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## Fascist pre-war Universalism (1919-1935): a form of unrestrained fascism

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Department of History

Bachelor of Arts in History and International Affairs

Fascist pre-war Universalism (1919-1935):  
a form of unrestrained fascism.

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## Abstract

“We will speak to the whole world. We will introduce Italy (...) to all other countries. We will use the radio, the theatre, the cinema. And, of course, we will use the press. But, above all, we will use men.”

— Galeazzo Ciano, 1934.<sup>1</sup>

As Fascism became the hot topic of discussion amongst foreign right winged intellectuals of the 1920s, the Italian Fascists were starting to see that their ideology did not have a solely Italian nature. The *Fasci Italiani All'Estero* were the first tool to export Fascism outside Italian borders but the youth and totalitarian leadership-centered, xenophobic (later racially-wise), anti-liberal, anti-communist and corporativist nature of Italian Fascism started to be exported independently of the Fascist Regime's efforts. Realizing such, the latter eventually recognized its international appeal also due to the general decadence of the liberal democracies following the Wall Street Crisis. The Italian Fascists went through the inter-war years concerned by how much vagueness to allow when defining fascism as a universal phenomenon. For them, vagueness would play both in favor and against the cultural imperialist aims that drove the entire attempt to marshal the internationalization of Fascism; remaining vague in setting clear ideological boundaries to allow penetration in national realities different from Italy's while never doing without the stress on the Italian origins of the traits adapted elsewhere. With the rise of like-minded states like Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy found it difficult to share the podium of those admired by foreigners and eventually proved that disunity induced by ideological differences did not only plague left-winged organizations around the world but was something that affected the right as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Ciano's words to the journalist Giorgio Nelson Page. After studying Goebbel's propaganda methods was determined to use the same to enhance the fascist universalist cause. Ciano quoted in Giordano Bruno Guerri, *Galeazzo Ciano: Una vita (1903-1944)* (Milano: La nave di Teseo, 2019), 171.

## Dedication

To my family, for the support given to me in all forms. To my dearly loved father and nonna Caterina, because I know they would be proud of me if here with us. *A voi che siete stati, siete e sarete sempre tutto.*

To Polina, for baring with my lengthy and at times boring historical discussions, for being my supporter and for holding my hand through any kind of storm. Let us share paths and accomplishments like this one together. *Спасибо моя любовь.*

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Thank you to Prof. Luca de Caprariis, for your endless knowledge and dedication for the historical discipline that inspires me day in and day out. Thank you for the archival suggestions and indications that made sure this thesis had a strong research basis. Thank you to Prof. Vanda Wilcox for allowing me to be her research assistant in the past, thank you to Prof. Gene Ogle and Prof. Annette Bryson for their guidance and support. Also, a special thank you to Prof. Bridget Welsh for her limitless personal support.

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## List of Abbreviations

P.N.F.	<i>Partito Nazionale Fascista</i> (National Fascist Party)
C.A.U.R.	<i>Comitati d’Azione per l’Universalità di Roma</i> (Action Committees for the Universality of Rome)
A.O.	<i>Auslandsorganisation</i> (Foreign Organisation)
B.U.F.	British Union of Fascists
P.E.P.	Political and Economic Planning
S.S.	<i>Schutzstaffel</i> (Protection Squadron)
A.C.S.	<i>Archivi Centrali dello Stato</i> (Central State Archives)
B.S.M.C.	Biblioteca di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea (Library of Modern and Contemporary History)
M.A.E.C.I.	Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of International Cooperation)

MinCulPop

Ministero della Cultura Popolare

(Ministry for Popular Culture)

C.R.O.M.

*Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana*

(Regional Confederation of Mexican

Workers)

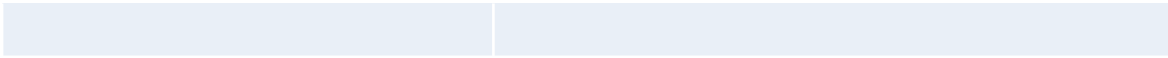
G.U.F

*Gruppi Universitari Fascisti*

(Groups of Fascist University students)

U.S.A.

United States of America



Introduction: *The cultural imperialist goal.*

“Fascism is now an international movement, which means not only that the fascist nations can combine for purposes of loot, but that they are groping, perhaps only half-consciously as yet, towards a world system.” — George Orwell, 1937. (emphasis added)<sup>2</sup>

Extremely nationalistic movements, Parties or governments like the fascist ones cannot internationalize their mission, or attempt to do so, because placing nationalism next to internationalism is an oxymoron.<sup>3</sup> This thesis aims to show that this argument in fact flawed. Even worse, it inherently leads to dismiss the study of the case as a whole. Such an underestimation has downplayed the understanding of Fascism’s complexity, non-Italian forms of fascism and all of its nonetheless dangerous modern heirs for far too long.<sup>4</sup> In this thesis, we will try to define ‘fascist universalization’ as the initially spontaneous process that saw certain defining traits of Fascism picked up by foreign admirers and made applicable in their home countries along with any fascist attempt to render nationals abroad good spokespeople of the fascist cause.<sup>5</sup> Looking at such a process, we will see that the main fascist actors (Italian Fascism followed by German National-socialism) were always highly reactive to and dependent on the status of the international system along with its international organizations; a weaker anti-fascist world order made fascist universalism stronger. Similarly, they auto-defined themselves via the process of internationalization and structured some of their main defining pillars such as the

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<sup>2</sup> Orwell quoted in Arnd Bauerkämper, Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, “Introduction,” in *Fascism without Borders Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe, 1918–1945* (New York City, NY: Berghahn Books, 2017), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Such idea is in line with historians like S. J. Woolf who dismiss fascist internationalism as “a contradiction in terms” See more in Roger Griffin, *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus* (London: Arnold Publishers, 1998), 195.

<sup>4</sup> This thesis refers to Italian Fascism (1919-1943) using a capital ‘F.’ This is to distinguish from international variants of fascism which are referred at with a lower-case ‘f.’

<sup>5</sup> Mind that this does not mean Italy alone. In fact, by ‘original fascist nation’ I solely mean any fascist Regime that emits the fascist rhetoric outside its border; the point of departure.

third-way approach between liberalism and communism; traits that defeated the test of time as an important patrimony for extreme right-wing ideologies to come.

As the first two chapters will show, this process was at first developing as Mussolini initially focused on domestic policy and the building of the new Fascist state. In addition, we will argue that the Fascist traits that foreigners aimed to transplant to their national realities, regardless of the weak governmental intention to export them, were Fascism's fundamental defining points even at home. Building on those, the third chapter of this thesis argues that the internationalization process was quickly picked up by the Italian Fascist state and administered as a mean to promote cultural, political and economic expansion. As a matter of fact, the final chapter of this thesis will be key to reinforce what argued in early chapters. In fact, we will argue that the Nazis attempted to internationalize their mission, and look outside their national borders, in a quicker way compared to the Fascists. Yet, we will do so not to argue that the former were more radical than the latter; the Nazis did not have to go through a 'tamed' period and they came into the 'game' already with an ideally weakened international post-Wall Street Crisis anti-fascist order. The reality of fascist universalism became more established and, indirectly, complex.<sup>6</sup>

Generally, this thesis follows historians like Daniel Hedinger in dividing the period of fascist universalism in two distinct temporal spheres. The first preceded, the 1940 Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis, which had a more ideological nature. The second, covering the post-1940 period, determined by a military and more "pragmatic" aim to join the likely winning side of the Second World War.<sup>7</sup> For such a reason, this essay will cover all the attempts to internationalize fascism

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<sup>6</sup> In such a setting, Italy found a potential ally [Nazi Germany] but was also confronted with a competitor that challenged Italian primacy. For more see Stefano Santoro, "The cultural penetration of Fascist Italy abroad and in eastern Europe," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, (2003), 49.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Hedinger, "Universal Fascism and its Global Legacy. Italy's and Japan's Entangled History in the Early 1930s," *Fascism* (2013), 141.

without taking into consideration the Regimes' military expansionism as such action effectively moved away from cultural imperialism and towards bellicose imperialism.<sup>8</sup>

From an historiographical perspective, this thesis aims to show that the practical strategies of foreign policy ought to be seen as means to reach ideological ends; they are not ends of themselves. In fact, moving away from a reading mainly inspired by the prominent historian Renzo De Felice, we will argue that the Fascist foreign policy did not merely aim to uphold Italy's permanent interests; those *interessi permanenti* that De Felice defines as Italy's need to never fully align with a specific power in order to have a wide decision margin or 'a last say' in disputes concerning, above all, the Mediterranean. Sure, Fascists were aware that expansionism's aggressiveness would have roared perhaps too much internationally. They knew such would have violated the relatively low profile needed to never fully show future intentions to foreign powers and attempt to maneuver through the uncertain waters of foreign policy. Yet acting in such a manner on the long term was simply not a 'Fascist;' arguing otherwise would equate Fascism too much to traditional liberal or conservative stands. Whereas some historians, like Emilio Gentile, who learned from De Felice but revised his arguments, tend to merge the ideological and pragmatism aspects, most see one aspect overlapping the other. Now, we shall dwell in trying to outline some of these claims.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> We will refer to cultural imperialism as a way to let traits from one country's culture penetrate and replace those of another country while never losing perception of where they originally originated from. In this way, many countries will have their attention directed at the point of origin and the latter can enjoy a high share of moral power over them. This is just a single part of the general idea of imperialism and it shall not be divided from the physical expansionism that, at least in Mussolini's case, was similarly theorized since very early years. In fact, since 1922, Mussolini believed that it was imperative for the prolific "Italian race" to find "outlets for its fast-growing population of more than 40 million people." See more in Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2007), 438.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, Gentile argues that the Regime started to champion ideology even in times where it looked like it was doing the opposite. Much in line with what is exposed in Chapter II of this thesis, he argues that the "changes in the organization and function of Fasci All'Estero," were not carried out to sideline apparent unrealistic aims. In fact, the standardization of the group to the Regime "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" of the late 1920s. See more in Emilio Gentile, "I Fasci Italiani All'Estero. The 'Foreign Policy' of the fascist party," in *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, ed. Stein Larsen Ugelvik (New York City, NY: Boulder, 2001), 114.

First of all, it is important to explore the thought of those who follow De Felice's thesis and stress on the centrality of the permanent interests in the Fascist thought. Many historians like Marco Cuzzi believe that, notwithstanding its strong ideological link to "Rome and *romanità*," fascist universalism was nothing more than a mask. For him, the entire internationalist experiment's real conviction and force aimed to protect foreign policy interests.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Cristopher Duggan agrees. Quoting Mussolini to prove that the Duce anticipated a European conflict already by 1927, he argues that Italy was ready to use any method to increase its impact on the international setting and make its "voice heard" so to be a determining power at a "crucial juncture in European history."<sup>11</sup> Christian Goeschel, in his book *Mussolini and Hitler: The Forging of the fascist Alliance*, applies a similar logic when evaluating Italy's relations with Nazi Germany. As a matter of fact, apart from conducting an interesting study on the personal relations between Mussolini and Hitler and the impact on the two nations' relations, he emphasizes on strategies. He shows that the fascist international coordination of the 1930s was initially an Italian seemingly anti-Nazi attempt to strengthen the 'pendulum strategy;' swinging support between France and Germany without ever showing clear side taking.<sup>12</sup> Along similar lines, German Historian Arnd Bauerkämper argues that adaptation of Italian Fascism abroad was not an ideologically driven experiment but an attempt, by authoritarian-minded leaders, to serve their political interests.<sup>13</sup> In fact, because of domestic circumstances, some fascist admirers turned against the Italian example.<sup>14</sup> Somewhat differently, we see that the Marxist interpretation, presented by thinkers like Leon Trotsky, sees the fascist internationalization as a practical (and

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<sup>10</sup> De Felice quoted in Marco Cuzzi, *Antieuropa, Il fascismo universale di Mussolini* (Milan: M&B Publishing srl, 2006), 109.

<sup>11</sup> Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 494

<sup>12</sup> Christian Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler: The Forging of the Fascist Alliance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 5.

<sup>13</sup> Bauerkämper and Rossoliński-Liebe, "Introduction," 5.

<sup>14</sup> Maggie Clinton, *Revolutionary Nativism Fascism and Culture in China, 1925-1937* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 13.

not ideological) synonym of “Imperialist capitalism’s” expansionist attempt “to solve its contradictions” of trade or production deficits.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, already by 1921, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci agreed that such defined fascism “on an international scale.”<sup>16</sup> Other Marxist historians like like Henry Ashby Turner in *German Big Business and the rise of Hitler* or Pietro Melograni in his book *Gli industriali e Mussolini* are keen in highlighting that fascism could not exist without conservative industrial groups’ support both at home and abroad. In that, on a basilar level, the Marxist critique correctly asserts capitalism’s financing the fascist growth. Yet, we shall not look at such as more than a base for further exploration.<sup>17</sup>

We shall now turn to the ideological dimension. In his *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928-1936*, Michael Arthur Ledeen states that whereas the internationalization of fascism was at first an effort to assure foreign admirers that fascism was about “guaranteeing their independence and integrity” the real identity of the movement was always purely ideological. Moreover, Ledeen sees the use of corporativism and a “universal, Christian, yet tolerant doctrine” as the major forces behind the export of Fascism.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Ledeen follows the line of those who look into the “Risorgimento roots” of Fascism and define the latter not as clean break with the past, but the radical completion of a process started in 1860 emphasizing Fascism’s anti-Nazi nature before the 1936 Rome-Berlin Axis. In fact, historians like Ledeen and John A. Davis believe that fascist internationalism can be seen as an effort to create a Latins’ “New Europe” as a remastered version of Mazzini’s “Young Europe” which did

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<sup>15</sup> Trotsky quoted in Griffin, *International Fascism*, 69.

<sup>16</sup> Gramsci quoted in Griffin, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Many argue that is “misleading” to think of fascism as purely “developmental.” In fact, “Fascism never worshipped economic growth for its own sake” and, as the study of corporativism shows, it aimed to place politics above economics. See more in Griffin, 200. Nevertheless, throughout the years, several Marxist historians have moved away from the orthodox equation “economic contradictions = imperial expansion.” We should consider, for instance, the work by Tim Mason and his emphasis on the primacy of politics in Hitler’s decision making.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Arthur Ledeen, *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928-1936* (New York City: Howard Fertig, 1972), 114.

want the adherence of National-socialist Germany.<sup>19</sup> In such terms, they do not deny that a fascist Europe was staunchly promoting a third way between Liberalism and Communism, but, at least initially, they argue that it posed itself as an alternative even to Nazism's Germanic roots.<sup>20</sup> Other historians like Paul Wilkinson state that "it was not so much the rather nebulous ideology of Italian fascism" but the "mass revolutionist techniques" that "proved so appealing" to those that wanted to apply the Fascist model in their homelands.<sup>21</sup> Still others refer solely to corporativism. In fact, many, like Gaetano Salvemini, see the peak of the of international interest towards Fascism heighten with the rise of curiosity for corporativism's economic theory as a third way between the capitalist and communist models. To illustrate, in his account, Salvemini explains how Italy became, for some time, "the Mecca of political scientists, economists, and sociologists" interested in Fascism seeing the decadence of liberalism after the 1929-Wall Street crisis.<sup>22</sup> Yet, Stanley Payne argues that Fascism's "vitalism and dynamism produced a model of 'permanent revolution' that almost by definition could take no simple, clear final form;" remaining vague in order to adapt to different national circumstances defined the process as whole. In accordance, Jeffrey T. Schnapp quotes Giuseppe Bottai to explore Fascism's "non-theoretical (...) [non] systematic [or] preordained" nature to argue a similar point.<sup>23</sup> Surely, the approach which bases on ideology can be messy and knotty. Yet, this thesis aims to comparatively study the patterns in the most common fascist traits which stimulated attraction around the world. We will conclude that such traits were youth and totalitarian leadership-centered, xenophobic (racially-wise), anti-liberal, anti-communist and corporativist.

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<sup>19</sup> Davis quoted in Michael Bentley, *Companion to Historiography* (London: Routledge, 1997), 582.

<sup>20</sup> Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, 84.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Wilkinson "Fascism," in *International Fascism*, ed. Roger Griffin, 27.

<sup>22</sup> Salvemini quoted in Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 491.

<sup>23</sup> Bottai quoted in Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *A Primer of Italian Fascism* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 76.

Overall, one will never see a clearly spelled distinction between those who read the entire process of internationalization focusing on how it was functional to the interests of Italian policy vis-à-vis a more ‘ideological reading.’ We simplified for clarity’s sake. Mostly, it can be widely agreed that, as historians like Ruth Ben-Ghiat state, the “admonitions to ‘keep Italy,’” along with fascism, “Italian,” were something that “co-existed” with stimulus to adopt an “imperial” consciousness that relied on a reading of Fascism as a “universal rather than a national phenomenon.”<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the aim of this thesis is to show how the conviction of fascism’s universality was always central to Italian and global fascism as a mean to reach an imperial aim along with serving as a legitimizing base for the Axis power-alliance that focused, during WWII’s prelude, on military expansionism.

