa Orientale Italiana*; consequently, Addis Ababa became the new capital of the fascist regime. The key words for Mussolini were Colonization and Civilization. Due to the way of thinking of the Fascism, Civilization and Colonization were closely connected to the idea of Mussolini of creating a connection between Augustus’ empire and his Fascist one. Indeed, to clarify this,

²⁶ Aristotle A. Kallis, “To Expand or Not to Expand? Territory, Generic Fascism and the Quest for an ‘Ideal Fatherland,’” *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 2 (2003): 237–60.

²⁷ Kallis, “To Expand or Not to Expand?” p. 249

²⁸ Mia Fuller, “Wherever You Go, There You Are: Fascist Plans for the Colonial City of Addis Ababa and the Colonizing Suburb of Eur ’42,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 2 (1996): 397-418.

Mussolini created a poster that read “Roma 754 A.C.-1935 D.C.”²⁹ (Figure 2). The poster shows four images: on the upper part of the poster are Augustus and Mussolini doing the Roman salute, and multiple plans of Roman villas. While, on the lower side an inscription says “Barbari 1935” (barbarian) and there is a photo of a group of Ethiopians and a plan of a typical village. This composition of images and inscriptions show strong messages. The first one is the celebration of the continuity of the Roman empire through Mussolini’s invasion. The second message was directed more to the other European countries because Mussolini used this poster to justify the invasion as a possibility for the Ethiopian to “become” a civilized population. According to Fuller, the idea of colonization and civilization brought Mussolini to think about a place that could show the high values of Italianness and the power and magnificence of the fascist regime, this place is the EUR.³⁰

The idea of the E42 was born almost simultaneously with the colonization of Ethiopia. For the following reasons, Fuller states that the E42 is the most successful colony of the Italian Empire.³¹ Mussolini compared himself to Augustus Imperator to create a continuum between the Roman empire and the Fascist one. This poster was made specially to explain in the form of propaganda that Mussolini was able to civilize a place that is not, in this case Ethiopia. For Mussolini, the art of urbanization was fundamental for his colonies; indeed, he transformed Addis Ababa into a planned Civilized colony. The analysis of the invasion to Ethiopia brings about a simple question: what is a colonial city? There are multiple answers, but according to Fuller, the one that best represents this is Addis Ababa. As was stated by Nezar AlSayyad:

²⁹ Fuller, “Wherever You Go,” p. 398

³⁰ Fuller, p. 408

³¹ Fuller, p. 408

Colonial cities, more than other cities, serve as expressions of dominance ... in colonial cities the relationships between the dominator and the dominated are clear, as are the political agenda and the motivations behind it.³²

From this phrase we can have a deeper view of the Fascists ideas. Moreover, this is the way in which Fascists see the colonial city for Addis Ababa. It is possible to state that the E42 is a colonial city due to the previous explanation that can be applied not only to Addis Ababa, but also to the EUR. Moreover, the future new neighbourhood will be the representation of the Italian empire under two main aspects, stylistical and ideological. Lastly, Fuller creates a connection between Addis Ababa and the E42 by emphasizing some features in common such as promoting the Italianness. Due to these historical facts, Fuller the E42 not only as a colony, but as an ideological city.³³ Continuing on the aspect of Italianness, Fuller describes the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana as “the most prominent building in the monumental centre of the EUR”³⁴ this, because of the exhibition about the Italians that the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana would host, and its geographical position.

³² Fuller, p. 407

³³ Fuller, p. 408

³⁴ Fuller, p. 408

Chapter 2: The Square Colosseum as The Eternal Modern-Classical

Architecture

The project of the EUR was officially announced during the Olimpiadi Della Civiltà, but its origins date to the early invasions of Italy in Ethiopia in 1935 and its aim was to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the fascist regime.³⁵ According to Richard A. Etlin, the architectural plan of the EUR is very particular, but at the same time simple. Piazza Axium is the square that creates the two axes that intersect at Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana.³⁶ The Square Colosseum is the most important building of the neighbourhood; indeed, Etlin emphasizes that the architecture is on podium so that it can be visible from Rome³⁷. Moreover, Piazza Axium is a symbol of the conquest of Ethiopia that defined the fascist regime as an Empire.³⁸ The aim of the EUR was also to reach the sea so that Mussolini could control the Mediterranean Sea. Ostia was useful because it could help Mussolini to complete his project. As Etlin wrote, to better explain the style and meaning of the EUR, Cini has written that the E42 was able to establish a distinctive look for that period.³⁹ Based on this, it is possible to argue that the EUR and the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana are elements that iconically represent the fascist regime as a whole.

The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana has been controversial since its birth. The Fascist Regime, as said before, wanted bring back the beauty of the ancient Rome and its

³⁵ Etlin, Richard A. *Modernism in Italian Architecture, 1890-1940*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991. pp. 483

³⁶ Etlin. *Modernism in Italian Architecture*. pp.484

³⁷ Etlin, p. 484

³⁸ Etlin, p. 484

³⁹ Etlin, p. 484

monuments. According to Claudia Lazzaro, the fascists affected the historical investigation. They stimulated students to analyse different aspects of Roman art architecture and to the restoration of found elements.⁴⁰ As Lazzaro wrote, this in-depth study of the ancient world was a move to inflate and justify contemporary art as propaganda. Indeed, as Lazzaro writes, by the end the Roman Empire, inscriptions had fallen out of use, but with the rise of the Fascist regime, inscriptions came back in architectural facades by using their own font that stylistically recalls the Litterio style. The font name is “Mostra,” it is stylistically is similar to the one used in the Roman empire, but it has some differences that let the viewer see the modernity in inscriptions. The Fascists’ promotion of scholarship on the ancient world blazes the way for art of the 20th century.⁴¹

The return to tradition is strongly represented in the design, structure, and composition of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. Mussolini wanted a building that could both represent and host an exhibition of Italianness. For this reason, in 1937, a competition was announced to which many groups of architects participated, and a jury charged with choosing the project that best represented Mussolini’s ideas.⁴² Over 53 projects were presented to the commission. The jury was presided by the president Cipriano Efisio Oppo, and further composed of Marcello Piacentini, Alfonso De Francisci, Giovanni Michelucci, Giuseppe Pagano, Piero Portaluppi, and Giuseppe Caffarelli, all architects and archaeologists.⁴³ The *bando di concorso* (competition) specified that the building had to host, during the EUR exhibition, the Mostra della Civiltà Italiana (the Exhibition of Italian

⁴⁰ Lazzaro, Claudia and Roger J. Crum (Eds.) *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) p. 31

⁴¹ Lazzaro, *Donatello among the Blackshirts*, p. 31.

⁴² “Concorso per il Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana,” *Architettura: Rivista del Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti* 17, no. 12 (1938): 849-864.

⁴³ “Concorso per il Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana.” p. 848

Civilization)⁴⁴. As a consequence, the building was to have a clear structure, that could be also understandable and easy to read, and should be

la sintesi della Civiltà Italiana delle Origini ad Oggi, nell'Arte, nella Scienza, nella Tecnologia, negli Eventi Storici, nelle Leggi Sociali, nel Pensiero Filosofico, Politico, Religioso ecc...⁴⁵

Moreover, the Fascist Regime announced numerous competitions for the multiple works of architectures that Mussolini wanted inside the E42⁴⁶. This *bando*, specified that the style and design of the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana must show the

Sentimento classico e monumentale, nel puro senso di atteggiamento dello spirito, che si è manifestato ed ha resistito attraverso i secoli in tutte le innumerevoli espressioni artistiche del nostro Paese, avrebbe dovuto essere, pur nelle più modern e funzionali forme, il fondamento dell'ispirazione architectonica.⁴⁷

In addition to this, the *bando* specified that there were no limits for the size of the building, but the building must reflect “monumentalism and classicism,” and architects were forced to use local materials and steel.⁴⁸ According to Lazzaro, the specifications about which material must be used, was not an exclusively a design choice, but a mathematic choice that also

...resulted from the policy of autarchy or self-sufficiency in industrial and agricultural materials, following the sanction imposed on Italy after the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.⁴⁹

On the other hand, from a stylistic point of view, the *bando di concorso* specified that the design of the building must be modern and must have a functional shape.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ “Concorso per il Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana,” p. 848.

⁴⁵ “Concorso per il Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana,” p. 848.

⁴⁶ “Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana,” Archidiap, Sapienza-Università di Roma, accessed May 3rd, 2023, <https://archidiap.com/opera/palazzo-della-civiltà-italiana/#myCarousel>.

⁴⁷ “Concorso per il Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana,” p. 849

⁴⁸ “Concorso per il Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana,” p. 848

⁴⁹ Lazzaro, *Donatello among the Blackshirts*, p. 30

⁵⁰ “Concorso per il Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana,” pp. 849-864.

The winning project was realized by a group of Rationalist architects, which included Giovanni Guerrini, Ernesto La Padula, and Mario Romano. Their project included not only an exterior design that portrayed Mussolini's idea of Italian Citizenship, but as it is stated in the bando:

...la disposizione della materia nelle sale dovrà risultare, nei suoi caratteri di unità e continuità, la Sintesi della nostra Civiltà in tutti i suoi aspetti⁵¹.

But why did this specific project win the *bando*? The most obvious answer to this question might be that the project largely fulfills the *bando di concorso*, but there are many stylistic choices that are not specified by the bando as the large quantity of arches and the building's shape that emphasize an idea of a timeless Romanità that Mussolini promoted. Indeed, Lazzaro argues that the multiplicity of the arches and six stories brings the viewer to think of a colossal imperial building as the Roman Colosseum.⁵² Moreover, as Kallis has written:

Romanità, Italianità and Impero would interpenetrate and intersect with universalità in a building that was intended as *monumento* the continuity of Italian genius and its incessant contribution to human progress⁵³

This is clear explanation of why the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana that we can see today is the winning project. Mussolini and the Fascist Regime wanted something eternal that can represent the past in modern key and be for the future something contemporary. Thus, this is why Guerrini, La Padula, and Romano's projects won unanimously.

