

# Revolutionary Fascism

by

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**I**

## **Nicola Bombacci, from Lenin to Mussolini**

On April 29, 1945, the main fascist hierarchs were shot down at the hands of communist partisans. Interestingly, among these fascists we find Nicola Bombacci, who was one of the most prominent figures of Italian communism, neither more nor less than the founder of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), a personal friend of Lenin, with whom he was in the USSR during the years of the Revolution (with a capital R). He was nicknamed the “Red Pope” and finally an unconditional follower of Mussolini, whom he joined in the last months of the regime. Will your life be the story of a conversion or a betrayal? Or was he, by chance, the natural evolution of a National-Bolshevik?

### **a young revolutionary**

Nicola Bombacci was born into a Catholic family (his father was a farmer, a former soldier of the Pontifical State) in Romagna, in the province of Forli, on 24 October 1879, a few kilometers from Predappio, where four years later he would be born the founder of fascism. It is a region where the struggle of the workers was distinguished by its hardness and by a peasantry accustomed to rebellion, a land of extreme passions. At the imposition of his father, he enters the seminary but leaves when his father dies. In 1903 he joined the anti-clerical Socialist Party (PSI) and decided to obtain a teaching diploma in order to help the less favored classes in their struggle (again, the similarities with the Duce are evident, they even studied at the same higher school), very soon he will dedicate himself, body and soul, to the Socialist Revolution. His capacity for work and organizing skills earn him the direction of several socialist press organs, in which he will increase his power, within the workers' movement, he will even be secretary of the Central Committee of the party and a member of parliament, where he will meet a young man, just a few years younger than him: Benito Mussolini, who - we must not forget - was the future hope of Italian socialism before it became national-revolutionary.[\[1\]](#)

An opponent of the soft line of social democracy, Bombacci founded the Italian Communist Party together with Gramsci and traveled in the early 1920s to the USSR to take part in the Bolshevik Revolution, where he had already been as a representative of the Socialist Party having been persuaded to the cause of the Soviets. There he made friends with Lenine himself, who in the Kremlin would say those famous words about Mussolini to him: “in Italy, comrades, in Italy there is only one socialist capable of leading the people to revolution, Benito Mussolini”, soon the Duce would lead a revolution, but a fascist revolution...[\[2\]](#)

As a leader (Antonio Gramsci was the theoretician, Bombacci the organizer) of the newly created PCI, he would become an authentic “public enemy number one of the Italian bourgeoisie who would nickname him the “Red Pope”. He brilliantly revalidated his mandate in parliament, this time on the lists of the new formation, while the fascist squads began to take to the streets facing the communist militias in bloody fights. Bombacci will endeavor to stop the fascist march towards the

power, but will fail. From the pages of his newspapers he inveighs against fascism, calling for the defense of the communist revolution. This is a time when the *squadron* Blackshirts sing irreverent songs like *"I'm not afraid of Bombacci/... With Bombacci's beard we'll make spazzolini (a brush)/ To polish Benito Mussolini's bald head"*. This is the time when communism finds itself immersed in numerous internal tensions and Bombacci himself polemicizes with his party comrades; one of the points of friction is precisely the decision between nationalism or internationalism. He had previously shown nationalist tendencies, which would be a harbinger of his future line, when he was still in the Socialist Party, as a result of a document protesting against D'Annunzio's action in Fiume that the party wanted to present, Bombacci revolted and wrote about the one who was *"perfectly and profoundly revolutionary; because D'Annunzio is a revolutionary. Lenin said it at the Moscow congress"*.<sup>[3]</sup>

## The First Fascism

In 1922 the fascists marched on the capital of the Tiber: nothing could stop Mussolini from taking power; nevertheless, this will never be absolute in the first years of the regime. As a deputy and member of the Party's Central Committee, Bombacci frequently travels abroad. He attends the 4th International Communist Congress representing Italy, and on the Committee of Action Anti Fascist he meets with several Bolshevik Russian leaders. He has already dedicated half his life to the proletarian cause and is unwilling to waver in his commitment to bringing his socialist dream into practice. In parliament and in the communist press, he becomes an ardent advocate of an Italy-Russia rapprochement, almost certainly speaking in the name and at the instigation of the Moscow leaders, but using a national-revolutionary speech that disturbs the bosom of the party which, on the other hand, has been in retreat since the victory of the fascists. Relations with the Soviet Revolutionary State would be a leverage for Italy as a Nation, which also witnesses a revolutionary albeit fascist process. They immediately accuse him of being a heretical and ask him to recant. They cannot allow a communist to demand, as Bombacci did, *"surpass the Nation (without) destroying it, we want it even greater, because we want a government of workers and peasants"*, socialist and without denying the Fatherland, *"sacred and unquestionable right of every man and of all groups of men"*. It is the so-called "Third Way" in which Revolutionary Fascist Nationalism could meet Revolutionary Communist Socialism.

Bombacci is progressively sidelined within the PCI and condemned to political ostracism; nevertheless, he continued to have contacts with some Russian leaders and with the Russian embassy he worked for, and in addition, one of his children was living in the USSR.

He sincerely believed in the Bolshevik Revolution and, unlike his Italian comrades, believed that the Russians had a national sense of the Revolution for which he would never disown his friendship for the USSR, not even when he definitively joined Fascism. With the definitive expulsion from the party in 1927, Bombacci entered a phase that we can describe as the silent *years that* lasted until 1937, when he launched his publishing house and homonymous magazine named *The truth* (The Truth) and which culminated in 1943 in a conversion progressive towards fascism. However, it is too simplistic to consider that Bombacci simply joined the fascism of weapons and baggage as do those who accuse him of being a traitor. We will witness a slow process of rapprochement, not with fascism but with Mussolini and to the left wing of the fascist movement, where Bombacci felt comfortable and among his own, very close to the revolutionary conceptions of this fascism, its corporatism and its social laws, of which he would speak in 1928, recognizing his identification<sup>[4]</sup> what *"every postulate is a socialist program"*.