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#### Chapter I: *Fascism in a cardboard suitcase.*

“The *Fasci* must be the superb and immaculate mirrors of Italian fascism abroad  
(...) fascism must have its hands abroad, like at home, so to have the means and  
instruments necessary to promote, develop and protect the policy of the  
Government.” — Cornelio Di Marzio, 1927.<sup>25</sup>

Since the beginning of its existence, Fascism looked outside its country’s borders.<sup>26</sup> This was mostly due to the existence of large Italian communities abroad. In fact, an ultra-nationalist ideology would inherently aim to speak to nationals abroad just as much as those at home. With both as targets, the Regime hoped to coordinate Italians abroad so to affirm national before

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<sup>24</sup> Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 11.

<sup>25</sup> Cornelio Di Marzio, transcript of his speech, *Il Legionario*, 5 February, 1927, MAECI Archives.

<sup>26</sup> Reminder: This thesis refers to Italian Fascism (1919-1943) using a capital ‘F.’ This is distinguish from international variants of fascism which are referred at with a lower-case ‘f.’

regional identities and spearhead, in a quicker way, the mission to ‘make the Italians’ that was advocated by Italy’s founding fathers such as by Massimo d’Azeglio. In order to do so, the Party created the organization of the *Fasci Italiani All’Estero* (Italian *Fasci* Abroad); the very first attempt to expand fascism outside the Italy’s borders. By promoting and directing the emergence of Fascist cells abroad, the Fascists aimed to defend the rights of Italian immigrants around the world and, ideally, indoctrinate them to accept a quintessentially orderly way of life.

Unfortunately, much of the documentation on the *Fasci* has been lost so it is hard to reconstruct the organization’s history in an ideal way.<sup>27</sup> This chapter will reveal the limitations of the *Fasci All’Estero* but, at the same time, Mussolini’s growing consciousness of fascism’s universal value. Which both emerged from the attempt to coordinate largely illiterate Italian immigrant communities scattered around the world<sup>28</sup> with an underlying cultural imperialist goal constantly in mind.<sup>29</sup>

From the beginning, Italian Fascists had opposed the liberal idea of immigrant integration. For them, the latter was seen as “the absurd theory” that, “denying centuries and centuries of history,” sought to cancel “infinite differences of race and culture” and “make uniform what social life has in every time diversified.”<sup>30</sup> In response, some Italians abroad, fearful of the “xenophobia shown by sections of the [non-Italian] community” in hosting countries, saw the *Fasci* as defenders of Italian identity (*italianità*).<sup>31</sup> In such a setting, exploring

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<sup>27</sup> A great amount of unclassified folders regarding the *Fasci* lost after the Second World War. Accordingly, this thesis relied on the most numerous source available; *Il Legionario*, the official journal of the *Fasci All’Estero*. See more in Stefano Luconi, “I *Fasci* negli Stati Uniti: gli anni Trenta,” in *Il Fascismo e gli emigrati* ed. E. Franzina, M. Sanfilippo (Bari: Editori Laterza), 133

<sup>28</sup> In Greece, illiteracy reached 90% amongst the Italian immigrants, limiting the spread of fascist newspapers and propaganda booklets. See more in F. Rossi to Giuseppe Bastianini, November 8, 1924, b.11, Archivi di Famiglie; Cornelio Di Marzio, ACS.

<sup>29</sup> This is implied when *Il Legionario* described leading figures like Cornelio Di Marzio as “a model fascist” (“*fascista tipo*”) who had “a constant concern to connect the interests of his country with the things he examines abroad and (let’s say it in one ear) a secret hope and an implied desire to possess, either in the imminent or distant future, the lands and riches that the homeland needs so much. And—if not at least that—the influence of the prestige of rights that other nations boast of instead of [Italy]” (emphases added). See more in “Cornelio Di Marzio,” *Il Legionario*, 22 January, 1927, MAECI Archives.

<sup>30</sup> Dario Lischi (Darioski), “Per la difesa dell’Italianità,” *Il Legionario*, 1 January, 1927, MAECI Archives.

<sup>31</sup> Cresciani, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Italians in Australia 1922-1945* (Canberra: Australian National University Press), 4.

the initially semi-independent *Fasci All'Estero* organization, we will determine that the post-1927 coordination of the latter in the Regime, done as a remedy to disorganization, did not weaken but strengthened the *Fasci's* underlying mission.<sup>32</sup> Superficially, the coordination seemed to sideline the radical ideas of thinkers like Ciro Trabalza<sup>33</sup> who had clear cultural imperialist aims in linking “the diffusion” of Italian language and culture abroad with “cultural expansion.” However, fully incorporating the *Fasci All'Estero* in the Regime was just an attempt to maximize the possibility to reach their mission. Leaving freedom to the *Fasci* would have been desirable if prospects of increasing revolutionary action would have been likely so that the *Fasci* could have adapted different plans to different revolutionary prospects around the world.<sup>34</sup> However, seeing that such was deemed impossible by many, Fascism abroad was to regiment Italians as the Regime was doing within the country rather than follow a separate revolutionary plan.<sup>35</sup> Yet this shall not lead to think that the coordination aimed to install a minimalist approach in line with previous liberal governments who solely limited themselves, at times in a passive way, at defending the migrants’ interests abroad. In fact, by giving less autonomy to the *Fasci*, Fascism abroad was to become “not simply a Party, but a real Regime” that would unite all Italians regardless of affiliation to the PNF or the *Fasci*.<sup>36</sup>

The *Fasci All'Estero* initially followed a general conservative line that aimed to render the Italian immigration abroad functional to the interests of the state.<sup>37</sup> Yet, unlike those who use

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<sup>32</sup>This was in line with the *fascistization* of the State which culminated with enacting of the *leggi fascistissime* (Super-fascist laws) that standardized the PNF to the State and weakened the independence of other political organizations.

<sup>33</sup> Important fascist thinker interested in matters of schooling and pedagogical issues and cultural promotion abroad. From 1921 to 1928 he was General Director of the Italian Schools Abroad (*Scuole Italiane All' Estero*); a teacher and a bureaucrat fully aligned with the Regime.

<sup>34</sup> “Nel Fascismo all'estero: interessi e rappresentanza,” *Il Legionario collection*, 8 January, 1927, MAECI Archives.

<sup>35</sup> The *Fasci's* 1923 mandate, ratified in 1925, stressed on the principle of respecting local authority abroad regardless if the latter hindered the growth of a Fascist struggle to counter the communists. This is because the Italian Fascists saw evident limits in imitating the *Squadristo* years (1919-1921).

<sup>36</sup> Lischi (Darioski), “Per la difesa dell’Italianità,” *Il Legionario*.

<sup>37</sup> Rhetoric similar to that of Carlo Delcroix who urged Italy not to “its children [émigrées] to other peoples to enrich them and regenerate them with our blood” is present in several articles of the nationalist *Rivista Militare Italiana* between 1910-1914. In its pages, conservatives theorized that migrants could be useful in Libya and future colonial territories. See more in Carlo Delcroix, “Il nuovo spirito e le alte responsabilità della rappresentanza nazione all'estero,” *Il Legionario*, 9 April 1927, MAECI Archives.

their case study to emphasize how Fascism followed liberal Italy's traditional foreign-policy, we aim to show Fascism's rejection of such liberal values.<sup>38</sup> In fact, in the early 1920s, there was "no indication that the internal debate between intransigents and revisionists divided militants abroad"<sup>39</sup> because the Fascists circles were united in a "relentless war on the Ministry for Foreign Affairs;" a tension between the traditional diplomatic corps and Fascist bodies was clear.<sup>40</sup> A good evidence is Giuseppe Bastianini<sup>41</sup> who complained about the "persistent resistance of the environment that deals with commerce; one that mainly belongs to the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Paris." For Bastianini, such an institution was "exquisitely opportunistic." On the one hand, it is always ready to "show itself, in Italy, as enthusiastic and respectful to the National Government in order to have honors and aid in business." At the same time, "it is not very convenient to show oneself as fascist" in the Chamber as the fellow countrymen are not refraining from taking "clearly hostile attitudes" against the *Fasci*.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Macaluso, of the Fascist League of North America (*Lega Fascista del Nord-America*) hoped that the Fascists would change the traditional tendency of doing "nothing more than to organize banquets, patriotic ceremonies and campaigns in defense of or against John, Jerry, and Jake Doe (*Tizio, Caio e Sempronio*)."<sup>43</sup> Yet, such sentiments, majorly advocated by the *Fasci All'Estero*'s youngest members, never became official. On the one hand, travel restriction was one of the weapons used against the *intransigenti* that aimed to carry out their anti-liberal

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<sup>38</sup> Historians like Renzo De Felice do not place a lot of emphasis on the attempts by the Regime to look outside its borders. They do so only to show the attempts to temper the radical ideas of the 1920s who called for the internationalization the fascist mission, considering the latter as evidence to show that the Regime sidelined ideology for a more pragmatical line typical of liberal foreign policy.

<sup>39</sup> Luca de Caprariis, 'Fascism for Export? The Rise and Eclipse of the Fasci Italiani all'Estero,' *Journal of Contemporary History* (2002), 161.

<sup>40</sup> De Caprariis, 151.

<sup>41</sup> Bastianini, a former *squadrista* from Perugia, was one of the eight fascist leaders who decided to march on Rome. Despite his young age, in 1922 he was a member of the Great Council of Fascism and was a secretary of the *Fasci Italiani All'Estero* from 1923-1927. Cornelio Di Marzio followed him to be the secretary from 1927-1928 to then leave the position to Piero Parini until the dissolution of the body in the 1930s. Bastianini later became the ambassador to London from 1939.

<sup>42</sup> Giuseppe Bastianini to Alessandro Chiavolini, 22 April, 1924, b.642, Segreteria Particolare del Duce; carteggio ordinario 1922-1945, ACS.

<sup>43</sup> Francesco Macaluso, "Camere di commercio all'estero ed espansione italiana," *Il Legionario*, 29 September, 1927, MAECI Archives.

struggle abroad and they were at times ratified by Mussolini himself.<sup>44</sup> On the other, the Duce never took clear sides and limited himself to advice, much in line with Mr. F. Rossi of the Athen's *Fascio*, to never cross the "limits of sobriety" and respect local realities.<sup>45</sup> In fact, the insistence on abiding by the laws of the host countries was to make Fascism's "weapon more effective" in presenting a better image of Italy to foreigners in line with the constant cultural imperialist goal.<sup>46</sup>

Of course, Mussolini also intended to distance Fascism from revolutionary socialism in the eyes of authorities since the fascist vs. anti-fascist struggle characterized the setting abroad just as much as at home. Whereas people like Rossi of the Athen's *Fascio* made no mention of anti-fascist struggle in *Fasci* like Corfù's one in Greece,<sup>47</sup> anti-fascist rhetoric in places like Latin America strongly denounced of Fascism's "conservative and authoritarian" nature.<sup>48</sup> As a matter of fact, the places that did not see political struggle were those that did not see the arrival of "the *arditi*, the *squadristi*, the *sansepolcristi*, the *diciannovisti*; that is, those people personally involved with the rise of Fascism," along with "many of their enemies."<sup>49</sup> Generally, the anti-fascist struggle was highly effective in hindering the work of the *Fasci* in cases like France and Belgium where the *Fasci* "remained always in the minority compared to anti-fascist organizations." In others, the *Fasci* had to deal solely with cases where anti-fascists would carry out lower-key actions like "gather at stations to block trains of children leaving for [Fascist]

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<sup>44</sup> Alessandro Chiavolini to Giuseppe Bastianini, July, 1927, b.13, Segreteria Particolare del Duce; carteggio ordinario 1922-1945, ACS.

<sup>45</sup> Luconi, "I Fasci negli Stati Uniti," 132.

<sup>46</sup> F. Rossi to Giuseppe Bastianini, November 8 1924, b.11, Archivi di Famiglie; Cornelio Di Marzio, ACS.

<sup>47</sup> Rossi, b.11, Archivi di Famiglie; Cornelio Di Marzio, ACS.

<sup>48</sup> Franco Savarino, "Juego de ilusiones: Brasil, México y los "fascismos" latinoamericanos frente al fascismo italiano," *Historia Crítica* (2008), 124.

<sup>49</sup> Cresciani, *Fascism*, 7.

summer camps.”<sup>50</sup> A similar instance of anti-fascist mass demonstrations took place in Mexico;<sup>51</sup> the arrival of the ship *Italia*, on February the 18th, 1924, bringing influential fascist ministers like Giovanni Giuriati to meet the local Italian communities, was harshly obstructed by worker unions like the Mexican CROM. Fundamentally, in such settings the struggle between Fascists and anti-fascists was truly international much like the attempts to bring fascism outside Italy’s borders.<sup>52</sup> Of course, this was because, much like the Fascists, the antifascists wanted to have a monopoly on identity; both factions respectively “claimed ‘Italianism,’ with the corresponding dichotomy: Italian = Fascist *versus* Italian = anti-fascist.”<sup>53</sup> This identity split did not help the cause of the Fascists and, in spite of initial aims, hindered the *Fasci*’s ability to “contribute to greater unity within Italian communities.”<sup>54</sup>

In order to explain the failure of the *Fasci* as an organization, historians offer different accounts. Some stress the strengthening “international opposition to Fascism,” the overdue “revision of Fascist propaganda methods,”<sup>55</sup> or the “indifference” of the majority of migrants,<sup>56</sup> which, using the words of Mario Appelius,<sup>57</sup> were subjected to “deep integration” into the local societies.<sup>58</sup> These problems notwithstanding, I believe that bad organization was a more important reason for the failure of the *Fasci All’Estero*. This was acknowledged even by staunch propagandists who saw “the difficulties inherent” to “vast” organizations like the *Fasci*’s one who were “as vast as the Earth.”<sup>59</sup> Seeing that the General Secretariat could not “dictate precise

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<sup>50</sup> Claudia Baldoli, “Un fallimento del fascismo all’estero: La costruzione delle piccole Italie nella Germania nazista,” *Italia Contemporanea* (2003), 1.

<sup>51</sup> Franco Savarino “Bajo el signo del Littorio: la comunidad italiana en México y el fascismo (1924-1941),” *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* (2002), 117.

<sup>52</sup> Savarino, 125.

<sup>53</sup> Maria Victoria Grillo, “Creer en Mussolini. La proyección exterior del fascismo italiano (Argentina, 1930-1939),” *Ayer* (2006), 236.

<sup>54</sup> Gentile, “I Fasci Italiani All’Estero,” 107.

<sup>55</sup> Cresciani, *Fascism*, 140.

<sup>56</sup> Grillo, “Creer en Mussolini,” 239.

<sup>57</sup> Director of the *Morning of Italy*, a major fascist newspaper created to fascistize the Italian communities in Cordoba, Argentina.

<sup>58</sup> Appelius quoted in Zanatta, “I Fasci in Argentina negli anni Trenta,” in *Il Fascismo e gli emigrati*, ed. E. Franzina, M. Sanfilippo (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2003), 143.

<sup>59</sup> “1927,” *Il Legionario*, 1 January, 1927, MAECI Archives.

and detailed rules for all the *Fasci* abroad,” due to the different circumstances in different countries, it was “in the judgment of fascist hierarchs, advised by the Kings representatives, to choose the quickest route and the most suitable form to achieve the purpose.”<sup>60</sup> As the first *Fasci Italiani All’Estero* were announced during the Summer of 1922, key figures of the Regime like the Giuseppe Bottai had emphasized the “urgent need” to “organize” the structure of “Italian fascism abroad.”<sup>61</sup>

Yet, whereas *Il Legionario* presented the men behind the *Fasci All’Estero* as diligent and free of inefficiencies, official documentation present them under a somewhat different light.<sup>62</sup> In Bastianini’s private folders available at the ACS, there are important letter exchanges between key leaders of the *Fasci* and the former. In October 1925, Bastianini wrote to Di Marzio, addressing the latter’s initial reluctancies towards the organization as a whole, which he described as plagued by “great movement, great nervousness, little or no clarity of expositions.” Seeing the difficulties of the *Fasci* abroad as “far from insurmountable,” Bastianini saw bad organization as a major limitation that could be overcome by a hierarchical restructuring to stimulate “every noble emulation” from lower ranks in an upwards motion.<sup>63</sup> Yet, in a “top secret” letter, dated June 4, 1924, an initially similarly hopeful Emilio Rocchetti,<sup>64</sup> of the Sao Paulo’s *Fascio*, brought everything but good news to Bastianini. In fact, he told Bastianini that he heard many “missionaries, journalists and non-journalists” speak about him “in a not-so-nice way.” Bastianini was accused of being too young (being 25 at the time), of working in a purely careerist way and, generally, of being too carefree when heading the organization as a whole. In

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<sup>60</sup> “Nel Fascismo all’estero: interessi e rappresentanza,” *Il Legionario*, 8 January, 1927, MAECI Archives.