Excluding Guerrini, La Padula, and Romano's project, another way to understand why they won is to compare them to the other finalists in competition. The project by Ugo Luccichenti is clean and modern, but this was not enough to win (Figure 3). The architecture

⁵¹ "Concorso per il Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana." p. 848

⁵² Lazzaro, *Donatello among the Blackshirts*, p. 30

⁵³ Kallis, *The Third Rome*, p. 253

does not refer to the original colosseum at all, one side of the building is curved and its aim or meaning is unclear. Moreover, the wall adjacent to the curved one is largely empty. It does have only a big window in the middle divided in to four sections. Another finalist project was realized by Dagoberto Ortensi, Cesare Pascoletti and Giovanni Santi (Figure 4). Their projects too, of course, had some general issues that did not let them win. First of all, the style of the building recalls one of the earliest styles inherited from the historicism of the Risorgimento, the Barocchetto. Effectively, historicism is anathema to fascist architecture by this time. Then, there is Umberto Nordio's project (Figure 5). The shape of Nordio's building is similar to the winning project Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, but it neglects to reference ancient forms or buildings type. The last finalist project was made by Giuseppe Samonà and Guido Viola (Figure 6). Their proposed building has one feature in common with the winning project: the number of arches. However, Samonà and Viola projected a building that has so many arches on the North and South facade of the building and nothing on the Est and West sides. This creates a sort of imbalance equality in their own project. Most of all these square arches are not proper arches at all, columns suggest these pouts do not create arches in a classical sense. This said, the winning projects of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italian was chosen because of its well balanced and sober style that is the result of the combination of the two main requirements in the *concorso*, the ancient and moder style that make ancient reference seems modern and the modern seem classically timeless.

Geographically speaking, the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana is located on a hill, where behind it flow the Tiber River. The position of the building is another aspect that emphasis Mussolini's aim of arriving to the sea. The overall design of the building is a cubical in shape, the exterior is made of travertine that recall the ancient architectures of the Roman empire; while,

the interior structure is made of modern material as glass and steel. It has six floors and for each floor there are nine arches for a total of 216 arches. On the ground floor, under the arches there is a group of statues about Italianness that goes all around the building; Mussolini wanted that each of these statues reflects the “national genius”⁵⁴ of the Fascist Regime. Starting from the left of the entrance the statues reflect: Heroism is Architecture; Music is the Right; Handicrafts is the Supremacy of Navigation; Political Genius is Sculpture; the Social Order is Mathematics; Labor is the Genius of the Theater; Agriculture is Chemistry; Philosophy is Printing; Commerce is Medicine; Industry is Geography; Archeology is Physics; Astronomy is the Genius of Poetry; History is painting, and Inventive Genius is Military genius. The style of the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana is connect to the ancient Rome for its simplicity and monumentality; moreover, the material in which is made (travertine) is straightly connected to the ancient roman art. Moreover, as in many other architectures of the ancient Rome, even the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana has a group of statues that surround the building. These statues are made of Luna marble and each statue represent a specific character of the Italianness, as for example the words in the inscription, poets, artists, heroes, saints, thinkers, scientists, travelers, and transmigrators. The particularity of these statues is that they are between the ancient style and the modern one. This because their style in ancient, not only for the pose and for the material in which the group is made, but also for their modern meaning; consequently, for what they represent. In one of the earliest drawings of the Palazzo, the statues were located under the central arches (Figure 7). The whole structure sits on a “podium” that has four statues for each angle named Dioscuri (Figure 8). This group of statues were made by Publio Morbiducci and Alberto de Felici. The Dioscuri are mythical Greek horses that are sons of Zeus and Leda. The presence Greek and Roman

⁵⁴ “Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana,” EUR S.p.A., accessed May 3rd, 2023, <https://www.eurspa.it/en/the-city-within-the-city/estate/historical-buildings/palazzo-civilta-italiana>.

mythology was common to find in fascist architectures. For example, on the pavement of the entrance of Stadio Olimpico, at the time named Foro Mussolini, there are mosaics represented figures of the Roman mythology (Figure 9). The presence of mythology evokes the connection that Mussolini wanted to made between his Empire and the Roman one.

Other elements of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana to analyse are the floor plans. The architecture has six floors plus the ground floor. Starting with the analysis of the ground floor, it is possible to notice a similarity with a plan of a Roman temple (Figure 10). The floor has square plan with two columns frames that emphasize the lounge. This frame of columns is similar to the plan of ancient Roman temple, in which there was a podium that elevate the structure, a decorated entrance, and then inside there was a series of columns used as elements that support the structure and as decorative elements. The difference between a roman temple and the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana is the lounge. Due to its modernity, the Square Colosseum does not have an altarpiece inside, but it has the *sala espositiva* (exhibition hall) in which the artworks should be exposed. Going up, the architecture of the floors is similar, except for one extra element that the ground floor does not have. The upper floors have the *chiostrina*, that is a courtyard inside the architectures (Figure 11). This is another element in common with the ancient Rome. Usually, inside villas or temples there was courtyard to emphasize the power and richness of the owner or God. As a consequence of this structure similarity with Roman temples, it is possible to say that the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana is ideologically and structurally an Italian temple that celebrate the Italianness; moreover, Mussolini explicit the unification between Italian and Roman empire through an idea of a modern and eternal architecture combined to ancient Rome's structures.

One of the clearest elements that refers to Fascist ideology is the inscription on each side on the top of the building that states: “*Un Popolo di poeti di artisti di eroi di santi di pensatori di*

scienziati di navigatori di trasmigratori” (Figure 12). This phrase comes from a speech that Mussolini did on December 26th, 1935 for the very first Italian gathering for the war.

Mai, come in questa epoca storica, il popolo italiano ha rivelato le qualità del suo spirito e la potenza del suo carattere. Ed è contro questo popolo, al quale l'umanità deve talune delle sue più grandi conquiste, ed è contro questo popolo di poeti, di artisti, di eroi, di santi, di navigatori, di trasmigratori, è contro questo popolo che si osa parlare di sanzioni. Italia proletaria e fascista.⁵⁵

These words refer to the sanctions that Italy received from League of Nation for invading Ethiopia. Thus, Mussolini by writing on a building that wants to glorify the Italianness a sentence that comes from a speech that encourage war he shows clearly that the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana is the building inside the Eur that best represent the war in Ethiopia and the colonization and civilization of Addis Ababa. Translated in to English this means “a population of poets, artists, heroes, saints, thinkers, scientists, travellers, and transmigrators.” This phrase emphasizes the Fascist idea of Italians being a unique and elite people. According to Kirk in his book *Fascist Ideology*, Mussolini has three different forms of describing the Italian Fascist national elite: “an elite *leadership*, an elite of *nations*, and an elite of *race* or *forms of civilization*.”⁵⁶ In addition to this, according to Fascist ideology it is possible also to connect the elite of civilization with the word of the inscription *travellers, and transmigrators*. These two concepts are strictly connected to the two fundamental factors that gave the birth to this architecture, that are “civilization” of Ethiopia, and the connection between Mussolini’s Empire, with Augustus Empire. As a consequence, these two historical events make the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana be the iconic building of the 42.

⁵⁵ Benito Mussolini, “Discorso del 26 Dicembre 1935,” [mussolinibenito.it](http://www.mussolinibenito.it/discorsodel26_10_1935.htm), accessed May 3rd, 2023. http://www.mussolinibenito.it/discorsodel26_10_1935.htm.

⁵⁶ Kallis, *Fascist Ideology*, p. 41

The first architectural idea that was planned by Mussolini during the colonization of Addis Ababa was the E42. As previously stated, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana represents both stylistically and ideologically the campaign in Ethiopia and the colonization and civilization of Addis Ababa, but it was not the first portion of the E42 to be built. The earliest building constructed is Palazzo Uffici⁵⁷ (Figure13). The EUR Office Building, designed by architect Gaetano Minnucci at the end of 1937 is the only EUR building to have been completely built before the outbreak of the Second World War. Being located at the entrance of the E42, the building had to have “representative character and yet, within certain monumental limits.”⁵⁸ The complex, with a covered area of 5,932 square meters and a cubic area of 104,656 cubic meters, is divided into two perpendicular buildings, that of the representative spaces for managers and officials, organized around a square courtyard, and that of the spaces for the public and technical staff, developed along the north axis (Figure 13). To join the two bodies is the main staircase for the public, a "real volumetric and spatial joint,"⁵⁹ and a very bright environment where classic and modern materials coexist, such as marble and tempered glass. The second body is divided into the hall for the public, now the hall of Fountains and the large room of the designers (Figure 13).⁶⁰ Taking in to consideration the two different times at which the buildings were built, it is important to understand that Palazzo Uffici is a "pilot" building of the whole new neighbourhood. As a consequence, compared to the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana not only the purpose is different, but also the style and its role.

⁵⁷ “Palazzo Uffici,” Archidiap, Sapienza-Università di Roma, accessed May 3rd, 2023, <https://archidiap.com/opera/palazzo-uffici-dellente-eur-42/>.

⁵⁸ The information of Palazzo Uffici is taken from “Palazzo Uffici” [my translation]

⁵⁹ “Palazzo Uffici”

⁶⁰ “Palazzo Uffici.”

Due to Palazzo Uffici's position and date of construction, the architecture provides a general introduction to the E42. Compared to the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, Palazzo Uffici's design is not initially so different. Both buildings are made with the same material Travertine, and stylistically they share the "immortality" of the classic with a modern material as tempered glass, metal structure even if conceptually different. Comparing the visual impact of the two buildings give and their size you can understand the purposes for which they were built; indeed, another important aspect of the Fascist's designers and Mussolini's will be the combination between style and function. Many new buildings of the Fascists Regime inside Rome are designed in way that the form is function and the function is for. Some examples of this "functional" design are the Uffici Postali (Figure 14) in Via Marmotta 4, and Viale Giuseppe Mazzini 101, or the INPS (National Institute for Social Security) offices in Piazza Augusto Imperatore 32.