<sup>61</sup> Bottai quoted in de Caprariis, “Fascism for Export?,” 154.

<sup>62</sup> “1927,” *Il Legionario*.

<sup>63</sup> Direzione dei Fasci Italiani All’Estero, Report on meeting with the Duce, October 1925, b.47, Archivi di Famiglie; Cornelio Di Marzio, ACS.

<sup>64</sup> Emilio Rocchetti to Giuseppe Bastianini, 4 June, 1924, b.47, Archivi di Famiglie; Cornelio Di Marzio, ACS.

similar letters, some high ranking figures of the *Fasci All'Estero* even allowed themselves to manipulate each other's quotes in private meetings reports to imply a general mistrust towards Bastianini or other key figures like Luigi Freddi.<sup>65</sup> Even in lower ranks, the reorganization of the local *Fasci*, carried out in order to "get rid of the undesirables," targeted fellow Fascists much more than the old liberal diplomats. In such a setting, personal animosities exceeded even one of the most fundamental fascist mission; countering the liberals.<sup>66</sup> Fundamentally, the inner divisions were a considerable hindering point in restructuring the organization.

In reaction, the Italian fascist government sensed such limitations and took action by March 1926. Back home, the key *gerarca* Roberto Farinacci was dismissed from the Party's Secretariat for having tried to streamline the PNF with the goal of making of it the core of the new Regime. Indirectly, such action had a significant impact for the *Fasci*. In fact, with Farinacci gone, the party organization abroad could not hope to play a primary role in the running of foreign policy and lost its "main support within the Regime." Unfortunately for the *Fasci*, Dino Grandi, appointed undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry after the State's coordination, did not want the *Fasci All'Estero* to lead the "fascistization of diplomacy" carried out between 1926 and 1928.<sup>67</sup> Evidently, an organization that was so reliant on single individuals like Farinacci was not bound to live independently and sustainably: subordination to the central regime was inevitable. Initially, in October 1923, Mussolini sacrificed the *Lega Italiana per gli interessi nazionali all'estero* (Italian League for the protection of national interests abroad) to further Bastianini's "hegemonic ambitions."<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, such ambitions could not travel parallel to the State's for

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<sup>65</sup> Luigi Freddi, close to high ranking *gerarchi* like Roberto Farinacci, had to seek the latter's help when, in December 1925, he was attacked by competitors within the structure of the *Fasci* (even Di Marzio was one of them). See more in Luigi Freddi to Roberto Farinacci, December, 1925, b.22, Archivi di Famiglie: Roberto Farinacci, ACS.

<sup>66</sup> Grillo, "Creer en Mussolini," 237.

<sup>67</sup> de Caprariis, "Fascism for Export?," 172.

<sup>68</sup> Gentile, "I Fasci Italiani All'Estero," 100.

too long. In fact, in the words of Roberto Cantalupo,<sup>69</sup> it was “not possible to accept, in a full fascist Regime, two authorities that contrast: that of the Party and that of the State.”<sup>70</sup>

For too long did the fascist State tolerate those *intransigenti* who, not accepting that the ‘straightjacketed Mussolini’ came to terms with the crown during the ‘survival years’ following the March on Rome, sought to carry out their radical missions within the *Fasci* abroad. Similarly, the Regime could not accept that organization of the *Fasci Italiani*

*All’Estero* had *been* transformed to be a platform to “mitigate the messianism or smug manifestations of Regime figures like Bastianini.”<sup>71</sup> To solve this, much in line with the coordination of the PNF within the new Fascist State at home, the same process was conducted by bringing in line the *Fasci All’Estero*. As a result, the features of Fascism at home, like the 1929 concordat with the Vatican or the government-commissioned mass organizations, were to be reflected in fascism abroad as well. In fact, in Mexican, “the Italian Salesian Fathers” started to collaborate “even more closely with the *Fasci*, from which they received valuable support against seizures and anti-clerical persecution during religious conflict.”<sup>72</sup> The “Mexican section of the *Piccole italiane* [Young Italian Girls], the youth organizations for women,” was made much more dependent and subordinate to the, “gigantic institution in charge of mobilizing youth in Italy” known as *Opera Nazionale Balilla*.<sup>73</sup> This is all to show that a plurality of independent

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<sup>69</sup> At the time, albeit being a nationalist, he was the most known supportive spokesperson abroad that the Regime could count on. Known in the pages of fascist journals like *Gerarchia* along for being guest in academic circles abroad. His remarks characterized an approach that was at odds with that of the Nazi’s internationalist plan embodied in semi-independent bodies like the AO and Ribbentrop office.

<sup>70</sup> Roberto Cantalupo, “Rivoluzione in atto e diplomazia Fascista,” *Il Legionario*, 17 September, 1927, MAECI Archives.

<sup>71</sup> Grillo, “Creer en Mussolini,” 236.

<sup>72</sup> Savarino “Bajo el signo del Littorio,” 131.

<sup>73</sup> Savarino, 129.

bodies abroad was not desired; the formula of fewer but easily controllable organs was preferred.<sup>74</sup>

Similarly, clash of interests with foreign authorities was another point of tension which hindered the work of the *Fasci*; a point which, at least temporarily, forced Mussolini to end the organization's development. On the one side, Cornelio Di Marzio saw the *Fasci All'Estero* as the leaders of a mission focused, on a fundamental level, on Italian nationals. This to avoid the "Russian error" of creating an international mission with an anti-nationalist nature undesirable to foreign authorities.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, with time, the fascist State did not resolve what was an inevitable clash with democratic governments. In some states like France, clashes were evident. In fact, already by October 1925, Bastianini, writing to Di Marzio, stated that "France would not authorize an entity [the *Fasci*] that would be a clear creation of the Italian State" seeing that the French care about the assimilation of the migrants and did not want infiltration from other states; let alone Fascist Italy.<sup>76</sup> In a poor attempt to solve this, the Italian state momentarily tried to mask the *Fasci* as a "non-political sections of the fascist Party."<sup>77</sup> However, such an independence, as explained before, was not functional for fascist interests and would quickly give way to a more centralized control. Consequently, as the British Ambassador in Rome stated time and time again in the 1920s, the "general purpose" of Fascism abroad was "distasteful to *more than one* foreign power."<sup>78</sup> As a matter of fact, the mission to 'italianize' the emigrants in

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<sup>74</sup> Such standardization can also be seen in the *Fasci*'s mission of cultural propaganda. In the cases of the *Fascio* of Frankfurt, we see that main local leaders like Enrico Scodnik considered "it useless to build more Committees of the 'Dante' in Frankfurt," where there was "already a Course for Foreigners working cared after by the local *Fascio*." See more in MinCulPop, Enrico Scodnik, "La Dante in Germania," January, 1934, b.91, Propaganda presso gli Stati Esteri 1930-1943, ACS.

<sup>75</sup> Marxist thought placed class above national consciousness and the the Communist International aimed to coordinate different Communist Parties around the world to foster revolutions. Italian fascism did not have a clear revolutionary mission as it did want to preserve large parts of existing power [especially financial] dynamics in the host countries as much as at home.

<sup>76</sup> Giuseppe Bastianini to Cornelio Di Marzio, October, 1925, b.47, Archivi di Famiglie: Cornelio Di Marzio, ACS.

<sup>77</sup> Gentile, "I Fasci Italiani All'Estero," 105.

<sup>78</sup> Cresciani, *Fascism*, 25.

places like Germany “seemed to become possible only after the installation of the Nazis in power,” and with the gradual loosening of tensions between the Fascists and the Third Reich.”<sup>79</sup> The international situation in the 1920s surely did not aid the development of the *Fasci* as an organization.

Nonetheless, the coordination and the apparent sidelining of the *Fasci* themselves did not mean a sidelining of the underlying mission. With time, it was inevitably picked up and marshalled by the central government. In fact, the *Fasci*'s goal was not limited to solely organize the Italians abroad and solely defend their interests. For the Fascists in foreign countries, succeeding “in establishing strong support among ‘their own’ [Italians]” was an important step towards creating an “important base for further expansion;” an expansion that would have a strong imperialist identity on a cultural, political and social level.<sup>80</sup> Fundamentally, Italian fascist leaders abroad could “serve the revolution by becoming excellent bureaucrats” who would organize Italian immigrant colonies abroad to become good representatives of Fascism in the eyes of the foreigners (emphasis added).<sup>81</sup> This was clear since the beginning for the leaders of the various *Fasci* abroad. Even in Italy, the Regime was interested in using the *Fasci* as a vehicle to promote cultural imperialism. Among others, Ciriaco De Mita argued that the Italian teacher abroad should be made into an “active representative and an apostle of Italian culture, even more so, outside a school” (emphasis added).<sup>82</sup> Such is even clearer in a letter, dated November 9, 1924, from the head of the Alexandria's *Fascio*, Dr. G. Colloridi, to Giuseppe Bastianini.

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<sup>79</sup> Baldoli, “Un fallimento del fascismo all'estero,” 2.

<sup>80</sup> Stein Ugelvik Larsen, “Was there Fascism outside Europe? Diffusion from Europe and domestic impulses,” in *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, ed. Ugelvik Larsen, Stein (New York City, NY: Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2001), 734.

<sup>81</sup> Carlo Delcroix, Dino Grandi, “Il nuovo spirito e le alte responsabilità della rappresentanza nazione all'estero,” *Il Legionario*, 9 April, 1927, MAECI Archives.

<sup>82</sup> Ciriaco De Mita, “La scuola e la cultura italiana all'estero,” *Gerarchia*, November 1923, BSMC Digital catalog, 1332.

Colloridi believed that “every international propagandist idea,” understood as one targeting even non-Italians in Egypt, could “only begin when fascism has imposed itself on the Italians in the first place” (emphasis added).<sup>83</sup> At the end of the day, any mean that would reach such an end was acceptable in the eyes of Fascists.

The coordination and apparent sidelining of the *Fasci* as an independent body did not reflect a defeat. Indeed, Fascist rhetoric became stronger with time. After the full subordination of the *Fasci* to the State, *Il Legionario* fervently established that “politics” was to be “forbidden” for Italians abroad; “the only politics” that they “must perpetuate” (emphasis added) was “patriotism: to exalt Italy with love, work and example.” Furthermore, looking at cases of liberal states like Australia, the diplomats who were appointed by the fascist authorities following the *fascistization* of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs were keen to “bring pressure upon Italians to conform to the social mores of Fascism” even when they “clashed” with local habits and traditions.<sup>84</sup> Such messages and circumstances would become stronger with time<sup>85</sup> even when, in certain cases, Italian colonies abroad were uninterested in the Regime propaganda.<sup>86</sup>

Consequently, by the 1930s, the *Fasci* became a piece of the Regime’s fascist universalist puzzle. To illustrate, as stated by Domenico Trombetta,<sup>87</sup> 37 of the 93 section of the Lictor Federation<sup>88</sup> conserved the *Fascio* denomination<sup>89</sup> and, by 1932, the *Fasci All’Estero* saw to “460 *Fasci*, 269 fascist sections, 220 *fasci* composed by women, 74 Houses of Italy, for a total of

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<sup>83</sup> G. Colloridi to Giuseppe Bastianini, 9 November, 1924, b.11, Archivi di Famiglie: Cornelio Di Marzio, ACS.

<sup>84</sup> Cresciani, *Fascism*, 30. Of course, there were diplomats who were much more wary and their views, especially regarding fascist propaganda in countries which culture was very different from the Italian one, will be accounted in Chapter III of this thesis.

<sup>85</sup> Santoro, “The cultural penetration,” 46.

<sup>86</sup> Mussolini himself grew to be disinterested in those migrants abroad who he saw, especially in Argentina, to be too integrated in local realities to be *fascistized*. For more see Grillo, “Creer en Mussolini,” 250.

<sup>87</sup> Founder of *Il Grido della Stirpe*, an American weekly newspaper, of fascist inspiration, published in New York from 1923 to 1941.

<sup>88</sup> The organization that followed the fall of the Fascist League of North America in December 1929.

<sup>89</sup> Trombetta quoted in Luconi, “I Fasci negli Stati Uniti,” 131.

164 thousand fascists registered” around the world.<sup>90</sup> The last secretary, Piero Parini, never abandoned the mission to indoctrinate youth, promoting youth summer camps (*Campi Avanguardisti*) in Italy, also for the children of fascists abroad. In fact, his many letters sent to Alessandro Chiavolini<sup>91</sup> aimed to get the Duce to visit the summer camps. In addition, the *Fasci Italiani All’Estero* did not effectively lose substantial funds by 1930 as Parini could still receive funding from the “General Directorate of Public Health (*Direzione Generale della Sanità Pubblica*) and the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* for his projects along with a total of 155,191 lire from 1937 to 1941 coming solely from private donations.<sup>92</sup>

Nevertheless, the most important lasting legacy of by the *Fasci* was the awareness that Italy could use different means to promote cultural imperialism. For that, the organization of migrants was a powerful weapon, but not the sole one. In fact, even when the migrants were too integrated to be ‘italianized’ that did not mean that they could not be manipulated by non-Italian fascists. For instance, in the USA, fascists like Art J. Smith, head of the 1933’s paramilitary Khaki Shirts movement, used fascist rhetoric to spread nationalist sentiments amongst the Italian-American community of Philadelphia that emphasized more the American than the Italian identity. He managed to gather, according to official documentation, 8 to 9000 sympathizers.<sup>93</sup> Such events were key for rising the awareness that led Mussolini to accept the fact that fascism was a global phenomenon that would materialize with the creation of the CAUR. in the 1930s.

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<sup>90</sup> Savarino, “Bajo el signo del Littorio,” 119.

<sup>91</sup> Mussolini’s personal secretary in the 1930s. His name is prominent in the archives of the Segreteria Particolare del Duce at the ACS

<sup>92</sup> By September 1930, camps were also opened in Rome, in the Parioli neighbourhood, and on the 25th of August, Chiavolini confirmed that the Duce was eager to visit the camps which were to be called after his name. See more in Chiavolini Alessandro to Piero Parini to Alessandro Chiavolini, September, 1930, b.2384, Segreteria Particolare del Duce; carteggio ordinario 1922-1945, ACS. See more in Various donations’ checks, December, 1937 to October, 1941, b.2384, Segreteria Particolare del Duce; carteggio ordinario 1922-1945, ACS.

<sup>93</sup> Luconi, “I Fasci negli Stati Uniti,” 132.

Overall, those who invested their passions in the creation of the *Fasci* found themselves to admit that they needed to “wait.” Wait for what? One may ask. They waited for what, according to them, “will happen and what shall happen; the achievement of the final purpose and aim” which was embodied in cultural imperialism (emphasis added). In fact, despite process of coordination, the Fascists behind the *Fasci Italiani All’Estero* were content for having created circumstances that saw “foreigners” speak about them and about Fascism while “constantly keeping their eyes fixed on our country [Italy].”<sup>94</sup> The *Fasci* effectively passed the baton to the Fascist state but the race towards developing fascist universalism as a tool for Italian cultural imperialism did not stop.

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## Chapter II: *All eyes on us.*

The development of the *Fasci Italiani all’Estero*’s mission was eclipsed by the same Fascist government they aimed to serve; a government *forced* to consider the reality of the international situation.<sup>95</sup> Was that the only factor influencing the unfolding history of fascist internationalism in the early 1920s? Of course not. The debate amongst foreign rightist thinkers on fascism, that started since the very early days of the Italian Fascist experiment, was another development independent from Mussolini’s will and the policies of the Fascist State.<sup>96</sup> However, the Fascist government always monitored the debate and intervened to use it to its favor when the international circumstances made that possible. This chapter will shed-light on how many

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<sup>94</sup> Dario Lischi (Darioski), “Realizzazioni fasciste nel mondo,” *Il Legionario*, 9 January, 1927, MAECI Archives.

<sup>95</sup> Reminder: This thesis refers to Italian Fascism (1919-1943) using a capital ‘F.’ This is distinguish from international variants of fascism which are referred at with a lower-case ‘f.’

<sup>96</sup> It is important to note that the selection of case studies was based on the extent to which the works of the existing historical literature deemed some thinkers more influential than others due to the extremely large numbers of fascist sympathizers following Mussolini’s rise to power. Generally, I have looked at right winged thinkers in European countries (both in cases, like Germany, of countries which were badly affected by the Versailles treaty using the latter as a scapegoat for national problems and offer a more balanced picture, including countries, like France and Britain. In addition, I chose to include some cases from the USA, Argentina and China to look at the problem from a global perspective.

foreign observers found the non-conservative, youth-centered, nationalist, anti-liberal and anti-communist nature of Italian Fascism very appealing. At the same time, we will illustrate how the initial reaction of the Fascist Regime vis-a-vis the growing foreign interest for Fascism.

Whereas Mussolini initially stressed Fascism's "un-exportability," such an initial stance changed in response to the rising interest from foreign thinkers and governments, like Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, which seemed to resemble that of the Fascists.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, *anti-societarismo* — the rejection of the League of Nations (*Società delle Nazioni*) — understood as the early form of what we now would broadly call sovereignty would leave the stage to a more radical approach centered on fascist universalism.<sup>98</sup> As such, we cannot take these initial approaches and define them as a fascist. In fact, whereas it always defined a purely conservative *final goal* in regards to foreign policy, it was purely a *mean* to an intentional setting that did not allow for quintessentially Fascist policies; not a final goal of itself. In fact, the ideas that caught the attention of foreign admirers, those that define Fascism in its *real* essence, were more radical and maximalist. Somewhat unwillingly, despite the Italian State's apparent inward look, the rightwing world of the time was studying Italy and was stimulated by its experience.

From the outset, the march on Rome was a shock to Italy and many foreigners. In fact, the seizure of power provoked a lot of curiosity from many right-wing thinkers of the era. Studying the Regime in the making of Fascist ideology, the first defining factor that attracted observers was that the Fascists were not purely reactionaries who just hoped to suppress the striking workers to reestablish old orders; they wanted to build something new.<sup>99</sup> Influential

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<sup>97</sup> Cuzzi, *Antieuropa*, 55.

<sup>98</sup> This can be seen as the prioritization of bilateral international interactions over institutional or multilateral ones, along with the call to protect national production above all else.

<sup>99</sup> This was the error committed by liberals like Giovanni Giolitti and even King Victor Emmanuel III when considering that Fascism could be constitutionalized and eventually disappear with the fading of the Red Threat.

French right winged thinkers like George Valois sympathized with aspects of Fascism in the 1920s.<sup>100</sup> In fact, it is in Valois's theory that we begin to see the appreciation of fascist vanguardism, albeit not coupled with complete rebuttal of conservative ideals. Both combined in his calls for the construction of a new French nation. Interestingly, such an ambivalent position vis-a-vis conservatism paralleled Valois's own ambiguous relation with French conservative groups. The latter were confused by the revolutionary appeal of Valois' "militant syndicalism" that did not aim at betraying the principles of monarchy. Undoubtedly, the juxtaposition of the revolutionary figure of the *Duce* and the King was an effort that was dear to Valois, who initially aimed to "reconcile the working class with the monarchy" as an effort to be vanguardist without forgetting national identities.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, Enrico Corradini painted Italy as an "economically retarded" nation that needed a state-centered process of "marshalling, rationalization and disciplining of human and natural resources."<sup>102</sup> Despite that, process was never materialistic in essence, did not see people as individualistic profit-maximizing beings and did not aim to represent a single class above all else. As a matter of fact, already by the mid to late 1920s, Fascist modernizing policies was appreciated even by movements outside Europe itself. In China, the journal "*Wenhua jiashe* (Cultural Construction)," which, eventually, would be the voice of the right-wing fractions of the *Kuomintang*, had a clear mission: "to promote China's native culture and to propagate the construction of modern China" (emphasis added). This surely resonated with the fascist rhetoric that appealed to past glories without being purely reactionary and conservative. Surely, the Chinese plans for modernization from above were present since the

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<sup>100</sup> Valois left the *Action Francaise* to create the *Faisceau* Party launching its daily *Le Nouveau Siècle*. His newspaper he wrote that Lenin was a dictator of "destruction" and Mussolini as a dictator of "civilization." For him, the West had to defend "Roman and Christian civilization against new invasions." See more in Yves Guchet, "Georges Valois ou l'illusion Fasciste," *Revue française de science politique* (1965), 1134.

<sup>101</sup> Valois quoted in Guchet, 1111.

<sup>102</sup> Corradini quoted in Griffin, *International Fascism*, 130-1.

1880s, yet, it is indicative to notice that Chinese nationalists admired the Fascist combination of modernity and tradition.<sup>103</sup>

Those who rejected the Marxist notion that defined development as defined by class struggle, embraced the unity of the nation which was central to the Fascist rhetoric. Historians like Zeev Sternhell highlight how the thought of Barrès and of Maurras “converged quite naturally with the second element in the fascist equation: the revision of Marxism undertaken at the beginning of the century by Georges Sorel and the theoreticians of Italian revolutionary syndicalism.”<sup>104</sup> Valois theorized a “new economy and the national revolution” which would define fascism as a “total conception of national and social life” destined to create a state in which “all the interests of the nation” were “summed up.” A movement that defended with the same ardent passion “the national interest, the interest of production and the interest of workers” possible only if the nation was the highest element that overarched all classes. Consequently, on a theoretical level, that would eliminate the tension between the proletariat and the upper classes. As it will be explained in a more comprehensive way in the following chapter, the fascist movements worldwide hoped to reject the liberal assumptions of men as tools for profit-maximization by making men identify their “individual economic life with that of the state.”<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, seeing that such a claim has a slightly Marxist tone, the Fascists focused on trying to propose an alternative to Marxism, but, in reality, both fascism and Marxism rejected the liberal system.<sup>106</sup> Fascism hoped to integrate capitalist competition in an authoritarian single party state where the absence of *laissez faire* was combined to the idea that the state was

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<sup>103</sup> Clinton, *Revolutionary Nativism*, 45.

<sup>104</sup> Zeev Sternhell “Fascism,” in *International Fascism*, ed. Roger Griffin, 31.

<sup>105</sup> De Felice, *Mussolini il duce: Gli anni del consenso 1929-1936* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editori, 1974), 16.

<sup>106</sup> De Felice, 10.

something more than a mere guarantor of competition. All economic classes were incorporated in a strict hierarchical structure that would be coordinated to serve the interests of the nation and, inevitably, the PNF. In such a structure, class conflict is not fully resolved in a Marxist sense but integrated and controlled as both the capitalists and proletarians would cherish the national identity above all else. Of course, in practice, the Fascist idea would make sure that few industrialists on top, who helped the rising fascist state, would have a full monopoly on resources at the sole condition of complying with the authoritarian state and the unionized proletarians would be divided and integrated. Nevertheless, the fascists hoped that, by placing the interest of the nation above those of an economic class they would appeal to the working masses without adopting a Marxist agenda.<sup>107</sup>

In several non-European cases, a similar model. The cadres of the Blue Shirts or CC Clique created after splits within the *Kuomintang* following the 1925 death of Sun Yat-sen in China. Dai Jitao, became “increasingly convinced that the unified nation, not the proletariat or peasantry, was the proper agent of a properly Chinese revolution.” Men like him, who, were truly international, coming from different backgrounds and enjoying trainings “at military and technical schools in China, Europe, the United States, the USSR, and Japan,” began to “champion ‘native culture’ (*guyou wenhua*) as the glue binding this revolutionary nation together.”<sup>108</sup> Generally, the ‘Fascism in the making’ of the 1920s was surely a constantly evolving and at times ambiguous process that, due to the lack of clarity, left the possibility to make of it whatever was most convenient. Those who were attracted by revolutionary rhetoric

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<sup>107</sup> Valois quoted in Guchet, “Georges Valois,” 1133.

<sup>108</sup> Clinton, *Revolutionary Nativism*, 3.

but could not accept the anti-nationalist Bolshevism looked at the fascist reality in Italy as an important alternative.

‘Change’ was equated to the vigor, vitality and freshness of new ideas which were met perfectly by those who despised parliamentarism’s stagnancy; *Giovinazza* (youth) was not just a propaganda song for the Regime but a concept central to fascists in Italy and abroad. In Europe, the international denunciation of the liberal “Europe of Paris and Geneva,” that later characterized Asvero Gravelli’s *Antieuropa* journal, had its base in ideas that harked back to back to the Mazzinian “Young Italy” (*Giovine Italia*).<sup>109</sup> Gravelli theorized the creation of a fascist “Young Europe” by “a highly vocal and literate segment of Italian youth.”<sup>110</sup> The anti-liberal rhetoric of fascist sympathizers abroad was based on the denunciation of the liberal political stagnation as it was staunchly against what George Valois called “the preponderance to those who know how to speak rather than to those who know how to act” (emphasis added).<sup>111</sup> Of course, to ‘act’ requires to be ready to react to changing circumstances, to be able to make swift decisions, and to have the ‘ardor to live’ that defined the Fascist understanding of ‘youth.’ Many, like Robert Brasillach<sup>112</sup>, asserted that the “the first virtue of the hero is youth” emphasizing a theme that in time would become central in any totalitarian state, especially, Germany and Italy; the “exaltation of physical effort” that ought to let “the fascist hero” stand up against “bourgeois agony.”<sup>113</sup> Similarly, the leading figure of British fascism, Sir. Oswald Mosley, affirmed how he always championed the “hope” revolved around a “vital and

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<sup>109</sup> Cuzzi, *Antieuropa*, 114.

<sup>110</sup> Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, 72.

<sup>111</sup> Valois quoted in Guchet, “Georges Valois,” 1121.

<sup>112</sup> Brasillach was majorly interested in art and literature at the time rather than politics but he was to become a key figure in the future Vichy Regime. He used the figure of ‘Corneille’ and his writings to extrapolate formulas of a “totalitarian government imposed by the Kings,” of a “royal dictatorship” or, as he places it, a “Cornelian fascism.” For more see Renard-Payen, “Brasillach, l’anti-démocrate,” *La Revue administrative* (1966), 638.

<sup>113</sup> Brasillach quoted in Renard-Payen, 640-41.

determined youth” dedicated to the “resurrection” of the British nation as a whole.<sup>114</sup> The issue of ‘youth’ was so central to fascists, that Italians applied it to evaluate the extent to which other nations could look forward to have a fascist future.

Looking into this discussion, we start to see differences between fascists in Italy and abroad. Margherita Sarfatti,<sup>115</sup> writing about the right-wing coup in Spain in a November 1924 edition of *Gerarchia*, affirms that “Spain is old, while we [Italian] are young (...) [the Spanish] are a people without spring, without spirit of renewal: without the wonderful strength of youth that is in us [Italians].”<sup>116</sup> Unfortunately, in the article, Sarfatti does not point at other nations who shared the same ‘youth’ as Italy; she follows a general trend in avoiding specifying cases that could follow Italy’s path. Similarly, Mussolini was always keen in stating that the world was to see “young countries,” being “poor and more accustomed to sacrifice,” but “strong of their young energies (...) affirm their vital power” and “their moral strength.” Yet, he never really gave specific details.<sup>117</sup> Instead, he just believed that all of the newly unified or formed nations, especially in Europe, were to follow the example of Fascist Italy who faced “the noonday of the twentieth century,” as the “only nation” that had “a word and a doctrine of salvation and life to be given to all the civilized peoples of the Earth.”<sup>118</sup> Despite the lack of agreement on who championed ‘youth,’ the call for a new civilization which would denounce the liberal culture of the middle-class couch potatoes (*borghesia pantofolaia*) defined many Fascists. They agreed that

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<sup>114</sup> Mosley quoted in Gary Love, “‘What’s the Big Idea?’: Oswald Mosley, the British Union of Fascists and Generic Fascism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* (2007), 452.

<sup>115</sup> Born in an influential Venetian Jewish family, she was the most important woman in the Regime and one of the most prominent Fascist intellectual of the 1920’s. Despite the fact that the journal *Gerarchia* was officially headed by Mussolini himself, the Duce trusted Sarfatti as editorial director.

<sup>116</sup> Margherita Sarfatti, “Cinema Spagna,” *Gerarchia*, November, 1923, BSMC Digital Catalog, 616-7.

<sup>117</sup> Undoubtedly, as we will see in Chapter IV, one of them was Germany and admitting it so easily was not in the interest of Mussolini.

<sup>118</sup> Mussolini quoted in De Felice, *Mussolini il duce*, 48.

such a culture tamed the imperial thrive of the ‘young’ and such conviction was surely not claimed by Italian thinkers.

Fundamentally, the third-way between capitalism and communism started to define fascist universalism and in the early 1930s. Already by the later 1920s, Fascism was seen as a point of reference despite the fact that the Regime had prevented the *Fasci Italiani all’Estero* (and the Party) to play a direct role in the running of Italian foreign policy. Suffice to think of Argentinian figures like General Uriburu<sup>119</sup> and President Marcelo Torcuato de Alvear who, in 1928, told the fascist senator Giovanni Indri that he admired Mussolini for having “saved Italy” from the ‘Red threat’ of Bolshevism.<sup>120</sup> Along the same lines, in South-America, important thinkers looked favorably to Fascism. The Venezuelan Laureano Vallenilla-Lanz was one of them. In his book *Cesarismo Democratico*, he elaborated a theory centered on a leader who, embracing the sentiment of the nation, became the only figure entitled to the law-making processes; an ideal central to future theories like the *Führerprinzip* (Leader principle). His friend Paolo Nicolai described him, in the 1934 preface of the Italian edition, as having “enough titles to be considered by us [Italians] as an exquisitely fascist spirit.” In fact, already by 1922, the fascist sympathizers in Caracas could enjoy articles “from the pen of the most Mussolinian fanatic; Vallenilla-Lanz.”<sup>121</sup>

Similarly, taking into account the fascist critique of liberalism, sympathizers like Brasillach saw the “eternal peace under the aegis of the League of Nations” as “the most pernicious dogmas of the democratic faith.”<sup>122</sup> Even in the USA, thought as the heartland of

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<sup>119</sup> A key future “fascist sympathizer” who led a military coup in 1930. See more in Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 45-50.

<sup>120</sup> de Alvear quoted in Finchelstein, 51.

<sup>121</sup> Paolo Nicolai, “Prefazione,” in *Cesarismo Democratico*, ed. Laureano Vallenilla Lanz (Sancasciano Val Di Pesa: Cremonese, 1934), 10.

<sup>122</sup> Brasillach quoted in Renard-Payen, “Brasillach, l’anti-démocrate,” 636.

liberal democracy, while clearly cheering for Fascism in its fight against communists in the 1919-1921 period, “apologists” did not spare attacks to liberalism and characterized Mussolini as “courageous, resolute, and bold.” In contrast, the Italian and American liberals seen as “weak, feeble, and decadent.”<sup>123</sup> Strikingly, amongst them, we see figures like the Ambassador to Italy Richard Washburn Child<sup>124</sup> who used phrases as “sickly liberalism” and “sentimental jelly” to “contrast” the “fuzzy femininity of Giovanni Giolitti” to “the Roman manliness of Mussolini.”<sup>125</sup>

Surely, the Duce had an “enormous latitude in the conduct of international relations” and, because of that, he was who the foreigners remembered the most. To them, as much as to Italians, Mussolini *was* fascism. In that, many did not distinguish the two.<sup>126</sup> Whereas, because of this, important Fascists like Luigi Freddi “saw enthusiastic and memorable fascist awakening” amongst Italian-Americans in the eastern USA, the interests in the Fascist ideology were few.<sup>127</sup> Since American society was not polarized as post-WWI Italy, many, especially amongst the wider public, acclaimed the charisma and the rhetoric of the strong leader and the phenomenon of “Mussolinianism” rather than fascism itself.<sup>128</sup> Sure, people like Alvin Owsley of the American Legion kept on blasting rhetorical statements that urged the Legion to “protect” the American “institutions and ideals,” even if it entailed “taking over the government,” just like Fascists “dealt with the destructionists who menaced Italy.” Nevertheless, his movement did not have much of an impact on the wider public.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 59.

<sup>124</sup> These figures are key; historians like Denis Mack Smith states that “fascists diplomacy was tested more in the relations of these ambassadors with the regime in Rome than in their relations with foreign governments.” More in Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy: A Political History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 403.

<sup>125</sup> Child quoted in Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 61.

<sup>126</sup> Alexander J. De Grand, *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: The 'fascist' style of rule* (New York City, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2004), 113.

<sup>127</sup> Benedetto Florio, “Luigi Freddi,” *Il Legionario*, 29 January, 1927, MAECI Archives.

<sup>128</sup> Previously discussed in Chapter I while outlining the reasons for the failures in the mission of the *Fasci Italiani All'Estero*. See more in Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 68.

<sup>129</sup> Owsley quoted in Diggins, 206.