The Palazzo Uffici is low and large as many other modern administrative building of the capital); moreover, its function is to house the offices that would then direct the Esposizione Universale Roma and that still direct the E42 as a complex of architectural monument.⁶¹ Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana differs in its structure: it is symmetrical and develops high. It is, like the Palazzo Uffici, adorned with a group of statues under each arch of the ground floor and one for each angle. On the other hand, the façade of Palazzo Uffici overlooking Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro is framed by two sculptural groups made by Dino Basaldella, representing the Chimera fighting with the Minotaur and the Chimera fighting with the Centaur (Figure 15). In the square in front of the Salone delle Fontane there is a monumental fountain. Decorated by Gino Severini, Giulio Rosso and Giovanni Guerrini

⁶¹ "Palazzo Uffici"

with eighteen black and white mosaics it is the most important work of the entire decorative cycle of the building. Of all the external decoration of the building, the sculptural element that remains unchanged from the design to the construction of the building is the statue-symbol, placed at the entrance of the police station and facing the entrance of the E42. Made of bronze by Italo Griselli, the *Genius of Fascism* (Figure 16), represents a young man with his right arm raised in the Roman salute. On the wall to the right of the entrance to the *Commissariat* there is *La Storia di Roma* (Figure 17), a travertine bas-relief made by Publio Morbiducci, featuring many buildings of ancient and modern Rome and some protagonists of Roman history. In the Meeting Room there is a fresco by Giorgio Quaroni depicting the foundation of Rome.⁶² Another aspect to analyse, as previously made for the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, is the floor plan. The architecture is developed on three floors plus the ground floor. The plan is articulated and it has an L shape. Compared to the Square Colosseum, Palazzo Uffici has in common the use of the columns, but the way in which columns are displayed is different. Each floor of Palazzo Uffici has many sections due to the quantity of offices that contains. On the ground floor, Palazzo Uffici is decorated with columns as Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, and it has two empty areas probably made to create space and decorate the architecture. Moreover, the offices are all on the frame of the building leaving the center to decoration elements and space to walk by. The other two floors are simple and logical. There are offices all along the frame of the Palazzo with a corridor that follows the architectural shape. This emphasizes the role of Palazzo Uffici inside the E42 as the building of administration. This explained, the main point in common between the two architectures is *Civiltà*. Palazzo Uffici was built to host the offices the later

⁶² The description of Palazzo Uffici is taken from “Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana,” [my translation].

will manage the whole exhibition of the E42, so it is possible to define Palazzo Uffici as the palace of *Civiltà* of “work” and “builders.” While, the meaning of *Civiltà* for the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana is connected to the exhibition that hosted and to the multiple meanings that Mussolini gave to this word as exploration, cultural excellence, and colonization. Moreover, as stated before, the word *Civiltà* connected to the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana emphasize the Colonization of Ethiopia and the civilization of Addis Ababa.

The differences between the purposes of the two buildings and their decorations, emphasize a fundamental element of Mussolini’s aims and logistics. The inscriptions in both buildings seems to be intentionally related not only to historical facts, but also to Mussolini’s programs, ideas, and aims. The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana inscription emphasizes the camping of Ethiopia and the colonization and civilization of Addis Ababa, celebrating civilization as conquest, and making it iconic. On the other hand, Palazzo Uffici was built before the plan of the E42 was finished. The Palazzo Uffici inscription (Figure 18) reads *La Terza Roma si dilaterà sopra altri colli lungo le rive del fiume sacro sino alle spiagge del Tirreno.* (The Third Rome will expand over other hills along the banks of the sacred river to the beaches of the Tyrrhenian). Analysing the circumstances and the historical events around the two architectures, what Palazzo Uffici’s inscription aims to communicate is the idea that the Fascist Regime is about to conquer and reach every goal. Mussolini expansionism program is reflected on this building too, but he does not aim to colonize Ethiopia, but rather as Mussolini said in his speech “La Nuova Roma” in 1925, he wants to achieve the Mediterranean Sea, showing the power of the Third Rome. Thus, both of the architectures want to celebrate the expansionism programmed by Mussolini. The differences are that the Palazzo delle Civiltà Italian’s inscription refers to the glory of

civilization and colonization of Ethiopia, therefore something that has already happened, while Palazzo Uffici announces what it will happen. It can be considered to have inaugurated the future Third Rome as “*transmigratori*” and “*navigatori*.”

Another controversial element of the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana is the arches. Arches are a common and simple element in Roman art. In this building arches are simple, but at the same time “strange” and controversial because of the way they are displayed. According to Etlin, in his book *Modernism in Italian Architecture 1800-1940*, these arches “raised walls in which the symbol of the arch makes the walls themselves.”⁶³ While classical arches have a different structure due to their use of supporting the weight of the wall. Indeed, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana seems not to have walls because of the repetition of arches. Thus, looking straight at the facade of building, all the elements displayed one behind the another giving the impression that the facade is made only of arches and that it is two-dimensional. In addition to this, Gaetano Minucci wrote an essay about the Esposizione Universale Roma, titled “August 2, 1942” in which he states:

This gigantic cube fully perforated by classical arches constituted a worthy and original idea. Not only did arches stand for the heritage of Roman architecture, but their repetition was intended as a metaphor for the endurance of Roman Civilization.⁶⁴

Even if for others, such as Etlin However, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italia was given an exterior form that does not develop an aesthetic rooted in the latest technique of construction, but it suggests the ancient system of building instead, which was deemed incapable of providing a meaningful symbol for the 20th century.⁶⁵ In addition to this, there is also Antonio Carlo Ponti who strongly criticized the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana by

⁶³ Etlin, *Modernism*, p. 497

⁶⁴ Etlin, p. 497

⁶⁵ Etlin, p. 499

saying that the arches were false due to their exclusive use as decorations and not functional as a real arch, he also added that the building would leave every art historian “perplexed and disturbed”⁶⁶.

The reminder of the ancient Roman art is not only through the simplicity structure, or in its arches and statues, but it is about the concepts and ideas behind its construction. Starting from the connection between Mussolini and Augustus, what Mussolini strongly wanted was to bring his figure as Dux to the same level of the one of Augustus as Emperor of Rome. To create the connection between the ancient and the modern, Mussolini created a road that goes from Piazza Venezia to the Colosseum, this road is called Via Dei Fori Imperiali. This road creates a pathway between the two Empires (Roman and Italian one). For instance, there is another road that Mussolini has made that still goes from the ancient to the modern and it is the Via Del Mare. The particularity of this road is not only the fact that it connects ancient with modern, but it is a road that brings Rome to the Mediterranean Sea⁶⁷. This is another prospective of the expansionism of the Fascist Ideology. This aim to lead the see is for military reasons, but it effects the contraction of the Eur in which there is Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana. Mixing all these information is quite complex to understand, but they are all in the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana. The issue of modern-classic architecture defines the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana as a controversial construction because it is not neither modern or classic but it is something new that evokes all the fascist ideas and all the roman ancient art aspects and styles. This combination of these two elements is explained by Mussolini aims to give to the population a new message by the Fascist Regime and its architectural style, that is to give a new “Classic Order”. In addition to this “classical order”,

⁶⁶ Etlin, p. 498

⁶⁷ Etlin, p. 485

Marcello Piacentini, who was considered as the main architecture under the Fascist Regime, explained:

*“Italian architects knew how to satisfy the requirements of the classical and monumental sentiment required for the big Mussolinian epoque”*⁶⁸

It was intentional that the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana was built as the most “exceptional construction of the E42.”⁶⁹ This means that all the main elements, the use of travertine, Luna marble statue, the arches and the way in which they are displayed, the inscription, and the monumentality mixed to the simplicity of the architecture, were all mixed to represents the big Mussolinian epoque that Piacentini describe.

Colonization and expansionism that surround not only the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italia, but also the whole EUR. The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italia is a new and completely different architecture that can be seen as the element of the colonizer inside the Esposizione Universale. The colonization of Addis Ababa years earlier before the construction of the new colony a bit outside Rome, helped the identification of the fascist ideology inside of the EUR and all around the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italia. end it is something in between the two most powerful arts.

⁶⁸ Etlin, p. 501

⁶⁹ Kallis, *The Third Rome*, p. 253

Chapter 3: The Expansionism of an Empire Through Architecture and Urban Planning

This chapter argues that the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana is the building that best represents the Fascist Regime's articulation of expansionism, colonization, and civilization. Most of the elements that characterize the style and the concept of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana are the foundation of this thesis. The questions this paper seeks to answer are the following: in which ways did the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana become iconic of the regime's ideology, and its colonialism? As previously stated, the Fascist Regime had its own idea about the meaning of colonization; indeed, for the Regime colonizing a new country meant that the invaders brought knowledge and culture to peoples far away.⁷⁰ Following the invasion, this is what they claimed to have done to Addis Ababa. Mussolini stated that by extending the Italian Empire to Ethiopia, it colonized and civilized Addis Ababa's population. According to Mussolini, they were not as "civilized" as the peoples of Europe. The second war in Ethiopia started June 1, 1936 and ended on February 19, 1937. The outcome of the eight-month conflict there was an idealization the Italian Fascist culture as being "superior". According to Mia Fuller, Mussolini's aim leading to colonization was based on orderliness, which means that the Italian Empire was linear, simple, and eternal. Not without reason, these are the same aspects that also reflects the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. Moreover, following this logic, the Fascist Regime used their architects as weapons to emphasize their

⁷⁰ Fuller, "Wherever You Go," p. 401

superiority as an allegedly more civilized culture. Mussolini used urban planning as the science to restore the new capital of the Italian Empire in Ethiopia and Italian East Africa generally and to organize the new city in a way in which the centre is the main civilized area with all the new architecture and surrounded by people. This brought the Fascist Regime to create a new area, which was totally original so as to show their “magnificence”. From this the idea of the EUR and E42 was founded.