Differently, more in tune with *Squadristo*'s militant experience, fascists like the "diehard party cadres of the CC Clique" were key to forefront the White terror that repressed the working movement and the Chinese Communist Party in 1927<sup>130</sup> with the long term aim to create a "network of tamed labor unions under government direction" in a "classic corporatist fashion."<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, Fascism was thought to be applied in accordance with the local realities and never to be fully copied from the Italian example. Some, like Argentinian fascists, followed this line to reject the accusation that they were merely copying the Italians and having "no relation to Argentine political tradition."<sup>132</sup> Others, like Jacque Doriot, argued, already from very early writings, that French fascism was the "French manifestation of the same conception" given by Italy.<sup>133</sup> In response, the Italians, after momentarily claiming fascism's non-exportability, never forced "the adherents to universal fascism" to "sacrifice any of their national integrity" but hoped for them to simply "join in the common search for the true expression of national genius wherever the forces of the modern world expressed themselves."<sup>134</sup>

Accordingly, Italian Fascists began to see that Fascism, almost spontaneously, turned into a global phenomenon. The rising Nazis, who sent Count Kurt G.W. Lüdecke<sup>135</sup> to study the Duce and his Regime, were the ones that tried the most to have a contact with the Fascists mainly for a strategic political reason rather than an ideological one. Yet, Italian Fascists, at least in the 1920s, seemed to have little interest towards a future fascist Germany. They focused mostly on countries like France and Spain. In fact, the Fascist press did not give excessive importance to the Munich

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<sup>130</sup> Clinton, *Revolutionary Nativism*, 29.

<sup>131</sup> Clinton, 34.

<sup>132</sup> Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism*, 43.

<sup>133</sup> Allardyce and Picard, "Jacques Doriot et l'esprit fasciste en France," *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale* (1975), 32.

<sup>134</sup> Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, 89.

<sup>135</sup> Originally a German nationalist, he joined the Nazis in the 1920s and survived the Night of the Long Knives and acted as the unofficial representative of Hitler in countries like Italy in the years of the Führer's rise to power. His accounts will be central in Chapter IV.

Putsch much. Rather, Spanish politics were extensively studied. Similarly, as outlined in official documents, Italian Fascists were interested in fascistizing the many French right-wing newspapers which were seen as promising propaganda tools.<sup>136</sup>

In the 1923 and the 1924 issues of *Gerarchia*, Fascist rhetoric was always detectable when Spain was discussed. Whereas the Spanish population which grew “used to the system of the rotation of the ministries” was disdained, the “real people” (emphasis added) of Spain, who felt “a sense of liberation” thanks to Primo De Rivera’s new right-wing rule of Spain, were extolled.<sup>137</sup>

Similarly, Mussolini himself highlighted how the religious and historical identity linked the “faith” of the two peoples, driving them to a common path.<sup>138</sup> *Il Popolo d’Italia*’s journalists like Gaetano Polverelli were keen to emphasise:

“The Spaniards are chivalrous and haughty because they have behind them a great imperial past (...) Spain, emerging from an attitude of contemplation, will find in Rome the pulse of a great life (...) Mussolini has understood this destiny of rebirth and with his strong spirit, beyond the sea and Sardinia, reaches out to Spain” (emphasis added).<sup>139</sup>

However, other Fascists, like Giuseppe Bottai, admired Spain mainly for strategic reasons.<sup>140</sup>

In fact, they found inspiration in Alfonso XIII’s foreign policy which forced other nations to take the “Spain factor” in consideration in Mediterranean theatre.<sup>141</sup> Similarly, Margherita Sarfatti, examining the evolution of Spanish politics in years leading up to the coup by De Rivera, noted that, especially in the Catalonia, the situation may have resembled Italy in the *Squadristo* years.

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<sup>136</sup> Cornelio Di Marzio, Official report “Appunti per il Duce: Francia,” January 1928, Archivi di Famiglie: Cornelio Di Marzio, b.47, ACS.

<sup>137</sup> Gubello Mèmmoli, “L’ammirazione della Spagna per l’Italia fascista espressa dal gen. De Rivera al nostro invito speciale,” *Il Corriere Italiano*, 14 November, 1923, BSMC Newspapers Archive.

<sup>138</sup> Rafael Mazas Sanchez, “Una intervista,” *Il Corriere Italiano*, 14 November, 1923, BSMC Newspapers Archive.

<sup>139</sup> Gaetano Polverelli, “Italia e Spagna,” *Il Popolo d’Italia*, 10 November, 1923, BSMC Newspapers Archive.

<sup>140</sup> Giuseppe Bottai, “I rapporti italo-spagnoli,” *Il Corriere Italiano*, 14 November 1923, BSMC Newspapers Archive.

<sup>141</sup> Francesco Geraci, “La Spagna nella politica mondiale,” January 1924, *Gerarchia*, 38, BSMC Newspapers Archive.

In reality, she considered the Spanish *pistoleros* more Manzonian *bravi* rather than the *squadristi*,<sup>142</sup> De Rivera like a Crispi more than a Mussolini and no hope for a *fascistization* of Spain due to the lack of a middle class's support<sup>143</sup> to the fascists.<sup>144</sup>

Nevertheless, no-one dismissed the prospect to have a fascist-friendly nation in the generally anti-fascist international setting of the 1920s was not totally discarded.

As a matter of fact, taking into account the hostile circumstance of the 1920s, the Regime was forced to be tamed at home and abroad.<sup>145</sup> Nevertheless, the tension between the attempts to give weight to the Fascist ideology in foreign policy and the consideration of the *interessi permanenti* resulted in a masked fascist attitude that would resemble a modern notion of sovereigntism. Championing nationalism and inviting others to defend their national interest defined the way those years' Fascist Regime spoke abroad. To illustrate, Edmondo Rossoni,<sup>146</sup> while speaking in Geneva, stated that the "internal affairs of each State should be governed solely by the citizens who make it up" and he was "a fascist for my country [Italy]" and Italy only. Continuing, he went as far as stating that Fascism did not mean "imperialism or militarism" as "some people try to make of it."<sup>147</sup> Yet, one shall restrain from aligning the Fascist way of looking at international relations too much to a type of thinking that simply hoped to ensure "raw materials and institutes for the major exports of [Italian] products."<sup>148</sup> That is to be done even if

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<sup>142</sup> Margherita Sarfatti, "Cinema Spagna," November 1924, *Gerarchia*, 618, BSMC Newspapers Archive.

<sup>143</sup> Sarfatti, 614.

<sup>144</sup> The last point, particularly, is highlighted by historians like Renzo De Felice when defining fascism as a middle-class reliant revolutionary movement. See more in Vittorio Vidotto, *Guida allo studio della storia contemporanea* (Rome: Laterza, 2004), 21.

<sup>145</sup> Writing for *Il Legionario*, Journalist Dario Lischi (Darioski) sees events like the visit of the Spanish King to Italy in line with the Corfù incident and the issue of Alto Adige as the only "flashes" of "assiduous vigilance and readiness for decision (...) supported by an inflexible will" that generally did not find much space in the 1920s. See more in Lischi (Darioski), "Realizzazioni fasciste nel mondo."

<sup>146</sup> Rossoni was the leading figure of early corporatist thought abroad. When he was expelled from Geneva's International Labor Organization, the Italian fascists reacted with rage. More in "Nuovi orizzonti di politica estera: Il Regime ed i funzionari" *Il Legionario*, 9 April, 1927, MAECI Archives.

<sup>147</sup> Rossoni quoted in "Il battesimo internazionale del Sindacalismo," *Il Corriere Italiano*, 10 November, 1923, BSMC Newspaper Archives.

<sup>148</sup> "L'andamento e la politica dell'emigrazione nel 1926" *Il Legionario*, 15 January, 1927, MAECI Archives.

such was the official stance; a still very vague and simply sovereigntist perception to be called fascist.

Generally, the 1920's Fascists looked at their hope to internationalize fascism combined the belief that Italy was "healed by fascism" with the assumption that "different ills can't be treated with the same remedy."<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless, in the 1920s, the international debate over the fascist experience in Italy to made key aspects seemingly truly applicable in the different countries. Fascist universalism was to have a non-conservative, youth-centered, nationalist, anti-liberal and anti-communist nature. Events like the 1923 visit of the Spanish King in Italy did spark a lot of interest amongst Italian fascists. Yet, interests eventually faded. In the end, the sovereigntist emphasis on 'Italy before all' and the gradual rejection of the liberal international structure were the sole official argument that Italy felt comfortable using without facing isolation from other non-fascist governments.

Fortunately for the Fascists, on the long term, the real face of Italian Fascism developed. Consequently, people like Valois, who initially thought the 'tamed' version of Fascism was the most developed one, were to be surprised by an unpredicted unleashing of internationalism mired towards empire. On the one hand, Valois cannot be blamed for his short-sightedness; it is difficult to predict the future."<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, the indication of future imperialist developments was present since the very early in the Fascist experience. The Regime gradually moved away from the 'traditional' consideration of the permanent interests towards a line centered on ideology, building a 'new world' and turning the existing international system upside down.

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<sup>149</sup> Cuzzi, *Antieuropa*, 45.

<sup>150</sup> In addition, it would make sense for a French nationalist to hope that Italian Fascists would limit themselves to a traditional interpretation of "the model of the concert of nations inherited from Metternich;" the opposite would be a threat to France. See more in Emmanuel Mattiato, "L'axe Rome-Paris et la campagne pour le « Blocco latino » dans Le Nouveau Siècle : l'action géopolitique de Georges Valois et du Faisceau (1926-1927)," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, (2017), 159.

### Chapter III: *A corporativist and Roman universality.*

“The economic man does not exist. A man is integral, he is political, he is economic, he is religious, he is saint, he is a warrior.”— Benito Mussolini, 1933.<sup>151</sup>

The Wall Street Crisis was the best event in favor of fascist universalism. In fact, by the 1930s, although the process began “independently of Mussolini, he was soon forced to acknowledge it.”<sup>152</sup> Yet this was not a bittersweet acknowledgment; the Duce saw interesting potential in marshalling the universalist experiment. Undeniably, ideological fervor came with the *decennale* (the decennial since the 1922’s March on Rome). This chapter will try to understand the effects of these developments. In doing so, I will analyze corporativism as the Fascist trait which was most attractive to foreigners at the time. In addition, attention will be given to the characteristics of the CAUR, which was Fascism’s tool to reach its universal phase. Albeit its international mission, the organization could not fully resolve the contradictions inherent to the combination of internationalism and nationalism. Tension was inevitable when foreign fascists looked at its long-term goals—all mired at strengthening Italy’s influence abroad — since they could not accept that any nation other than their own could eventually hold such important primacy.

Yet, in the 1930s, the united front against the liberal and communist enemies held all world’s fascists somewhat united. There was more to unify than divide the fascists. If by the 1920s, as *Il Legionario* asserted, the events in favor of Fascist universalism followed “each other

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<sup>151</sup> Mussolini quoted in Schnapp, *A Primer of Italian Fascism*, 163.

<sup>152</sup> Salvatore Garau, “The Internationalisation of Italian Fascism in the face of German National Socialism, and its Impact on the British Union of Fascists,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* (2014), 47.

at shorter and shorter intervals,” they became frequent by the 1930s.<sup>153</sup> The answer was the evolution from simple sovereignism. While looking at the ‘outside world,’ the newspaper

*Ottobre* (named after the month of October that saw the success of the March on Rome)<sup>154</sup>

highlighted that Fascists of the 1930s could not help but see a great interest in Fascism’s

development. This was

reinforced by the general

decadence of liberal economic system along with that of the

League of Nations. Therefore,

the corporativist answer

appeared inevitably strong and

effective in stimulating

curiosity.<sup>155</sup> Conveniently, with



Figure: Notice how the suitcase indicating Geneva and Lausanne (liberalism) is decadent yet still sealed to the wider public and the ‘magician’ or ‘comedian’ is trying to convince the crowd of the suitcases’ value while a clown is in the background and the setting is set “in the kingdom of jokes.” As the setting is also described as a “sideshow” (*baraccone*) or “illusion” and “mystery,” the people, angered, make comments, *in different languages*, like “Bewitching, how about unemployment?,” “Cheat! We are starving!” or “Berlin cannot be led by the nose!” The title of the illustration is “the usual orator.”

Source: “Il Solito Oratore” *Ottobre*, October 28th, 1932, b.10, MinCulPop; Fascicoli di personalità e di testate giornalistiche 1926-1944.

<sup>153</sup> Dario Lischi (Darioski), the article’s author, lists the Corfù incident, the issue of Alto Adige and the visit of the Spanish King to Italy as the main events of the 1920s. Undoubtedly, he would have listed the financial crisis of the 1930s as one of the events of the decade that followed. See more in Lischi (Darioski), “Realizzazioni fasciste nel mondo.”

<sup>154</sup> The newspaper was founded by one of those Fascist radicals that were ‘too Fascist’ for the 1920s; Asvero Gravelli. In Fascism’s early years, he blasted his universal anti-liberal rhetoric in the pages of another of his newspapers named *Antieuropa*. One of his letters to Benito Mussolini shows that whereas the newspaper *Ottobre* was able, for the first two years of its existence, to pay its employees, it was not able to do so by December 1934. Perhaps this might show that the Duce became less interested in universalism by then with the Ethiopian on the horizon, yet, the newspaper received state funds until well into 1936. See more in Asvero Gravelli to Benito Mussolini, December 1934, b.10, MinCulPop; Fascicoli di personalità e di testate giornalistiche, ACS.

<sup>155</sup> Even main liberal english newspapers could not avoid but see how Fascism made a universal example in trying to create the “new man” out of its twenty-two corporations. See more in “Lo stato Mussoliniano nelle interpretazioni della stampa mondiale” *Ottobre*, 14 May, 1933, b.6, MinCulPop; Fascicoli di personalità e di testate giornalistiche, ACS.

its anti-materialist nature, corporativism, was perfectly in line with those who were anti-liberal and anti-communist.

“When does capitalist enterprise cease to be an economic matter?” Asked Mussolini and answered “When its dimensions lead it to be a social matter.”<sup>156</sup> In such a way, he baptized corporativism. Along doing so, he also denounced the long held presupposition that economic rationality and profit maximizing were the paramount factors in human decision making. In fact, throughout social engineering experiment inspired by corporativism,<sup>157</sup> economics was secondary to political spirituality. This was done to create a national-consciousness that would transcend class consciousness; something that the fascists saw as divisive.<sup>158</sup> Yet this did not come without difficulties. By officially marshalling the spread of fascism abroad, the Italian State had to make a clear cut between ‘what was fascist and what it was not;’ the vagueness that helped the spontaneous adaptability of Fascist traits abroad before was undermined. Outside Italy, the aim was not let Fascism “penetrate (...) amongst the masses (...) sometimes unconsciously” but to actively affirm Fascism’s universality. Ultimately, in line with what Mussolini wrote in *Gerarchia*, Italian Fascists believed that Fascism was to follow the path of the ideals of the Roman Empire, Catholicism and Renaissance. It was to resemble the “fourth universal force of renovation.”<sup>159</sup>

As such, it is worthwhile to explore the corporatist idea, which assumed, for the Fascists, the “deepest significance of the [their] revolution as a universal revolution.”<sup>160</sup> First and foremost, corporativism grew from the early sovereignism of the 1920s. In fact, the influential

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<sup>156</sup> Mussolini quoted in “La vastissima eco in Italia e nel mondo del formidabile discorso del Duce all’Assemblea del Consiglio Nazionale delle Corporazioni” *Il Popolo d’Italia*, 16 November, 1933, BSMC Digital Catalog.

<sup>157</sup> In fact, Fascists eventually convinced themselves to have the mission to “restructure the human condition itself.” See more in Ledeen, 43.

<sup>158</sup> Griffin, *International Fascism*, 197.

<sup>159</sup> Benito Mussolini, “La Missione Universale Di Roma,” *Gerarchia*, October 1932, Milstein Division of the New York Public Library, 802.

<sup>160</sup> Ugo Spirito, “Regime Gerarchico,” *Civiltà Fascista*, January, 1934, BSMC, 12.

corporativist thinker Ugo Spirito, believed that nations, in the process to create a strong State (a key factor for corporativism), should be inward oriented as much as possible. Only once the process was stabilized, they could open up.<sup>161</sup> Top-to-bottom social engineering was central to this. The “corporativist man,” Spirito affirmed, was to adopt the hierarchic mentality (*mentalità gerarchica*). For him, hierarchy’s verticality would perfectly counter socialism’s horizontality, which stood for “the levelling of individuals.” Yet, much disagreement was present when defining corporativism’s relationship to private property; an issue that would ultimately highlight its differences with the Marxist system of state-collectivization. For his opinion, Spirito was accused of being too left-leaning as he foresaw and eventual and inevitable abolition of private property.<sup>162</sup> Because of this, Spirito was completely aware that a true diffusion of his ideas would not be “allowed” in the form he would have liked.<sup>163</sup> As one might sense, the process to define corporativism was a characterized by many voices which would ensemble in a rather messy and competitive way. Whereas some did not agree on what level of production the corporativist strict division in hierarchy would have to start, others, for their initial revolutionary syndicalist views, were unsure of Labor Unions’ role in the process. In fact, those who criticized Spirito’s idea of corporativism also stressed its strong sector-based nature. For him, hierarchy was present at the firm’s level and not, following the official interpretation, on a broader scope that saw the establishment of corporations of firms working in the different fields of production on a national level.<sup>164</sup> Others pushed to protect some sort of free-market idea within the scopes of

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<sup>161</sup> This could vaguely remind us of Stalin’s nationalistic ‘socialism in one country’ approach which, in the USSR, was opposed to Trotskyist internationalism. See more in Files on Ugo Spirito, b.1299, Ministero dell’Interno; Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, ACS.