Aristotle A. Kallis explains that expansionism and colonization were the two important concepts of the Fascists’ ideology: Was the Fascist regime so obsessed with those concepts? The most obvious answer could be that Mussolini was a Dictator, and it is partially true, but Kallis discusses the conquest of Ethiopia as “successful execution” of Mussolini’s colonial campaign. Indeed, according to Kallis the Ethiopian campaign has been referred to be Mussolini's masterpiece by Renzo De Felice.⁷¹ Moreover, according to the Fascist Regime the only way to expand Fascism was through force; consequently, this created the consensus that fascist all-around greatness will eventually triumph gave the fascist notion fresh relevance. Moreover, Kallis discusses the idea that the spiritual component of violence was viewed as a force for natural transformation, as a crucial phase in the individual's re-education to stamp his character and turn him into a true uomo fascista. Thus, violence was a form of the expansionism that it justified because, according to Mussolini’s speech in the Fascist Congress in 1925, Compared to any sort of negotiation or compromise, it was more moral. This emphasizes the aspect of using violence as means of peace; consequently, the violent colonization of Ethiopia was necessary and justified. Mussolini’s plan to colonize Ethiopia went back to 1925, when Italy was entering into an agreement with Britain about their relative interests in Ethiopia. In that agreement, the Duce

⁷¹ Kallis, *Fascist Ideology*, p. 124

emphasized his “desire to pursue integral violent solution.” Mussolini was so determined to expand the Italian Empire and its power is celebrated in the projects that later represent the Ethiopian campaign, including the E42 and in particular the building that represents Italians as conquer of Africa.

The second concept that Kallis discusses is the meanings of the Palazzo della Civiltà and the craving to colonize Ethiopia. The way of thinking about civilization of Mussolini is the main excuse because he went to Africa. Unfortunately, Ethiopia was not enough. Kallis, provides historical facts that reveal the real aims of Mussolini’s colonization. Italy had been interested in Ethiopia since the end of 1880s when they conquered Eritrea and Somalia laying the foundations of the first Italian colonies in Africa. Italy lost a battle in Adowa in 1896 that stop the Italian expansionism⁷². Since then, Italy’s aim was to conquer Ethiopia. Later in 1906 Italy accepted a tripartite agreement with France and Britain in which the three countries agreed to support each other in the event of an attack. This event, course, compromised Italy’s aim of colonizing Ethiopia. When the Fascist Regime began to rule Italy, Mussolini wanted revenge and decided that despite the agreement with England and France, he would move his troops into Ethiopia and colonize Addis Ababa. For this reason, the League of Nation sanctioned the Italian Empire.

The idea of the E42 was born simultaneously with the colonization of Ethiopia and its capital Addis Ababa. Both these events built, for the Fascist Regime an opportunity to show a modern Italy to other modern nations. According to Mia Fuller, Mussolini wanted to conquest Ethiopia to “civilize” a nation that for to the Fascist Regime, it was not. As Fuller says:

⁷² Kallis, p. 125.

such comparisons were made on the basis of such indices of Civiltà ('civilization') as clothing, education, food, literacy, and medicine, but here, they were made on the basis of postures and floor plans.⁷³

Moreover, another reason why Mussolini arrived to Addis Ababa was to expand the Italian Empire taking a piece of Africa as the other countries of the League of Nations did before. This actively demonstrates that, Mussolini wanted to show the Italian elite and the power of the Fascist Regime through the science arts of architecture and urban planning. Indeed, as poster for his propaganda to the civilization of Addis Ababa, the new capital of the Italian Empire in Africa, Mussolini printed an image in which $\frac{3}{4}$ of the page is filled by a statue of Cesar doing the Roman salute and of course Mussolini is doing the same. Between these two there are geometrical plans of Roman houses that emphasize the civilization through the art of archeology and “modern domestic architectures.” Indeed, Fuller discuss that Mussolini use archeology as evidence of civilization inside the image. Moreover, Fuller concentrate the description of the plans by writing:

the depicted floor plans are essentially rectilinear, and are typical of 'architecture', which evokes both design and symmetry. To complete the picture of Italian Civiltà, the plans shown are of both ancient domestic architecture (which was, in this instance, all rectilinear) and modern domestic architecture (which was represented by the less symmetrical, partly curvilinear plans).⁷⁴

The remanding part of the poster, on the lower side, there is depict an African village and a group of natives. This image has the power to show the meaning of Civilization of the Fascist Regime. Thus, the conquest of Ethiopia reflects on the Eur because Mussolini emphasize the civilization but behind it there is the colonization. Colonizing a new area means that the colonizer subdues and imposes his own rules on the colonized. This is what

⁷³ Fuller, “Wherever You Go,” p. 399.

⁷⁴ Fuller, p. 399

happened for Addis Ababa, but the Eur is seen as a colony because it is a bridge to the sea. These elements are strongly reflected in the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. First, these elements of colonization and civilization are in the inscription, then they are also in the cubical shape that characterize the Rational style of the architecture. The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana is considered the most iconic but at the same time the most controversial building of the Eur because of its style and connotations.

These historical events and ideologies are recognizable in the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana: As stated before: the inscriptions of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana that are repeated on the four faces of the architecture state “Un Popolo di poeti di artisti di eroi di santi di pensatori di scienziati di navigatori di trasmigratori” (A population of poets, artists, heroes, saints, thinkers, scientists, navigators, and transmigrators.) The words “heroes,” “navigators” and “transmigrators” does not refer to the battles won during World War 2, but to the successful military campaign Ethiopia. Mussolini describes himself and the Italian population with those words to remind of the colonization and civilization of Addis Ababa, where they brought *la Civiltà* through the art of urban planning and architecture. Moreover, they also refer to the victory of Italy in Ethiopia over England and French competitors. Based on this, the words “expansionism” and “colonialism” are reflected in the inscription of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. In addition to this, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana can be considered as a sort of monumental trophy that celebrates Mussolini’s successes and the Fascist meaning of civilization; this contributes to the building design to be iconic.

As stated in the previous chapter, the inscription on Palazzo Uffici is material of discussion on Mussolini’s program of expansionism due to the prediction. According to Mussolini’s

expansionism program, the Mediterranean Sea was already a territory of the Italian empire.

Kallis discusses Mussolini's speech "the Number as Force" in September 1929 stating that:

Expansionism, therefore, for demographic-economic reasons was an open-ended process, intending to accommodate the existing excess population, and to provide the necessary space for the – hopefully – expanding population of regenerated Italy⁷⁵

Therefore, the expansion of the Italian Empire is caused not only by political content, but also by a pre-existing concept of a space that Italy owned decades before the Fascist regime. For this reason, Mussolini, in June 1919 during the program of the *Fasci di Combattimento*, made some references to the foreigner policy of Italy that expand the Italian territories and "safeguard her vital strategic interests." Through the years, Mussolini processed this idea developing it into an expansionist campaign called *Mare Nostrum*. The aim of the campaign consisted in expanding the Fascist Regime territories through the Adriatic Sea and achieve the costs of North Africa "as historically belongs to Italy."⁷⁶

From now on, the main argument that connect the E42 and the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana with Mussolini's propaganda of expansionism is the heritage of the Roman past. The campaign of *mare nostrum* aims to take back the sea as "spazio vitale" of Italy. The heritage of the Roman Empire influenced Mussolini to take a place that historically was owned by the Italic peninsula. As previously stated by Mia Fuller, Mussolini makes straight connections between his empire and Augustus, so much that the Fascist regime does not have only to think about the style and the urban planning of the E42 as a continuous of the ancient Rome, but also militarily speaking, Mussolini wants to give the rebirth to the original areas that the ancient Rome owned. Moreover, Mussolini combine the historical

⁷⁵ Kallis, *Fascist Ideology*, p. 49

⁷⁶ Kallis, p. 50

territories of Italy with the idea of race. This emphasize the role of Italians as “transmigratori” as it is ideologically represented in the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. Furthermore, the Duce in one of his last speeches before the March on Rome, wanted to make evident “the Fascist myth of the nation as a positive utopia, combing the significance of territory with the spiritual and historic qualities of the Italian people.” Moreover, Kallis confirms that:

The doctrine of Italy’s right to expand in the Mediterranean was further strengthened by Mussolini’s notion of spiritual and cultural hierarchy of races. His references to “thinly populations areas” surrounding the Mediterranean did not simply amount to a demographic justification for Italy’s claim to a fairer share of Territory in proportion to her Population⁷⁷

Italy, compared to other nations had a “historic heritage” that *de facto* let the peninsula be culturally dominant inside the Mediterranean.

According to Kallis, Mussolini used the expansionistic campaign as an excuse not only to expand Italian territories, but also to use the Fascist Regime’s culture as the thing to save all the “little populations” that surround the Mediterranean Sea. From now on the campaign of Rome to the Sea became a competition for Mussolini to conquer the so called “*spazio vitale*” that according to his ideology was “a struggle for life or death.” Due to the geographic position of Italy in the Mediterranean Sea, Italy did not have any way to the exit. Indeed, Mussolini in his speech at Milan in 1935 says: “Italy..., was an island surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea with no other exit to the world. If her world power ambitions were to be taken seriously, control of her land and maritime *spazio vitale* was the geopolitical and historical key to greatness.”⁷⁸ Of course later, other countries contained the expansionist

⁷⁷ Kallis, p. 50

⁷⁸ Kallis, p. 51

campaign of Mussolini, but the historical heritage and geo-political issues brought *spazio vitale* to be the reason for discussion with the other countries and “it became a metaphor of superiority and vitality” for the elitism of the Fascist Regime, bringing more attention to the power of Mussolini.