<sup>162</sup> Some went as far as making personal attacks. For instance, a note by the Political Police of the *Ministero dell’Interno*, in an attempt to defame Spirito, stated that in one of his conferences about Corporativism, only 63 people filled the seats of a theatre that could hold around 800 people and many of them slept while Spirito was talking. See more in “Appunto su Ugo Spirito,” July, 1934, Spirito, b.1299, Ministero dell’Interno; Direzione.

<sup>163</sup> Interview conducted by Dr. Salvatore Valitutti in Spirito, b.1299, Ministero dell’Interno; Direzione.

<sup>164</sup> Agostino Nasti, “Sviluppi corporativi nell’anno XII” *Civiltà Fascista*, November, 1934, BSMC, 1038.

corporativism in an effort to “restore, at least partially,” the market’s “corrective automatic mechanisms.” Fundamentally, all aimed to pass through the idea that “no other system” was “more flexible” and allowed for the “free exercise of capital and private enterprises and economic institutions, while at the same time safeguarding the public interest.”<sup>165</sup>

Similarly, all seemed to agree that, in the Fascist State, “the problem of freedom” was to be “postponed and submitted to the exigency of a hard work of accumulation of material forces and technical tools, aimed at repairing the deficiencies of a nation born too late (Italy).” The corporativists were “forced to impose a quasi-military discipline on its citizens” much for the same reasons of the *Squadristi* who crushed strikes in the 1920s; Italy could not “offer itself the luxury of squandering through civil unrest” seeing that, “in the absence of liberal traditions and customs” it would “be fatal” for the nation.<sup>166</sup> Yet, their aims would rarely get more specific. Vague claims like setting the “economic life under the dominion of the spirit” abounded (emphasis added).<sup>167</sup> Never did the Fascists clearly define the idea of ‘public interest’ or ‘spirit’ nor did they specify on which stakeholders the State should have kept at check and when. In corporativist circles, one could hear the “distant wail of guildists, medievalists, royalists, and other isolated social critics.”<sup>168</sup> Even on an international stage, one can find a long standing legacy of corporativist policies which outlived Fascism, and were adapted even in States whose fascist identity is doubtful. Among them, for example, Turkish “Unionism (1908-1918) and Kemalism (1923-1950) as singular official ideologies,” as well as the Kemalism after Kemal of the 1960s and 1980s are to be considered “programmatic and, in the narrow sense, ideological

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<sup>165</sup> Lello Gangemi, “Economia Fascista,” *Ottobre*, October 28, 1932, b.10, MinCulPop: Fascicoli di personalità e di testate giornalistiche, ACS.

<sup>166</sup> De Felice, *Mussolini il Duce*, 14.

<sup>167</sup> Giuseppe Maranini, “Corporazioni e Partito,” *Civiltà Fascista*, March, 1934, BSMC, 303.

<sup>168</sup> Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 211.

variations” of corporativism applied in a reality that did not resemble neither that of Fascist Italy nor of National-socialist Germany.<sup>169</sup> Fundamentally, Corporativism, being somewhat vague, was *extremely politically functional* but not necessarily functional for the fascist cause alone.

Therefore, Fascists thought a lot about how vague should fascist traits remain origin adapting to other non-Italian environments. The origins of traits like corporativism were not to be arcane. Yet, that would have entailed giving it specific label and stressing its original Italian nature. Essentially, that entailed giving a definition and an image to traits, like corporativism, that before were exporting themselves rather spontaneously thanks to interests coming from outside Italy.<sup>170</sup> Sure, the Italian Fascists were glad about the attraction that the doctrine stimulated amongst foreign movements. Count Galezzo Ciano, in particular, was constantly aware of the hundreds of groups that visited Italy from abroad to study the Regime. Yet, they never aimed to take the entire Fascist package with them. For instance, a delegation of the *Kuomintang* that visited Italy to study the “major fascist organizations,” was particularly interested in study groups like the GUF, the Montessori method and the Gentile reform of education along with corporativism but seemed to disdain other aspects.<sup>171</sup> Similarly, the Italian Embassy in Japan, was pressing the Regime to send propagandist material that was *strictly* centered *only* around topics like the “opera nazionale Balilla, physical education, military, military, military, public works.”<sup>172</sup> Even the most distant asian movements or governments were interested in using some of the seemingly most successful traits of Fascist ideology so to enact them in their countries without embracing the Fascist system in its totality. Yet, the Italians

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<sup>169</sup> Fikret Adanır, “Kemalist Authoritarianism and fascist Trends in Turkey during the Interwar Period” in *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, ed. Stein Larsen Ugelvik (New York City, NY: Boulder, 2001), 320

<sup>170</sup> See chapter II of this thesis.

<sup>171</sup> Report to Count Ciano, b. 51, MinCulPop; Propaganda presso gli Stati Esteri 1930-1943, ACS.

<sup>172</sup> Giacinto Auriti to CAUR headquarters in Rome, 1934, b.113, MinCulPop; Propaganda presso gli Stati Esteri 1930-1943, ACS.

wanted to stress that one had to acquire the *entire* package and not leave aspects like the totalitarian state on the side; those “willing to accept corporatism separately from Fascism” were to rethink their interpretations.<sup>173</sup> Fundamentally, ‘giving to Fascism the things that were Fascism’s’ was a Fascist and Italian interest.

In a way, claiming primacy in the fascist history traits was a way to *fascistize* the process of universalism. Stressing the Italian and Fascist origins of traits like corporativism would also create a disincentive for moderates and socialists to acquire certain traits of Italian Fascism. In fact, the Italian Fascists were not interested in the admiration of leftist groups who, “although not wanting to call themselves fascists,” had “already of Fascism (...) the most vital germs” in their “bosoms.”<sup>174</sup> Equally, they felt the same for conservatives. The latter’s “adhesion” to fascism abroad was to be considered “equivocal” as they were solely interested in corporativism’s economic face and not in its socio-political ones.<sup>175</sup> Most importantly, all of these aims were to tackle a much more long-term concern. Future Italians, which would see Fascism’s and corporativism’s greatness, were to be proud of Italy’s newest contribution to human progress. Fundamentally, the Fascist aimed to not be sidelined by the course of history.<sup>176</sup>

In an attempt to do so, the first official step initiated by the Regime was to set up the CAUR. Officially, such an organization depended “in part from the cabinet of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in part from the Under-Secretary of Press and Propaganda and, finally, from the Fasci abroad.” Eugenio Coselschi headed it along with the General Augusto Pescosolido who came, like the former, from the War-volunteers Association (*Associazione Volontari di Guerra*).

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<sup>173</sup> Gabriele Paresce “Espansione del Corporativismo all’Estero” *Civiltà Fascista*, May, 1934, BSMC, 394.

<sup>174</sup> Paresce, 515.

<sup>175</sup> Paresce, 626.

<sup>176</sup> Paresce, 523.

Much like the *Fasci All'Estero*, according to the Inspector of the Party Mastromattei, the “malcontents” and the *irriducibili* were “rallying” around Coselschi; internationalism continued to attract Fascist radicals. Yet, the internationalist position did not weaken but actually got stronger before the Second World War. In fact, with the Italian campaign in Abyssinia, the sanctions enforced by the liberal democracies against Italy increase but so did the anti-liberal support coming from the public. In fact, Coselschi held important meetings both at home and abroad, under the slogan: “Let's counter the occult forces against the Light of Rome,” he counted on several thousand CAUR representative who attended events in Rome.<sup>177</sup> For CAUR members, not being universalists would equate to “betray fascism” as it would belittle the only way to reach “the only” and true “development of fascism;” the “empire.” The journal *Ottobre*, founded by the loudest voice in favor of universalism—Asvero Gravelli—demanded that those who preferred a more tamed fascism cease to make fascism “a nationalism in a black shirt, or worse, another work of art for foreigners visiting Italy.”<sup>178</sup> The imperative to spread Fascism abroad by establishing a “permanent liaison with the European and *world elites*” was clear.<sup>179</sup>

Whereas Coselschi had come to terms with rational interests, he still managed to keep them in line with his radicalism. On the one side, according to Elena Bacaloglu, a Romanian journalist of the time and a fascist activist in her country, Coselschi's remarks and attitudes forced, at times, formal excuses coming from Ugo Sola, the Italian ambassador to Romania, to the alarmed

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<sup>177</sup> Coselschi was originally a nationalist who joined D'Annunzio in the *Impresa di Fiume* (the short lived occupation of Fiume), he then became an active fascist in the area between Florence and Arezzo. A very ambitious man, he “surrounded himself by elements” loyal to him, who he wanted “to be maintained or promoted to command posts so that they could be the natural exponents of the Fascism of Arezzo (*aretino*).” That was because, not being an early fascist, he had little backing from the *diciannovisti*. For this, by 1930, he could not count on the “liking” of the local “Fascist environment.” In fact, he was seen as an emerging figure, according to an investigation of the *Ministero dell'Interno*, more thanks to personal friendships than “Fascist merits.” Very probably, he eventually was appointed as head of the CAUR, turning his focus abroad rather than at home, also to appease his local detractors. See more in b.337, Ministero dell'Interno; Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, ACS.

<sup>178</sup> Romano Bilenchi “Abbasso la politica del piede di casa” *Ottobre*, October 28, 1932, b.10, MinCulPop: Fascicoli di personalità e di testate giornalistiche, ACS.

<sup>179</sup> Gravelli in Cresciani, *Fascism*, 142.

local authorities.<sup>180</sup> On the other, he was forced to respect State guidelines and Mussolini's interest to keep CAUR as a functional mean in favor of Italy's foreign policy.<sup>181</sup> In fact, days after the first conference of the international fascist movements held at Montreux, Switzerland in 1934, Coselschi asked the french journalist Theodore Vaucher to give some important reports to the French Ambassador to Rome; documents that would reassure that the Montreux Conference had no anti-french sentiments and that it adopted an anti-german and "pro-French" line. Italy still wanted to keep France close and such was done through the CAUR as well.<sup>182</sup> Yet, that was also because, as a radical harbinger, Coselschi was sure of the eventuality of an upcoming World War by 1934. Particularly, at a specific instance, he bluntly announced his predictions in front of 5000 Genovese school children which gathered in the occasion of the 24th of May celebrations despite the fact that that "few clapped" and "alarmism" was predominant.<sup>183</sup> Merging the strategical need to keep France as a friendly power with his anti-germanic idea, he did not invite the Nazis to join other international fascists at Montreux.<sup>184</sup> Consequently, the CAUR's took a much more "Cristian" and "Latin" shape against anti-semitism and wotanism.<sup>185</sup>

The extent to which CAUR was successful at coordinating foreign fascist movements requires a comparison between different countries. For the scopes of this thesis, I have looked at nations that would, eventually, align with Italy and Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Particularly, Japan offers an interesting look into CAUR and, especially, the goal of fascist

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<sup>180</sup> After all, it was not accepted to present a purely fascist and revolutionary rhetoric without disguising it as inter-cultural dialogue between Romania and Italy. See more in b.337, Ministero dell'Interno; Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, ACS.

<sup>181</sup> In fact, Mussolini hardly ever saw CAUR as anything more than a comfortable propaganda mean to use in cases when he needed his Fascist rhetoric on an international scale. This strategical use explains why he did not always send official representatives to conferences like Montreux's one. See more in "Pax Romanizing," *Times*, December 31, 1934, Vol. XXIV, No. 27, Times online archive.

<sup>182</sup> b.337, Ministero dell'Interno; Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, ACS.

<sup>183</sup> De Felice argues that the fascist interest definitively broke away from the reality and *interessi permanenti* by 1936. After the Abyssinian campaign in fact, whereas the popular opinion was not seeking further war, Mussolini affirmed that Abyssinia was 'just the beginning' (*solo l'inizio*) in a longer path of conflicts mired at developing Italy's imperial identity. See more in Chapter 2 "Il consenso tra la metà del 1936 e la metà del 1940" in *Mussolini il duce. Vol. 2: Lo stato totalitario (1936-1940)* ed. Renzo De Felice (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editori, 1981).

<sup>184</sup> This was also because, the conference, held in 1934, came shortly after the killing of Austria's Chancellor and Mussolini's personal friend Engelbert Dollfuss perpetrated by Austrian Nazi.

<sup>185</sup> Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, 114.

universalism; one that would inherently result in tensions amongst its adherents. As we saw before, the CAUR, much like the *Fasci* Abroad, clashed with Italian diplomacy. Some embassies around the world, even after the *fascistization* of diplomacy, were trying to downplay the action of Coselschi and his clique. Generally, Giacinto Auriti, who was the Italian Ambassador to Japan in 1933, always stressed on the fact that people like Matsuoka Yosuke, who would become foreign minister in 1940, were not real fascists despite demanding “a fascist revolution and the abolition of all political parties” along the “lines of the [Italia] fascist model.”<sup>186</sup> In fact, Auriti said that Japanese fascists did not share “neither the glorious origins, the political economic and social content nor the high complex purposes” with Italian Fascists.<sup>187</sup> Most importantly, the Italian ambassador to Tokyo wrote, in 1934, that Italian and Japanese fascists did not have similar end goals. In Japan, back then, “every effort” was “made to ensure that Tokyo and not Rome” was “the guide and the lighthouse” for Asians (emphasis added). Auriti surely said so because he was as a diplomat wary of altering too much the traditional image of Italy to foreign states; one that CAUR aimed to change. However, his affirmation are enlightening also from an ideological perspective. They show that, on the long term, every fascist wanted to use Fascist methods to fulfil his own nation’s imperialist aspirations— both cultural and military depending on the case— but not that of others. In consequence, the fascist universalist plan upheld by CAUR focused much more on the European continent. Effectively, the Regime distanced itself from areas like Asia and Latin America alike. As evidence, we can see how the dissolution of the Mexican “Golden Shirts” in mid-1936 was “greeted with relief” in a diplomatic reports and not a single Argentinian “party or movement” close to the fascist ideology got “Rome’s approval.”

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<sup>186</sup> Hedinger, “Universal Fascism and its Global Legacy,” 141.

<sup>187</sup> Giacinto Auriti to CAUR headquarters in Rome, 1934, b.113, MinCulPop; Propaganda presso gli Stati Esteri 1930-1943, ACS.

The so-called “sister parties” such as the Argentine Civic Legion and the National Fascist Party never found much support neither through CAUR nor official Italian channels. Overall, it was not a very global movement.<sup>188</sup>

Of course, the *decennale* did not fully erase the remnants of the 1920s’ tamed Fascism. The important revolutionary syndicalist and fascist theoretician Sergio Panunzio, albeit being active in constructing the corporativist theory— one seen as universal by many— was a key anti-internationalist. He argued that, even by 1934, Fascism was “a purely Italian movement and, by consequence, neither exportable nor comparable to other movements.”<sup>189</sup> Yet, such views were counterbalanced by those that stressed universalism as the only prospect for Fascism; a much more idealistic view. One that, inevitably, would be the prevailing one as the Fascist State grew more and more detached from national interests, failing to separate them from the interest of the Fascist movement. “We were a nation, now we are a Regime.” Wrote Giuseppe Maranini for *Civiltà Fascista*. “The effort of Cavour’s generation gave the homeland unity and independence; the effort of our generation gave it, for the first time, a Regime.” Corporativism, the most universally appreciated fascist trait, was the attempt to do so by regimenting the economic sphere.<sup>190</sup> It, along with the CAUR, affirmed that Italy’s aim was not, “in a traditionally conservative sense,” to “adapt to changing circumstances.” From the 1930s onwards, it was about “creating such circumstances” (emphasis added).<sup>191</sup> Eventually, this idea of a permanent, and expanding, revolution integrated Giuseppe Bottai’s theory of “continuing revolution;” one which was to advocate “expansion beyond the limits of its own territory of birth and

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<sup>188</sup> Savarino, “Juego de ilusiones,” 134.

<sup>189</sup> Schnapp, *A Primer of Italian Fascism*, 88-89.

<sup>190</sup> Maranini, “Corporazioni e Partito,” 298.

<sup>191</sup> F.G Cabalzar “Attualità di Antieuropa,” *Ottobre*, October, 28, 1932, b.10, MinCulPop: Fascicoli di personalità e di testate giornalistiche, ACS.

experiment.”<sup>192</sup> Even if the radical voices of *Antieuropa* were glad to see that the League of Nations was slowly dying, they *did not stop* there; the mission was “not exhausted” as “the result obtained” was “not satisfying” (emphasis added). With the *decennale*, the Gravelli’s journal *Ottobre* developed “in the wake of *Antieuropa*” also thanks to the new support of fascists abroad. The Duce’s “promise” that the second *decennale* would be “more important and interesting than the first” was to be respected.<sup>193</sup>

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#### Chapter IV: *Italy is not alone anymore.*

Fascism becoming a universally known ideology was aided by the general decline of western liberalism and a strengthening Soviet state. In fact, after 1933, Italy ceased to be the only actor in the fascist international stage; the Germany of National-socialism arose. In such a setting, the contradictions arose. Evidently, competition proved to be inevitable as the two ultra nationalist nations used the same means to reach imperialist ends. Looking at how the rise of Nazi Germany affected the general alignment of fascist movements around the world, this chapter will argue that, albeit the lack of sympathy between its leaders, the two fascist movements tried to coexist as two differing ways under the same dome. Fundamentally, they were united by a process of identification by rejection of and opposition to the “post-war order.”<sup>194</sup> Nevertheless, such an attitude did not favor the same degree of unity amongst movements and parties around the world enjoyed by the internationalist communist movement who developed from a stricter doctrine mired towards an ideological unity that transcended national identity. In this chapter, we will first account for initial mistrust between Nazis and

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<sup>192</sup> Bottai quoted in Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, 72.

<sup>193</sup> F.G Cabalzar “Attualità di Antieuropa,” *Ottobre*, October, 28, 1932, b.10, MinCulPop: Fascicoli di personalità e di testate giornalistiche, ACS.

<sup>194</sup> Patrick Bernhard, “Colonial crossovers: Nazi Germany and its entanglements with other empires,” *Journal of Global History* (2017), 207.

Fascists reported in primary sources like the diary of Count Kurt W. Luedecke<sup>195</sup> along with comparing the Nazi internationalism to the Italians' one. Doing that, we will conclude that the Nazi-internationalism was much faster to consolidate. That was mainly because of temporal reasons rather than a Nazi innate radicalism supposedly not present in Fascism. Circumstances were more favorable as the Nazis rose to power in a disarrayed international stage that did not require them to be 'tamed.' In addition, comparing the reactions of Italian fascists to the failed Munich *putsch* to those of the Nazi victory in the elections of November 1933, we will try to show how the Italians *always* wanted to hold the primacy of the 'true' fascist nation in the world. In the 1920s, the Italians lacked knowledge of the Nazi movement<sup>196</sup> and, in doubt, preferred not to give too much importance to the Nazis also due to strategical disadvantages that doing the opposite would have entailed. Later, during the 1930s, the nationalistic need to play "a role of spiritual supremacy" in the fascist international movement played an important role.<sup>197</sup>

When, in the 1920s, fascism was 'in the making' in Italy, the fascists were worried about fascistizing the state at home and overcoming the hostile international order abroad; they could not imagine a fascist-friendly force merging in Germany. In fact, Italian fascist overlooked the importance of the 1923 Munich *putsch* attempted by Hitler in order to create a government in the Bavarian region that would oppose Stresemann's liberal government in Berlin. Some Italian fascists did see Hitler as "an avant-garde element" and not a purely conservative figure. Others, saw the Nazis as "Bavarian reactionaries" and, Mussolini himself wrote, already in 1922, that

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<sup>195</sup> An original German nationalist who joined the Nazis in the 1920s, survived the Night of the Long Knives and acted as the unofficial representative of Hitler in countries like Italy in the years of the Führer's rise to power. His diary was written in 1938 and such is key to deduce its trustworthiness as a source retelling episodes of the 1920s. In fact, Lüdecke attempted to reflect upon his actions and not try to diminish them in order to escape accusations in the post-WWII era.

<sup>196</sup> It is widely known that Mussolini himself "had never heard of Hitler" before 1923. See more in Kurt G.W. Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler: The lost testimony by a survivor from the Night of the Long Knives* (South Yorkshire: Coda Books Ltd, 2013), 59.

<sup>197</sup> Garau, "The Internationalisation of Italian Fascism," 52.

National-socialism, along with German politics in general, was much more conservative than Italian fascism.<sup>198</sup> Others saw Hitler, “as a politician,” lacking “not only intellectual preparation, but also intuition” and a “basic knowledge” of politics. For them, the attempted *coup d’etat* portrayed Hitler as a “wretched one-hour dictator” who, copying the Italian *squadristi*, became Mussolini’s “ridiculous caricature.”<sup>199</sup> Somewhat differently, fascist journalists like Leo Negrelli called those that carried the *Haekenkruezler* (Swastika) as “Hitler’s *fascists*” (emphasis added) and stressed on the similar symbolism between Italian fascists and German Nazis as a good propaganda tool for the latter.<sup>200</sup> Overall, as we started to see already in Chapter III of this thesis, Italian fascism and German National-socialism had an ambiguous relationship.

Yet, National-socialists were eager to learn from the Italian fascists and use their methods as means to reach power. Some, most strikingly, even hoped to have a direct contact with Mussolini and his fascists. For instance, in 1921, Hitler sent Kurt G.W. Lüdecke<sup>201</sup> with a specific mission; establishing a contact with what was, at the time, a ‘revolutionary’ Mussolini. In fact, an attempt to bring the Nazi and the Italian fascist revolutionaries closer was a prospect that was desired by many and, amongst all, Ludendorff seemed to find the prospect a wise one.<sup>202</sup> Comparing such a meeting to a second one, held in 1922, when Mussolini was more ‘straightjacketed,’<sup>203</sup> is key to highlight furthermore the forcibly ‘tamed nature’ of the Italian Regime at the time along with the immediate stimulus, felt by the emerging Nazis, to look for

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<sup>198</sup> Benito Mussolini, “Maschere e volto della Germania,” *Gerarchia*, March 1922, BSMC Digital catalog, 114.

<sup>199</sup> Giulio De Benedetti, “Le illusioni di Hitler: Ludendorff ha tentato di suicidarsi?,” *Il Corriere Italiano*, 17 October, 1923, BSMC Newspapers Archive.

<sup>200</sup> Leo Negrelli, “La Lotta tra la stella semita e la croce ariana: Un discorso di Hitler ai social-nazionalisti bavaresi,” *Il Corriere Italiano*, 8 November, 1923, BSMC Newspapers Archive.

<sup>201</sup> One might see this meeting as an unofficial party line decision because Lüdecke himself admitted that he travelled “without an official rank in the organization (N.S.D.A.P.)” and “a mission of such great potential importance” had been entrusted to him largely because of personal initiative. On the other hand, it is understandable why he would be entrusted with it keeping in mind that, back in 1922 and arguably throughout its entire existence, the National-socialist Party was ruled by the principle of “every man for himself—for the Party’s sake.” More in Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 64.

<sup>202</sup> Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 57.

<sup>203</sup> Mussolini’s government was dependent on the vote of the conservative flankers and those that allowed the March on Rome to take place.

international aid. Lüdecke, in 1921, believed in Mussolini's interest in the Nazi plan; he was comforted by the fact that the future Duce spared "four hours to talk with a stranger whose sole credentials were the name of a general (Ludendorff) (...) and of another man totally unknown to him and still utterly powerless (Hitler)" despite being "poised for the moment when he must act to determine the destiny of Italy."<sup>204</sup> On the other hand, Lüdecke did not meet the same level of friendly attitudes the second time he met Mussolini. In both meetings Lüdecke was determined to get the Fascists as close as possible to the Nazis seeing that it would have been an "enormous advantage" to have the propagandistic<sup>205</sup> and, possibly, economic support<sup>206</sup> from those who successfully overcame "Marxism and parliamentary inefficiency."<sup>207</sup> To such an aim, both for a pragmatic need to find allies<sup>208</sup> and for ideological affinity, Lüdecke knew that Hitler was ready to sacrifice even domestic support by key figures like Hans Frank and Rudolf Hess, who lamented the "un-German" alignment with Italy.<sup>209</sup> Nevertheless, albeit Mussolini was informed by General L. Capello, after his return from Berlin in 1922, that Italy could benefit from the "birth of the right conditions to allow the growth in Germany of a phenomenon similar to fascism."<sup>210</sup> Italians were sure that a dictatorial takeover in Germany would have altered the international environment.<sup>211</sup> For instance, France would have never pardoned a clear Italian backing of an authoritarian alternative to the Weimar government and that prevented Mussolini from a clear alignment alongside the Nazis.<sup>212</sup> In response, Lüdecke himself, had to admit that

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<sup>204</sup> Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 60.

<sup>205</sup> Lüdecke, 66.

<sup>206</sup> Lüdecke aimed to "get money" and follow Hitler's imperative to "Rip out of Mussolini whatever you can!" (*Fetzen Sie aus Mussolini heraus, was Sie koennen!*) for more see Lüdecke, 109-111.

<sup>207</sup> Lüdecke, 66.

<sup>208</sup> Hans Woller, "I rapporti tra Mussolini e Hitler del 1933: Politica del potere o affinità ideologica?," *Italia Contemporanea* (1994), 494.

<sup>209</sup> Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 29-30.

<sup>210</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini e Hitler: I rapporti segreti 1922-1933* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2013), 45.

<sup>211</sup> It was clear that a possible Bavarian government, which would carry the "name of Ludendorff" would lead to a war, "immediately or on a short-term with France." See more in Leo Negrelli, "Il colpo di Stato in Germania: Hitler ha proclamato la dittatura," *Il Corriere Italiano*, 10 November, 1923, BSMC Newspapers Archive.

<sup>212</sup> "Una diffida del Governo francese alla Germania: La Francia non potrebbe tollerare la costituzione d'un Governo dittatoriale," *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 9 November, 1923, BSMC Newspapers Archive.

Mussolini, as a statesman, would measure the Nazis “by no yardstick except our usefulness to Italy”<sup>213</sup> and, in an interview with *L’Epoca* newspaper dated October 25th, 1923, stressed on ideological differences rather than affinities. In it, he criticized Italian fascism for its lack of anti-semitism<sup>214</sup> and he was even accused in *Il Corriere Italiano* of defaming the “leaders and the majority of his homeland” for the purpose of “a small minority [the Nazis]” or for “particularist, if not personal, purposes.”<sup>215</sup>

In the beginning, the disagreements between Nazis and Italian fascists, mainly on the issues of race, were so marked that the latter decided to hinder the path of the former. They did so by aid groups who were directly opposed to the Nazis. Seeing that, deep down, Mussolini wanted to weaken the international environment to his favor, he still invested in anti-liberal German groups like the *Stahlhelm* (Steel helmet). In fact, when the failure of the Munich *putsch* showed “disagreement amongst the various military organizations” in the German radical rightist environment, Mussolini decided to answer plea for arms<sup>216</sup> with donations that varied from 1.200 heavy machine guns, 2.700 rifles, 32.500 ordinary rifles, and 90.000 infantry artillery shells. He believed that the *Stahlhelm* were closer to the Italian fascists and were more influent than the Nazis.<sup>217</sup> These convictions were affected by theories advances by figures like the German folklorist Anton Hilckman who highlighted how the Nazis, by appealing more emotively to the blood-based essence of the German people, embodied the opposition to “latinity.” Protestantism and “Wotanism” characterized Hitler’s movement too much. Interestingly, many foreign fascist sympathizers, especially in France, tended to agree with him. They all thought that anti-

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<sup>213</sup> Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 108.

<sup>214</sup> De Felice, *Mussolini e Hitler*, 33.

<sup>215</sup> Mario Passarge, “Il movimento di destra in Germania e i social-nazionalisti bavaresi,” *Il Corriere Italiano*, 17 October, 1923, BSMC Newspapers Archive.

<sup>216</sup> De Felice, *Mussolini e Hitler*, 72-73.

<sup>217</sup> De Felice, *Mussolini e Hitler*, 89.

parliamentary and anti-social democratic ideals were not the only characteristics that made up a fascist and Hilckman warned to not be fooled by the Nazi's traits which resembled those of Fascism.<sup>218</sup> In response, Hilckman was not spared from criticism. Being a Christian German who was in love with Italian culture, he was accused of being a "fake" German or a "Latin of Germany" by his Nazi-counterparts in order to further highlight the divisions.<sup>219</sup> Fascist Italy diminished Hitler momentarily convinced by some fundamental differences and by the convinced that the Nazis were a ephemeral movement; they could not be more wrong.

In time, the Nazis did grow stronger despite the failed *putsch*. Reaching power by 1933, they always attracted considerable attention, much like the Italian fascists, from outside of national borders in the entire process of seizing power. However, unlike the Italian fascists, the Nazis, when in power, found themselves in an international setting that was much more receptive to Fascist rhetoric. In addition, not being the first fascist-like nation in history gave various advantages to the Germans. One of them was to observe the Italian way to internationalize the fascist mission or the Italian and Japanese empire-building methods with more interest than, say, the British or French ones.<sup>220</sup> For such temporal reason, we do not have to bother talking about 'tamed' forms of a Nazi international agenda; the Germans had much more freedom in revealing their true face. Already when rising to power, Hitler, unlike Mussolini in the *Squadristo* years (1919-1921), could be preoccupied on how to get international help for his movement.<sup>221</sup> Fortunately for him, the Nazi's international mission did not start with the AO<sup>222</sup> established in 1934 but attempts to coordinate with "German Nazis outside Germany" already were made when

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<sup>218</sup> Anton Hilckman, "Il fascismo tedesco è anti-romano?," *Antieuropa*, 1 March, 1931, Milstein Division of the New York Public Library, 1732.

<sup>219</sup> De Felice, *Mussolini e Hitler*, 162-163.

<sup>220</sup> Bernhard, "Colonial crossovers," 206.

<sup>221</sup> Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 106.

<sup>222</sup> The Nazi version of the *Fasci Italiani All'Estero*.

Nazism seemed a marginal phenomenon.<sup>223</sup> To illustrate, individuals like Rudolf Jung,<sup>224</sup> racialists like Dr. Walter Riehl, the Hungarians Nazi-sympathizers Gyula Gömbös and Tibor Eckhardt in Budapest gathered with Hitler to plan an actual military *coup d'état*. Lüdecke, present in such occasion, asserted that “the meeting ended with Riehl and Hitler at odds and only one issue settled; Hitler had shown the Nazis outside Germany that he would make his Party subordinate to none. He and nobody else was to rule.”<sup>225</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Nazis marshaled the standardization processes in a quicker way than the Italians. In fact, the latter, in the pages like *Il Popolo d'Italia*, could sense that “Hitler’s plans were not limited to Germany alone.” The newspaper defined figures like the Hungarian lawyer Ferenc Ulain<sup>226</sup> as the “the soul” of the Munich *putsch* seeing that he was arrested “while traveling to Munich on the Austrian border” along with “seven Hungarian officers and five Bavarian officers” who carried a “treaty concluded with the Hitlerian group, in which reciprocal obligations were established” for the execution of the *putsch*.<sup>227</sup> Fundamentally, Hitler had a fertile ground for international coordination “for revolutionary movements, all kinds of violence, the occupation of public buildings, the mobilization of armed groups” and a possible “formation of revolutionary governments” since the very early stages of the Nazi experience.

Whereas such a focus aimed abroad was a driving force similar to that of the Italian fascists, it was one which the Nazis merely quickened. Inherently, such a force aimed at reaching inevitably contrasting culturally imperialist ends. On the one hand, much like Fascists, the Nazis,

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<sup>223</sup> Garau, “The Internationalisation,” 53.

<sup>224</sup> He, already by 1919, had published books like *Der Nazionale Sozialismus* (The National-Socialism) considered to be “the first National-socialist handbook.” For more see Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 101.

<sup>225</sup> Lüdecke, 104.

<sup>226</sup> After WWI, Ulain made a connection between the Hungarian and Bavarian racists. In 1919 he founded a racist newspaper named *Szózat* and in 1923, together with Gyula Gömbös, he founded the Party of Racists.

<sup>227</sup> Rastignao, “Il tentativo monarchico in Germania è fallito: I dirigenti Hitler e Ludendorff arrestati, combattimento con perdite da ambedue le parti— Social-nazionalisti ungheresi e austriaci partecipavano al complotto,” *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 10 November, 1923, BSMC Digital catalog

always had a clear picture of how the fascist world would differ from the one they reacted to already during the seizure of power. As evidence, in Lüdecke's diary we see statements such as the following:

“Our great hope sprang from the fact that in the existing world outlook there was something fundamentally unwise, inorganic and therefore weak, which, during the centuries had brought about impossible, untenable condition. If that was true then it was equally true and far easier to believe that the creation of a new structure and a new world-outlook, organically conceived, could be carried out against all and everything, however small the initial force might be” (emphasis added).