These were the actual historical facts that historians as Kallis discusses, but there is another point of view that let us understand why the E42 is located between Rome and Ostia, that is Mussolini’s explanation. He earliest Mussolini’s thoughts of connecting Rome to the sea dates back to his speech “La Nuova Roma,” given in the Sala degli Orazi e Curiazi on the Campidoglio on December 31 in 1925. In that speech, Mussolini announced that he will link the city center of Rome at Piazza Venezia to what will be a rebuild and restored Ostia Antica through a road that will be La Via del Mare. Almost a year later, on October 5, 1926, Mussolini delivered another speech in Perugia about “Roma antica sul mare.” As Richard A. Etlin state, this “was of exceptional importance for the future of vision of Ostia and for the subsequent role it will be assigned in the Esposizione Universale.”⁷⁹ The reason why about this speech was to create a connection between the greatness of the ancient Rome to the development of a new Ostia. During this speech Mussolini narrows a bit of Rome’s history by mentioning that during the decade of the 260BC, Rome became an Empire and Romans created the “first military fleet.” Later, Mussolini went deeper in the history of Rome by mentioning that from 147BC to the third decades after Christ, Rome ruled the Mediterranean zone without challenge. As a result, it can be said that Rome was strong even at sea and that this power was the product of numerous sacrifices, unwavering persistence, and an unwavering will. These qualities were

⁷⁹ Etlin, *Modernism*, p. 485

prized in the past and will continue to be so in the future. By stating this, Mussolini emphasize, not only the power of Rome, but also the glory from where the Fascist Regime comes from. In addition to this, Etlin add that the growth of Ostia and its ties to Rome's old centre became an increasingly significant Mussolinian topic, both for the practical purposes of contemporary communications and business and for the figurative depiction of Fascist Rome as the deserving heir of the ancient Roman Empire. According to Etlin, Mussolini was able to transform his plans into reality. The rise of the E42 brought Mussolini to realize his propaganda of *Roma al mare* giving to the Fascist Regime the role empire. Based on this issues, Vittorio Cini says:

is to be considered as one of the most interesting aspects of the fair. Nor is it without profound significance that the reborn Empire wishes to extend the city toward the mouths of the Tiber near which Rome raised monuments that still appear in all of their admonishing grandeur.⁸⁰

In support of what Cini said, Giuseppe Bottai argues on the linking of Rome and Ostia by emphasizing the origins of ancient Rome “where for centuries the dominating spirit of Rome has affirmed itself.”⁸¹ For Etlin, the empathy between Cini and Bottai come from the phrase “Mediterranean and Imperial Exposition.” This idea of turning an idea into a physical thing rise the affirmation that the Mediterranean Sea was part of a Mussolini’s Empire. The affirmation is explained by the architect Plinio Marconi, who, in a rhetorical way, asked to Mussolini why expand Rome to Ostia and not to the mountains. The answers explained by Marconi was: “especially in the fact that today the sea constitutes the means and the incitement of our political aspirations.”⁸² For instance, Guido Calza, in his article

⁸⁰ Etlin, p. 486

⁸¹ Etlin, p. 486

⁸² Etlin, p. 486

“resurrection of Ostia Antica for E42-[anno] XX,” explain that in order to announce the Esposizione Universale, Mussolini needed to valorise Ostia Antica as part of the exhibition.

Indeed, Etlin explain that

whereas the Esposizione Universale would contain an imperial exhibition in an area designated as the Citta dell’Africa Italiana, the full significance of Italy’s colonial enterprise could be appreciated only through a companion visit to Ostia Antica.⁸³

As Guido Calza wrote “it is Ostia that integrates and completes the vision of imperial Rome.”

All of these contents support let understand the reasons why Mussolini expanded Italian territory to the sea. It is not all about geo-political aspects, Mussolini wanted to give a meaning to his propaganda of expansionism, by giving to the E42 the role of connecting the two main cities, Rome and Ostia, as a consequence, the regime will be considered as an empire. Moreover, thank to the explanation of Etlin about deem the E42 as a “an imperial exhibition in an area designated as the Citta dell’Africa Italiana,” the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana absorbs more the connotation of being a monumental trophy of the civilization of Ethiopia and its capital city Addis Ababa.

To emphasize the meaning of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana as the iconic building of the E42 and the one architecture that in absolute represents Mussolini’s ideology, and his war campaign in Ethiopia, it is relevant to analyse the Esposizione Universale as the foundation of the Italian Empire. According to Bottai, the idea of the Esposizione Universale was born in close connection with the colonization of Ethiopia. Indeed, Bottai argues:

⁸³ Etlin, p. 486

The Abyssinian victory, the affirmation of Italian will in the world, the founding of the Empire were already secure givens in his mind... The political value of the Esposizione of 1942 was, from that time, definitively fixed.⁸⁴

The idea of representing the E42 as the object that can recognize and define the regime as an empire was presented to Mussolini by Senator Cini in 1937. Indeed, Cini designed the E42 as “celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution and the fifth anniversary of the Empire.” The connotation of using the E42 as the element that let the fascist regime became an Empire is based on the earliest urbanistic plan of the Esposizione Universale that Mussolini approve on April 8, 1937. The central area was named Piazza Axium. The name has origins from the Ethiopian war, when General De Bono occupied the center of Abyssinia that, according to Etlin, is the place in which both Axum and Ethiopian emperors were crowned. In addition to this, Etlin affirm that:

The empire of Axum, dating from the first century, was explained to the Italian public as having linked together the cultures of Africa and Arabia. Thus, the Fascist conquest of Ethiopia was deemed a fitting sequel to the ancient Romans’ conquest of Egypt.

As well as building a palace that demonstrates the power of the Italians in colonizing Africa, Mussolini brought a real African obelisk to Rome. Indeed, it is considered as the “last African obelisk transferred to the Urbe” and located in the middle of Piazza Axum at the E42. To emphasize this obelisk as a representative trophy of the war in Ethiopia was considered as the “symbolic, living, and tangible evidence of the conquest of the new Empire realized by Fascist Italy.”⁸⁵ Piazza Axium was designed to embody the “grand antechamber to the entire Exposition.” As Etlin writes, Piazza Axium dominates the plan of the E42 because it is in the middle of Via Imperiale that extends all along the plan;

⁸⁴ Etlin, p. 483

⁸⁵ Etlin, p. 484

moreover, the obelisk is located in the cross axis that intersect Via Imperiale and facade of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. According to Etlin, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana was considered as the most important architecture inside the E42; moreover, the palace is located on the highest point of the plan to give the chance to see the magnificent of the *Civiltà Italiana* even from Rome. Based on these facts, Etlin explain:

...in the first official site plan for the Esposizione Universale, not only did the evocation of the Empire figure prominently, but also the presence of Piazza Axum made eminently clear that it had been the conquest of Ethiopia that had given Fascist Italy its empire.⁸⁶

This can be considered as a proof that the elements inside the E42 wants to express the glorification of Mussolini as the one who brough Italy to become an Empire and to let understand that the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana is connection between all the elements as Piazza Axium and Palazzo Uffici. Moreover, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana is used as reference point of the E42.

Thinking about the E42 as a symbol of the born of the Fascist Empire, Bottai made an annotation that let think about the E42 in a different way. Bottai emphasize that the Fascist Regime traditionally celebrates a conquest or a “great national enterprise”⁸⁷ by erecting a “decisive monument.” In addition to this, Etlin explain that the E42 was a “political attempt to defuse the international ostracism incurred since the League of Nations had condemned the Italian government...” As stated before, the sanctions helped in a certain way to realize how today we see the E42. Due to the sanctions Mussolini was obligated to use local material and as Bottai said “For architecture, this meant the use of either

⁸⁶ Etlin, p. 484

⁸⁷ Etlin, p. 485

traditional, native materials, such as travertine and marble, or new materials from Italian industry, such as aluminium.” Moreover, according to Bottai, this event let “Esposizione Universale reflected the consequences of the founding of the Empire.” Etlin with the support of Bottai quotes, underline what has been stated before. The E42 is the proof that let the Fascist Regime be an Empire that has conquest Ethiopia; thus, it is a colony of the Fascism that can be considerate as an African city that connect Rome to the sea. In addition to this, inside the E42 there is the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana that describe the whole meaning of the E42 through its design and iconicity.

Conclusion

To sum up, can the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana be considered the building within the E42 neighbourhood that ideologically represents the war in Ethiopia? Yes, it can. The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana has a long history that was not established with the construction of the E42, but starts with Mussolini's initial idea of using arts and exhibitions for propaganda purposes. After the Ethiopia campaign, Mussolini decided to build a new colony in Italy that would have a similar urban plan to the ones in Ethiopia, because he wanted to show what the Fascist regime could do and of course use the excuse of an exhibition on Italianness in its drive to reach the sea and expand the Italian Empire. The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana was followed by the style of the Square Colosseum that recalls ancient buildings with its group of statues and its "fake" arches that are purely aesthetics. Combined with the simple geometric shape of the structure, Mussolini's intention for the building was for it to be an ancient building that would be seen as modern for future generations. Thus, it is an eternal building that with its inscription show how the Italians were seen under the Fascist regime and emphasize the role of the building inside the EUR. Moreover, the inscription that Mussolini wanted is directly connected to the campaign to colonize Ethiopia. This is another reason why the Square Colosseum is the building that represents the EUR as a Fascist Regime colony and it shows its connection with the Ethiopia campaign. Moreover, due to EUR's geographical position we can discuss another campaign of Mussolini's campaigns to the Sea. In this case Mussolini, expansionist view to the sea is connected to the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana through to the fact that behind the building there is the Tiber River that

was used to reach the Mediterranean Sea. These and other historical facts and accompanying analysis permit the Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana to become the public image of colonization, an articulation of fascism, and seek to reinforce the Italian sense of cultural identity.