Nevertheless, being nationalistic, both Italian fascists and Nazis wanted their respective countries to “make the whole world widen its eyes in astonishment”<sup>228</sup> when looking at them. Whereas they learned from each other in the process, the end would inherently bring about difference in interests. To illustrate, albeit Mussolini admired the idea of “cesarism” championed by German philosopher Oswald Spengler, he rejected the ideological reasoning that would constitute the rhetoric for German cultural imperialism. In fact, he could not accept that Spengler entrusted the German people *alone*, being “the least worn out,” as “the least to have matured among the white peoples,” with the “historical mission” to exercise a “unifying and establishing function” on the Western world as the base of a new “empire.”<sup>229</sup> In addition, Mussolini did not like the fact that the Germans were marshalling their outreach to foreigners in a quicker way than the Italians thanks to the same less-binding international stage that initially aided Fascism's international rhetoric. To emphasize on the German ‘rapid’ way to fascist universalism, we shall look into the

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<sup>228</sup> Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 62.

<sup>229</sup> De Felice, *Mussolini il Duce*, 38.

Manchester Guardian's translation of a Memorandum from the Nazi's Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda to German missions abroad— that is to say Embassies and consulates etc— used in a report to Count Ciano dated July 30, 1934. The Manchester Guardian starts off by stating that “whereas the German Republic paid little attention to propaganda (except in its own frontier regions) and produced hardly any literature in praise of its own achievements (although the achievements were considerable),” the Third Reich had begun “a prodigious and costly propagandist effort.” Like the Italians, the Germans advocated that the Sections abroad shall remain as “inconspicuous as possible both amongst the public and in the press” however, the Nazis were much quicker in getting foreigners to come to contact with their ideas. In fact, Goebbels himself, head Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, stated that “the prodigious mass of creative ideas must receive suitable interpretation and should be made understandable to foreigners.”<sup>230</sup> Just as much as Fascists could not deny the radical Nazi outreach to foreigners, they could not neglect that such ability was aided by the universal outreach of a sentiment that plagued Europe for centuries; anti-semitism. In fact, the anti-semitic reality, surely not present solely in Germany, made National-socialism a “serious rival, possibly even as influential as the Italian model of Fascism” in the eyes of foreigners.<sup>231</sup> Generally Hitler was clearly aware of that. In an interview early in his political career, he stated:

“In the north, the red Semitic cross of the Soviets triumphed, but in the south, the *Fascio* triumphed against that conception. We too want to bring our hooked cross [*Swastika*] to triumph. Today the struggle is between the Semitic and the Aryan stars.”

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<sup>230</sup> Express mail from London's Italian Embassy to Count Galeazzo Ciano, 30 July, 1934, b.91, MinCulPop; Propaganda presso gli Stati Esteri 1930-1943, ACS.

<sup>231</sup> Garau, “The Internationalisation,” 51.

It is interesting to see that Hitler does place Fascism on the same level of bolshevism (as they both ‘won’) and calls for an almost separated victory for National-socialism;<sup>232</sup> was the Nazi way alternative even to that of Fascism?

Not fully. Whereas the imperialist end goals of the two universal fascist programs would inevitably bring clashes, this was true for every adherent to the ideas of universal fascism.<sup>233</sup>

Therefore, German Nationalism just added the xenophobic trait, under strict biologically-racist terms, to the list of traits that we identified as defining universal fascism in Chapter II of this thesis; the Nazi ideology paralleled Fascism’s *under the same dome* of universal fascism.

Reacting, Italian Fascists clearly saw that their initial prediction of a Nazi failure were proved wrong and, maybe half-willingly, they had to accept the new Nazi allies. Nevertheless, there was something to gain from this situation as well and, for such a reason, it was not a defeat; Nazi Germany could be used as an excuse to defend the ‘primacy’ of Italian Fascism. In fact, the major Fascist propaganda publication, when reacting to the Nazi victory in the elections of 1933, always tried to highlight Italy’s moral primacy over the idea that inspired the Nazis in their fight.

*Il Popolo d'Italia* writes that “Hitler’s overwhelming victory in Germany is an impressive and grandiose proof of the expansion in the world of the universality of Fascism.” Already from the title of the article, the Fascists implied that the Nazis acted following “the bright wake of Fascism and of Rome.”<sup>234</sup> Others, see Nazism as functional to an important defining point of fascist universalism; anti-communism. In fact, *Il Popolo d'Italia* states that national-socialism

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<sup>232</sup> Leo Negrelli, “La Lotta tra la stella semita e la croce ariana.”

<sup>233</sup> For instance, Giacinto Auriti, the Italian ambassador to Tokyo stressed in, 1934, that the Italian and Japanese fascists did not have similar ends as “every effort” was made by the Japanese counterparts “to ensure that Tokyo and not Rome” was “for Asians the guide and the lighthouse. Apart from showing that the tensions, highlighted in Chapter I, that the *fascistization* of diplomacy wanted to surpass still persevered in the 1930s, this source is key to show the inevitable lack of unity within an ultranationalist international plan such as the fascist one. See more in Giacinto Auriti to CAUR headquarters in Rome, 1934, b.113, MinCulPop; Propaganda presso gli Stati Esteri 1930-1943, ACS.

<sup>234</sup> “Nella scia luminosa del fascismo e di Roma, le Camice Brune di Hitler sull’esempio delle Camice nere di Mussolini smantellano le roccaforti del vecchio mondo socialdemocratico: Resurrezione dei Popoli,” *Il Popolo d'Italia*, March 7, 1933, BSMC Digital catalog.

meant “the only real and effective barrier against the internationalist Bolshevik wind coming from the East.”<sup>235</sup> Similarly, an equal rhetoric was used to emphasize how a victory of Nazism meant a strengthening of anti-liberalism when comparing how the Nazis managed to bring “40 million *unanimous and disciplined* voters” to the polls compared to “the sole 5 million” who went to vote for referendum on the Young Plan held in 1929 and called by the conservatives.<sup>236</sup>

Whereas both Mussolini and Hitler seemed to subtly agree that “alliances were never ideal, but a purely political matter,”<sup>237</sup> Mussolini, by the Berlin Olympic games of 1936, stated that despite the fact that Italian and German fascism did not share a similar revolutionary development, “the objective that both wanted to reach” was centered, for both, on exacting “the unity and greatness of the people.” He proceeded in stating that “Fascism and Nazism are two manifestations” of the same sentiment.<sup>238</sup> How and why did he come to such a statement? How could Mussolini accept the Nazis as an ideological pair of Italy? Two years earlier, he lost his last, if present,<sup>239</sup> personal sympathies for the Nazis when an Austrian S.S. members killed the Duce’s personal friend and Austrian Prime Minister Engelbert Dollfuss in July, 1934?<sup>240</sup> Surely, such was the product of the alignment with Nazi Germany following the Ethiopian war and the intervention in the Spanish Civil War both seen as preludes of WWII. Still, considering that the creature of Italian fascism developed its influence abroad almost independently of the will of its leader, one could say that the Duce simply caught up late in realizing Nazi Germany’s

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<sup>235</sup> “La vittoria della giovinezza in Germania sanzionata dai risultati plebiscitari delle elezioni,” *Il Popolo d’Italia*, March 7, 1933, BSMC Digital catalog.

<sup>236</sup> “Un doppio plebiscito in Germania: Oltre quaranta milioni di elettori approvano la politica estera di Hitler,” *Il Popolo d’Italia*, 12 November, 1933, BSMC Digital catalog.

<sup>237</sup> Woller, “I rapporti tra Mussolini e Hitler,” 494.

<sup>238</sup> Mussolini quoted in Goeschel, “Prefazione,” in *Mussolini e Hitler*, ed. Renzo De Felice, VI.

<sup>239</sup> Accounts like the excerpts from Nahum Goldmann’s diary retelling a meeting with Mussolini in November 1934, presented by De Felice, show Mussolini go as far as stating that he was a “zionist” ready to help the Jewish people against the bellicose aims of Hitler who he saw as an “imbecile and a good-for-nothing.” See more in Renzo De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy: a History* (New York City, NY: Enigma Books, 2001), 640.

<sup>240</sup> Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 56.

momentum within the fascist universal front. Some historians see German Nazism as “the most successful” model of universal fascism because “it was the strongest, the most ruthless and the most expansionist” of all believed that the most radical element stirred the most spirits.<sup>241</sup> Yet, one cannot fully agree as Italian fascism was not any less radical. Nazism was merely aided by the time in which it appeared on the world stage; a time that did not force it to be ‘tamed’ and allowed it to gain momentum. In fact, albeit the Nazis were strategically omitted from the ideological image of the Fascist’s “Young Europe” ideal<sup>242</sup> and the Montreux Conference<sup>243</sup>, circumstances “made it clear that the models had become two” as groups like the Rumanian Iron Guard and the Danish National Socialists started to actively embrace the Nazi-way.<sup>244</sup>

Nevertheless, the Fascist-Nazi dichotomy would not assure unity within the fascist universalist sphere. This was the case despite the fact that the Nazi Hermann Goering and Giuseppe Renzetti<sup>245</sup> agreed on the desirability of a “Fascist–Nazi solidarity” that would “lead to a common effort to convince other nations of fascism and then achieve a great agreement between various fascist countries.”<sup>246</sup> In fact, they subtly did not agree *upon who would effectively* lead such a united front despite clearly agreeing that a prospect of ease and cooperation was not doable; neither Goering nor Renzetti were liberal thinkers as far as international relations were concerned. Fundamentally, this reality did not account to preserve unity even within in fascists movements around the world. For instance, the B.U.F. was deeply divided between those more conservative members who sided with Italian fascists<sup>247</sup> and those

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<sup>241</sup> Larsen, “Was there Fascism outside Europe?,” 735.

<sup>242</sup> Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, 84.

<sup>243</sup> Ledeen, 144.

<sup>244</sup> Garau, “The Internationalisation,” 54.

<sup>245</sup> The major Mussolini’s envoy to study the Nazi State.

<sup>246</sup> Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 44.

<sup>247</sup> Garau, “The Internationalisation,” 55.

Nazi-friendly radicals who were ready to take the lead of the party without the former despite being in a minority.<sup>248</sup> Similarly, the Japanese *Kakushin* right ended up breaking away from the county's right wing front seeing that others did not want align along Nazi Germany. In fact, despite the fact that the Japanese ruling elite did not fancy the idea of mass-politics and did not foresee a threat coming any ethnic minority within the country, "the solid ethnic and political basis of Japanese nationalism"<sup>249</sup> along with "the great-power status of Nazi Germany" drew the extremists in Japan closer to the German-model. For such reasons, the case study of Nazi Germany joining the universal fascist front is key to show that the left was not the only one plagued by disunity. In fact, just as much the III International's directives helped to break up the Socialist fronts in counties like Italy from 1919 to 1921, fascist universalism similarly, albeit in a more indirect way, negatively affected the unity of like minded groups within different domestic realities.

As a matter of fact, whereas historians like De Felice argue that the WWII Axis "came out of the need to join forces in a situation of international isolation (...) and under no circumstances was a result of ideological affinity,"<sup>250</sup> the experiment of fascist universalism served as an additional legitimizing base for the future formation of the pre-war Axis alliance between Germany, Italy and Japan. In such a setting, a strictly military alliance served as a short term preservation and a practical handling of what ideological matters were breaking; unity. Of course, the ends changed as cultural imperialism was replaced by military expansionism but the basic formula to have internationalist means to reach an imperialist and nationalistic goal did not.

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<sup>248</sup> Garau, 61.

<sup>249</sup> Gregory J. Kasza, "Fascism from Above? Japan's Kakushin right in Comparative Perspective?," in *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, ed. Ugelvik Larsen, Stein (New York City, NY: Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2001), 202.

<sup>250</sup> De Felice quoted in Goeschel, "Prefazione," in *Mussolini e Hitler*, ed. Renzo De Felice, VIII.

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Conclusion:

Looking at universal fascism, it is difficult to establish a widely shared common-ground amongst historians who are interested in defining the process. The same can be said for the countries or movements that adhered to it. Whereas Stanley G. Payne sees German and Italian movements as the sole to develop “autochthonous roots” and dismisses all the “purely mimetic movements” elsewhere, others do not see fascism as a universal phenomenon at all.<sup>251</sup> It cannot be denied that Mussolini, while being “formally in charge of Italian foreign policy as foreign minister,” had to rely on the “Italian diplomatic service, which was far from fully fascist.”<sup>252</sup> Similarly, we also have to keep in mind the important point made by Renzo De Felice who wrote the most exhaustive bibliography of Mussolini. The Fascist leader was too absorbed with “the ordinary administration” and “the handling of daily problems” prevented devoting much attention to the process of fascist internationalization.<sup>253</sup> Yet, it is nonetheless stimulating to draw a parallel between fascist universalism and Europe’s 1848 Revolutions since “each fascism” would “have causes and features peculiar to the national context” in which it arose, making “generalization hazardous and calling into question the idea that all the putative fascisms are actually variants of the same revolution.”<sup>254</sup>

By looking at the *Fasci Italiani All’Estero*, the traits Italian Fascism that that foreigners admired, and tracing the trajectory of the CAUR, we always highlighted that cultural imperialism was the driving force behind Fascist Italy’s willingness to present its ideology as universal. Yet,

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<sup>251</sup> Payne quoted in Griffin, *International Fascism*, 233.

<sup>252</sup> Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 38.

<sup>253</sup> De Felice, *Mussolini il Duce*, 23.

<sup>254</sup> Griffin, *International Fascism*, 59.

in the process, the universalists always wanted to prevent that those who adapted Fascist traits to their national realities forget that those had an Italian origin. How vague were the points of fascist universalism supposed to be, in order to allow penetration in national environment, while never fully departing from its Italian origins? George L. Mosse sees that the Fascist ideology “expresses itself primarily not through theory and doctrines, but through a bizarre synthesis of ideas whose precise content will vary significantly from nation to nation but whose appeal will always be essentially mythic rather than rational.”<sup>255</sup> Roger Eatwell explains that “the Mussolini-Gentile entry in the 1932 *Enciclopedia Italiana*” was an attempt to define fascism in a way to enhance its international appeal seeing that the word “nation” was seen as ‘not a race, nor a geographically determined region’ but an entity made by the nature of its State.<sup>256</sup> Yet, with time, the issue of vagueness was not the only question keeping the fascists busy. Eventually, fascists abroad along with Italian realized that the nationalist nature of the ideology would make internationalism not sustainable on the long run. Each wanted the spotlight on their respective nation in an attempt to uphold culturally imperialist interest; everyone wanted to be original in their own way rather than copy-cats of Italy. In fact, in cases like the *Fasci All’Estero* and the Nazi AO, “even if we can establish similarities of origin and content,” the “political aims” between them would eventually show to be different.”<sup>257</sup> Indeed, the appearance of Nazi Germany in the fascist universalist family did everything but preserve the unity of a movement already fluid as a whole.

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<sup>255</sup> Mosse quoted in Griffin, 53.

<sup>256</sup> Eatwell quoted in Griffin, 193.

<sup>257</sup> Larsen, “Was there Fascism outside Europe?,” 737.

There is a lot of space open for further research on fascist universalism. First, it would be interesting to understand why, movements like the Chinese CC Clique, paralleled the anti-colonial struggle in Ethiopia to that of their anti-Japanese struggle.<sup>258</sup> In fact, it is key to carry out exploration of how foreign fascists distanced themselves from the fascist international mission once the Italian imperialist aims behind the process became clear. Secondly, there is a need to understand how the process to internationalize fascism using an ideological or cultural charm eventually turned to military colonialism imposing the fascist way of life using hard power in conquered territories.<sup>259</sup> Thirdly, an extremely thought provoking comparing exercise may be devoted to the similarities and differences between the fascist and stalinist internationalism. Nonetheless, all these inquiries will most likely fail if we do not see how the rise and spread of right-wing authoritarian movements in and out of Europe can only be understood and interpreted from a comparative perspective that uses a “common concept of fascism.”<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Clinton, *Revolutionary Nativism*, 60.

<sup>259</sup> This could even link to studies of domestic issues inside fascist nations as even the NSDAP and the PNF were eventually “driven into the shadows while the paramilitary formations assumed the crucial roles due to their infiltration of the police, the military and certain sectors of the civil service.” See more in Larsen, “Was there Fascism outside Europe?,” 743.

<sup>260</sup> Woller, “I rapporti tra Mussolini e Hitler,” 492.

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