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Figures



Figure 1: Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana (Photo by Wojtek Gurak)

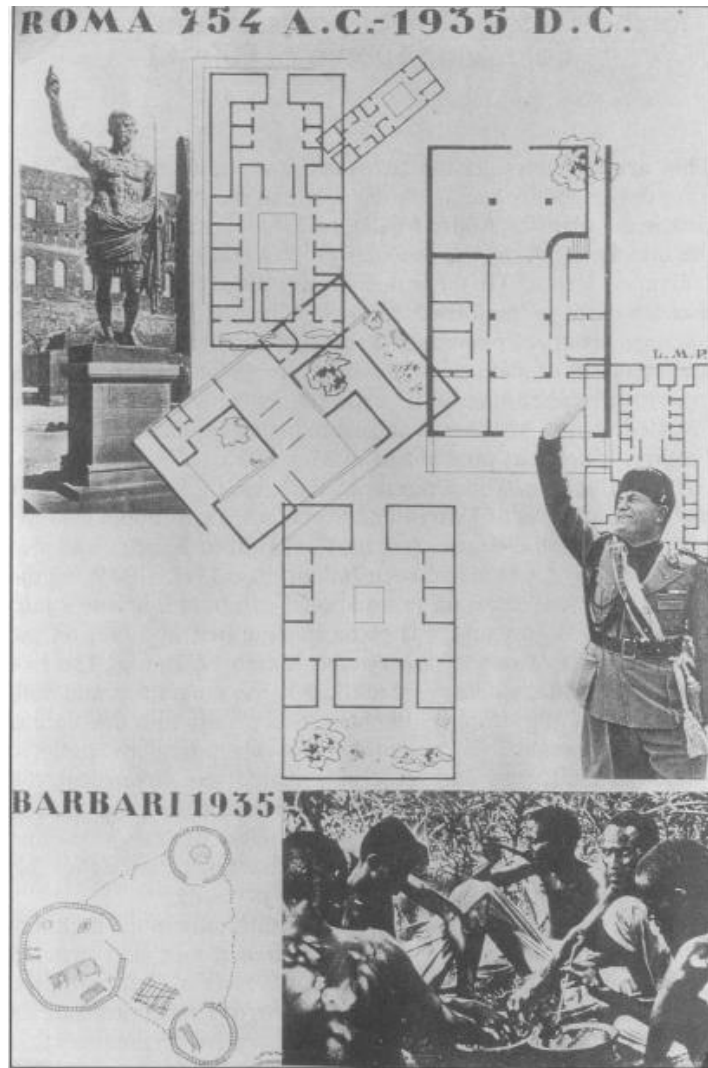


Figure 2 Poster for Ethiopia Campaign [Fuller, "Wherever You Go"]

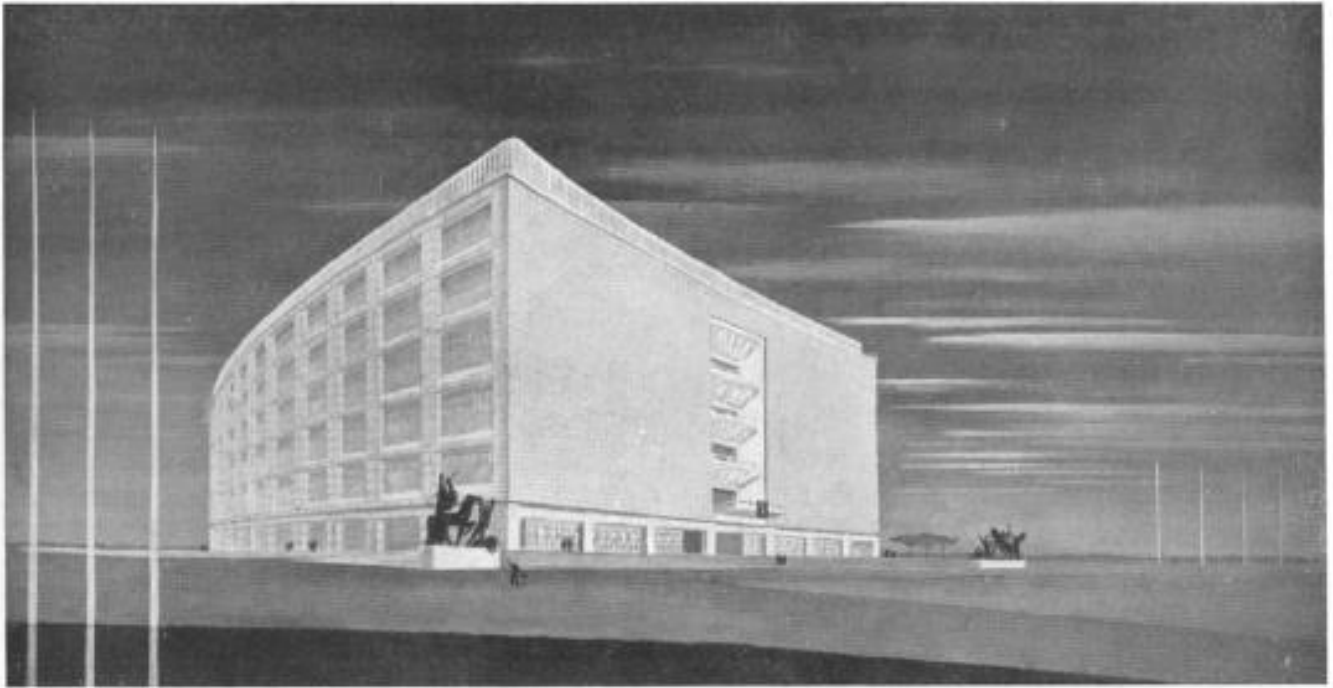


Figure 3 Project by Ugo Luccichenti of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana

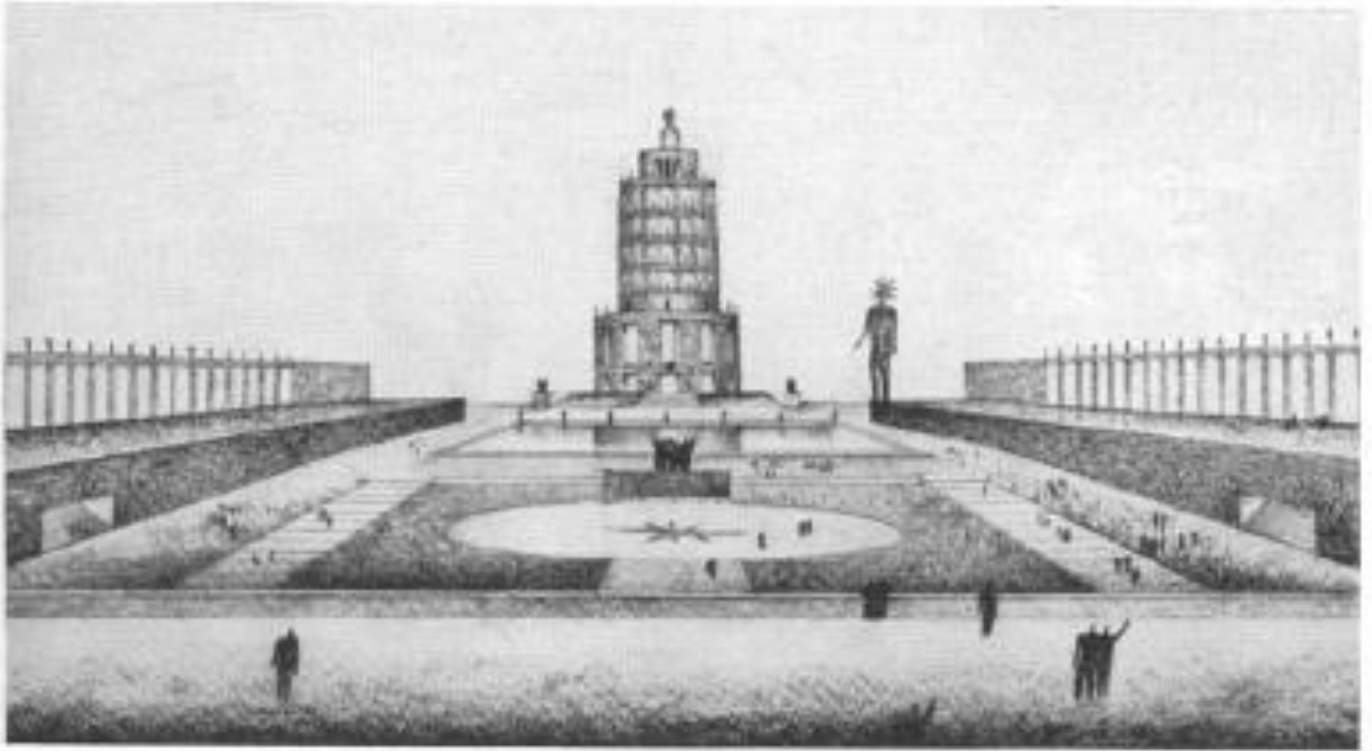


Figure 4 Project of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana by D. Ortensi, C. Pascoletti, G. Santi

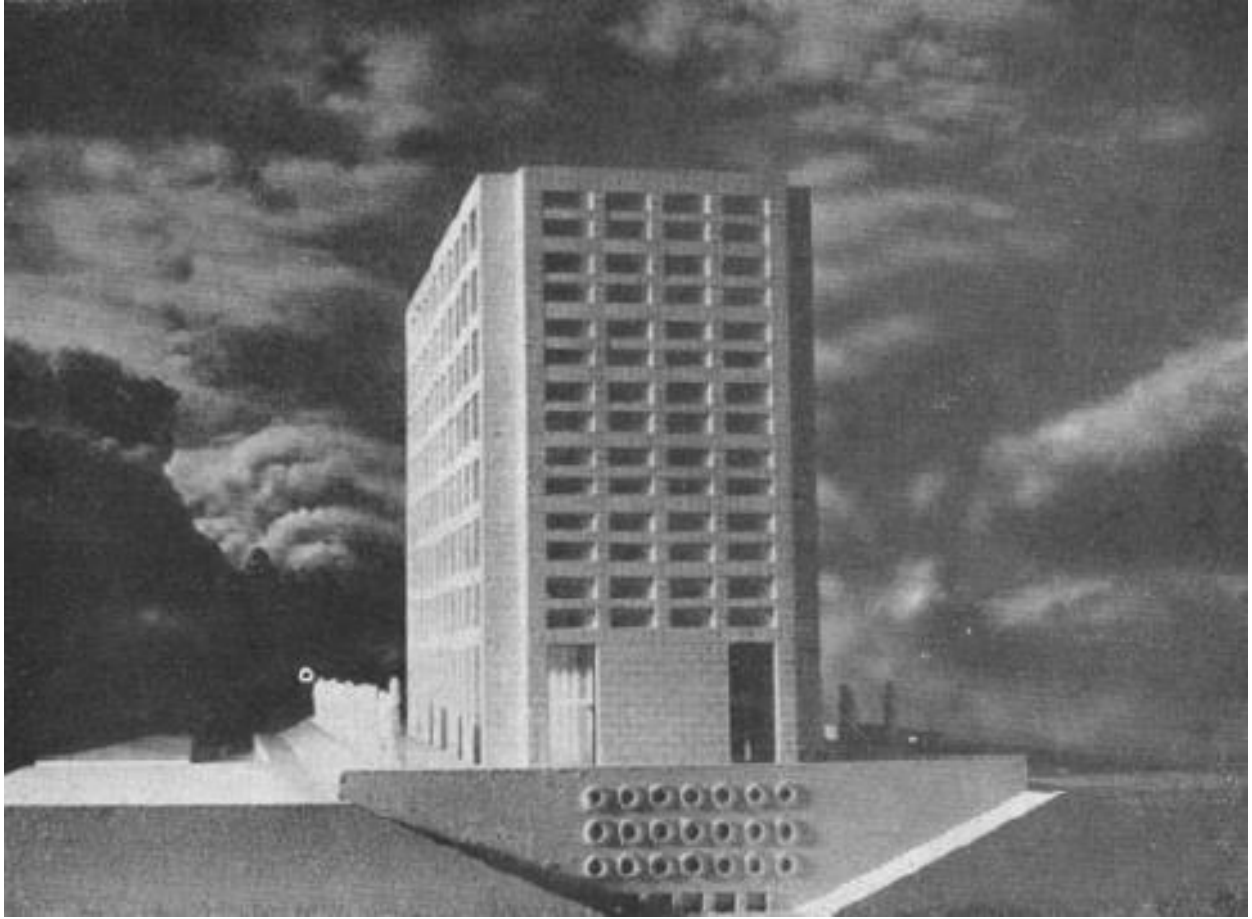


Figure 5 Project of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana by Umberto Nordio

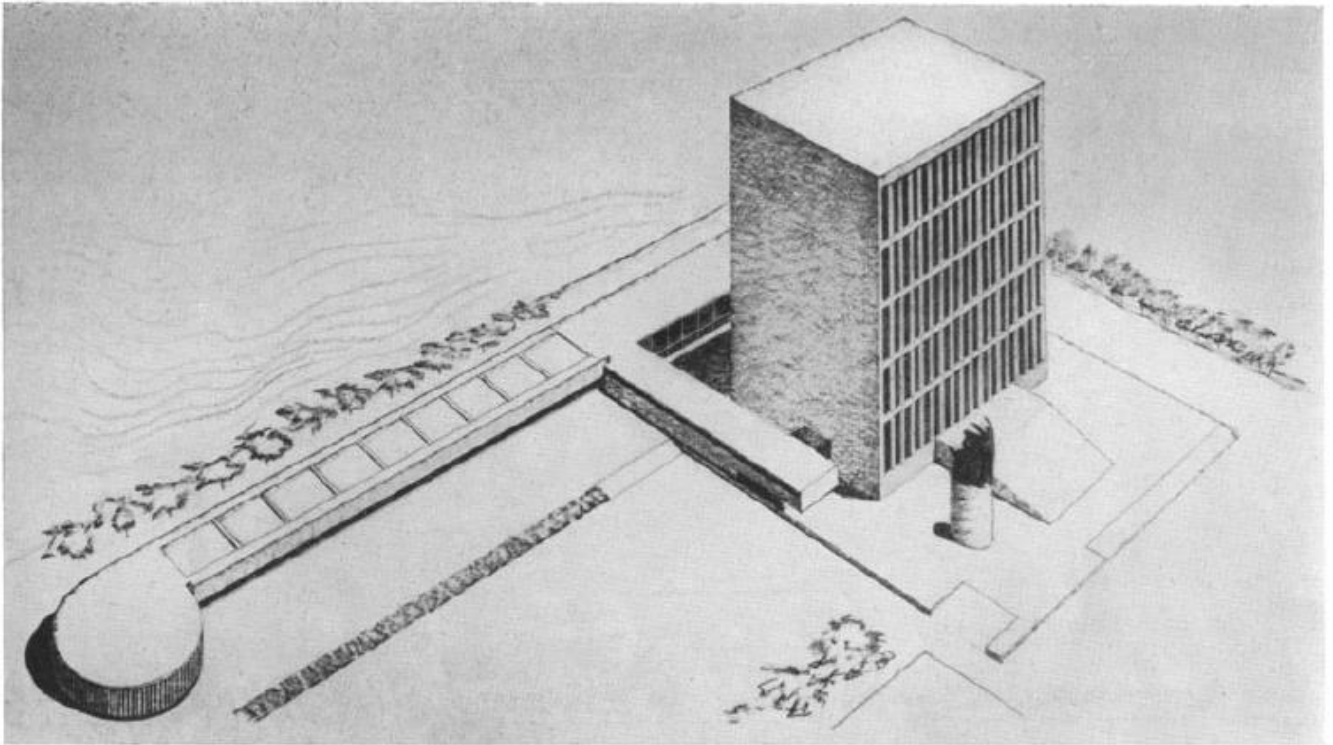


Figure 6 Project of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana by G. Saroni, G. Viola



Figure 7 Early drawing of the winning project of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana



Figure 8 Photo of one of the four Dioscuri of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana



Figure 9 La Lupa, the wolf of Rome, mosaic on the plaza of the Foro Italico

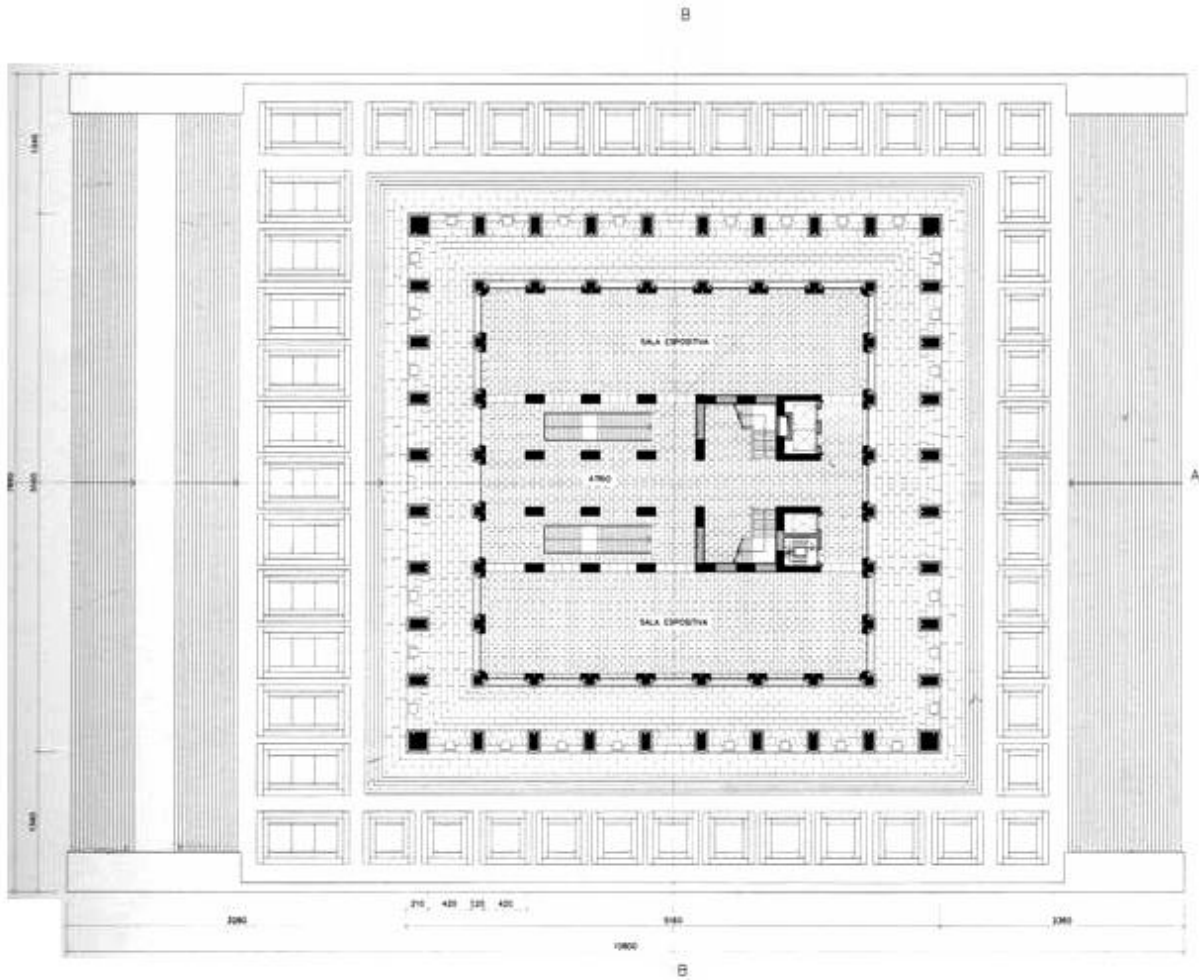


Figure 10 Plan of the Ground floor of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana

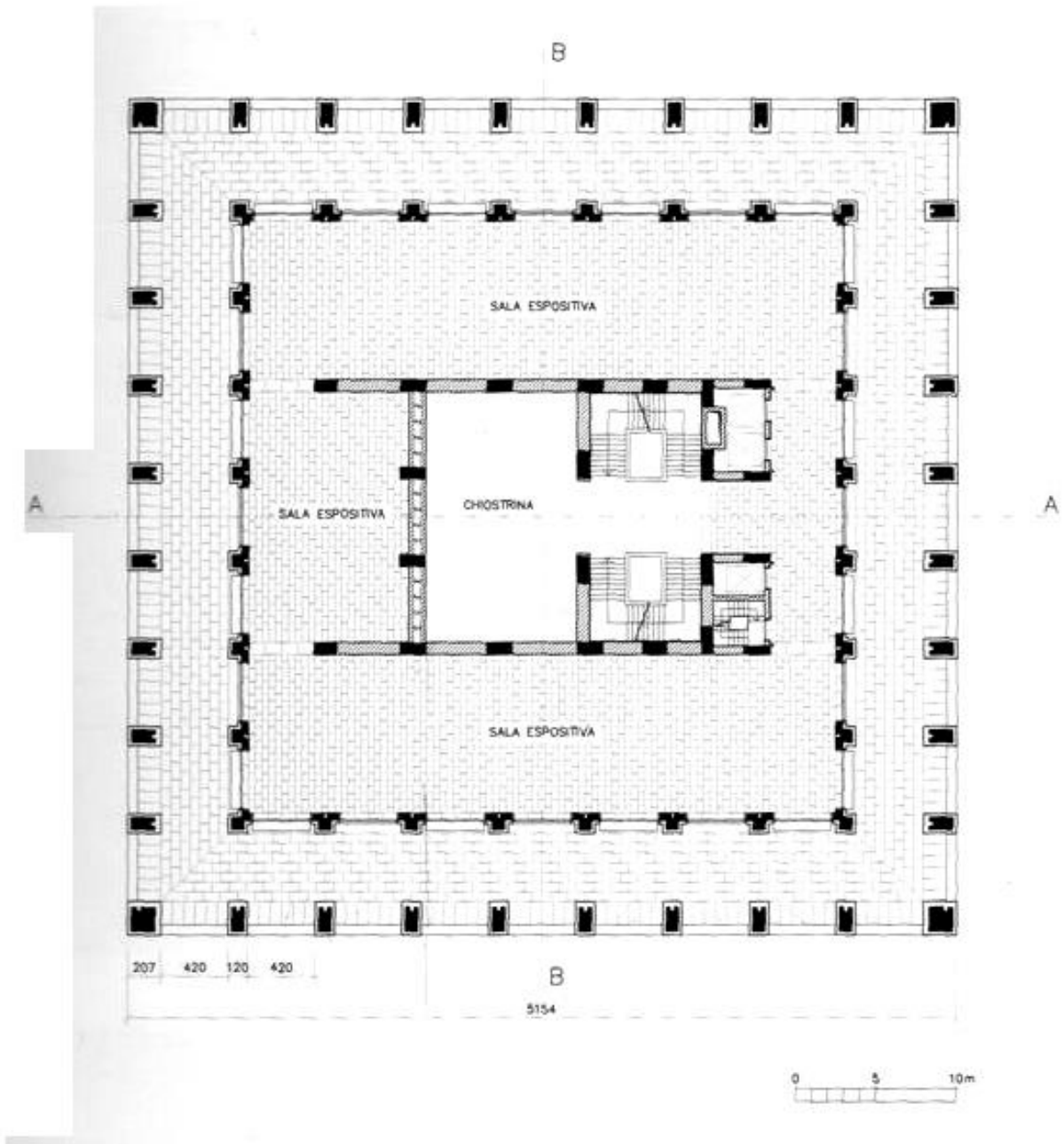


Figure 11 Plan of the First floor of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana



Figure 12 Inscription of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana

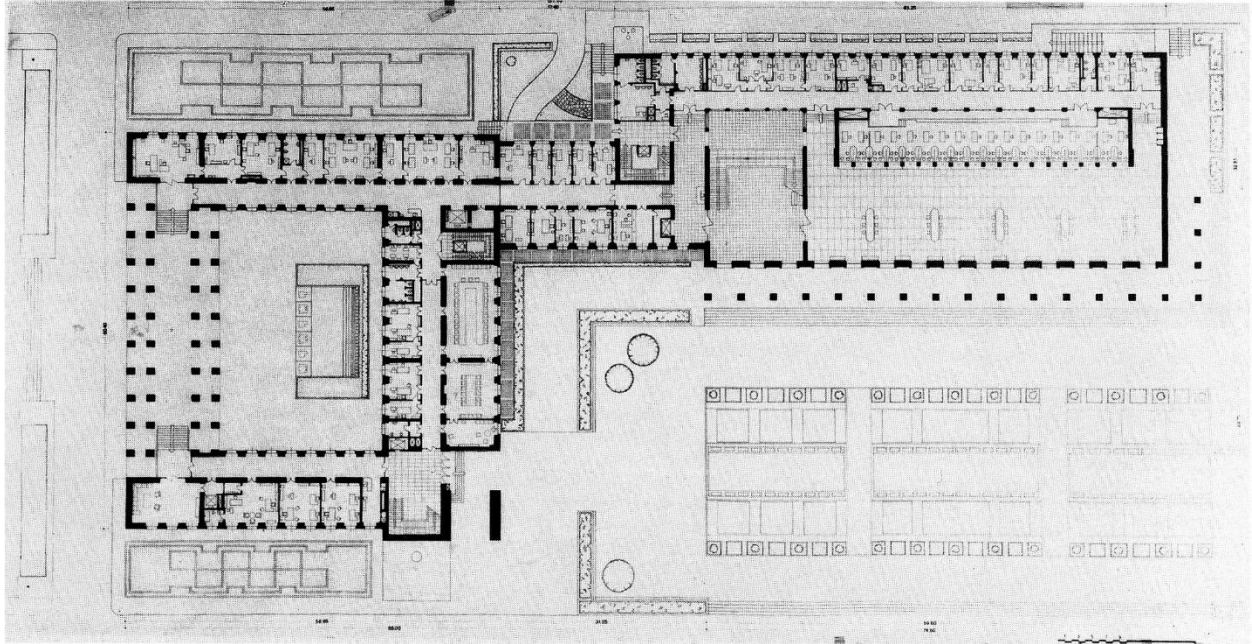


Figure 13 Plan Ground floor, Palazzo Uffici.



Figure 14 Facade of the Ufficio Postale in via Marmorata 4, Rome



Figure 15 Facade of Palazzo Uffici facing Via della Civiltà del Lavoro with the two sculptures made by D. Basaldella



Figure 16 Genio del Fascismo. Statue in front of the Police station of Palazzo Uffici

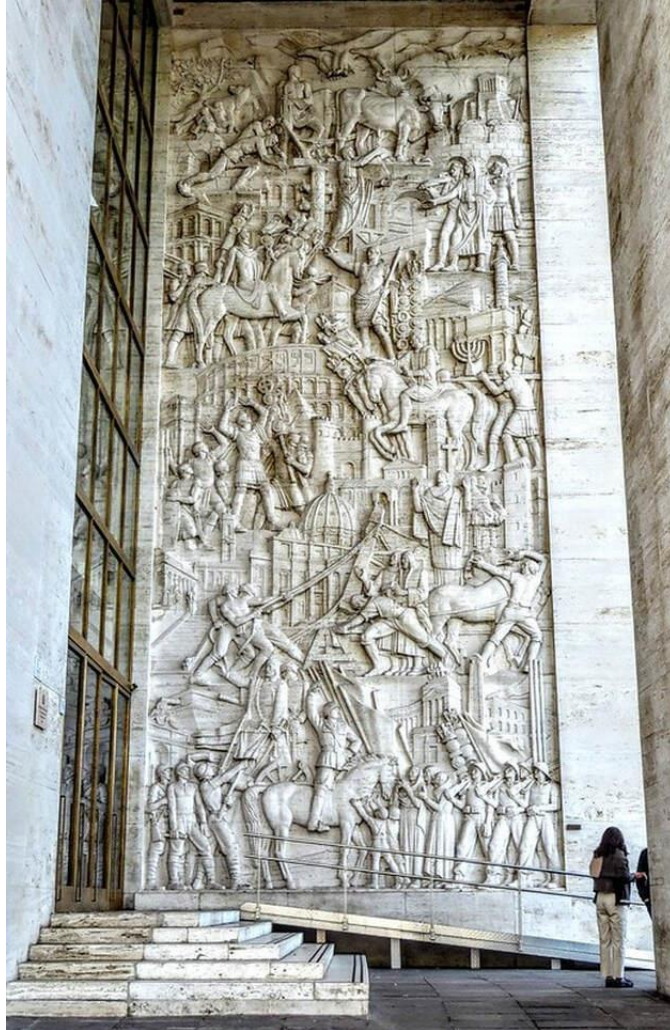


Figure 17 La Storia di Roma, base-relief by Publio Morbiducci. Palazzo Uffici



Figure 18 Inscription Palazzo Uffici