From the above, we can clearly state that Bombacci is not a fascist but defends the successes of the regime and the figure of Mussolini. He did not approach the Fascist Party - he never joined the National Fascist Party - despite his acknowledged friendship with Mussolini, he never accepted any of the positions offered to him, nor did he ever renounce his communist origins. He valued his independence more. However, he became convinced that the corporate state proposed by fascism was the most perfect

realization, socialism in practice, a superior stage to communism. He would never camouflage his ideals. In 1936 he would write in the magazine *The truth*, confessing his adherence to fascism but also to communism:

“Fascism made a great Social Revolution. Mussolini and Lenin. Corporate and Soviet fascist state, Rome and Moscow. We have gone far enough to regret it, we have nothing to apologize for, for both in the present and in the past we are driven by the same ideal: the triumph of work.” [5].

Meanwhile, Bombacci has a long epistolary exchange with the Duce trying to influence the former socialist in his social policies. The great historian of fascism, Renzo de Felice, wrote about this that Bombacci has the merit of having suggested to Mussolini more than one of the measures adopted in the 1930s [6]. In one of his letters, dated July 1934, he proposed a program of economic autarchy (which Mussolini would apply) which, Bombacci tells the Duce, shows his “*willingness to work harder on what matters most, in the interest and for the triumph of the Corporate State...*”, as he also does from the pages of his magazine where, without ceasing, he battles for an autarchy that will make Italy an independent country and also with the capacity to face the plutocratic powers (meaning by this the USA, but also the France and England). To this end, he strongly supports the 1935 intervention in Ethiopia, not as a colonial campaign but as a prelude to the clash between countries “*proletarians*” (among which would be Fascist Italy) and the “*capitalists*” which will irretrievably come, “*the global revolution (what) restore world balance*”. The Italian action would be a “*typical and indisputable proletarian conquest*” destined to defeat the powers “*capitalists*” and whose experience “*it has to be assumed... as a fundamental date for the redemption of people of color, even under the oppression of the most terrible capitalism*” [7].

## against Stalin

The period from 1936 to 1943 was difficult for fascism, due to the onset of armed conflicts that foreshadowed defeat. It was during this period that Bombacci deepened his ideological approach to Mussolini. He is already a man of almost 60 years old, he has seen many of his socialist dreams not come true, but he is an eternal idealist and is not willing to abandon the struggle for socialism, for “*that work of economic redemption and spiritual elevation of the Italian proletariat that we socialists started from the very beginning*”. His publishing house is an economic ruin: his biographers have left records of the economic needs and difficulties he suffers. One opportunistic step would have sufficed for him, had he joined fascism official and would have had the full assistance of the state apparatus at his disposal, but he did not want to lose his independence

although, from time to time, it has to accept subsidies from the Ministry of Popular Culture. This phase coincided with a profound reflection on his past mistakes and a series of attacks against Russian communism. Thus, writes Bombacci in November 1937, the relations between the USSR and the democratic countries could only have one explanation, which in turn would explain everything else: “*there is only one reason, frivolous, vulgar, but real: interest, money, business*”, due to which this former communist could openly declare that “*we proclaim with a clear conscience that Stalin's Bolshevik Russia has become a colony of Hebrew-Masonic international capitalism*”. The anti-Semitic allusion is not new in Bombacci, nor in the socialist theorists of the beginning of the century, since we must not forget that modern anti-Semitism had its most fervent supporters precisely among the revolutionary doctrinaires of the late 19th century when the Jew incarnated the figure of the hated Capitalist. In Bombacci we do not find racist but social anti-Semitism, in line with Mediterranean theories of the Jewish problem, differentiated from German or French anti-Semitism.

At the outbreak of the 2nd World War, especially when it broke out on the Eastern front, Bombacci participated fully in the regime's anti-communist campaigns. As a communist leader who traveled to the USSR his voice is heard. Let us not be mistaken: he does not deny his ideals, but builds up his thesis that Stalin and his henchmen betrayed the Revolution. He writes numerous articles against Stalin, about real

living conditions in the so-called communist *paradise*, the measures adopted by the former to destroy all the successes of socialist Leninism. In 1943, shortly before the fall of fascism, Bombacci concluded by summarizing his position in a propaganda pamphlet:

“Which of the two revolutions, the fascist or the Bolshevik, will leave a mark on the 20th century and remain in history as the creator of a new order of social and tangible values? ...Rome won!

...The materialistic, semi-barbarous Moscow, with a totalitarian capitalism in which the State is the employer, wants to support in forced march (five-year plans), leading its citizens to the most extreme misery, the existing industrialization in countries that during the 19th century endured the process of a capitalist bourgeois regime. Moscow completes the capitalist phase.

...Rome is a very different thing.

...Moscow, with Stalin's reform, presents itself institutionally like any other bourgeois parliamentary state. Economically there is a substantial difference because, while in the bourgeois states the government is formed by delegates of the capitalist class, in Moscow the government is in the hands of the Bolshevik bureaucracy, a new class that is actually worse than the capitalist class because without any control it has at its disposal the work, production and life of its citizens...”[8].

## To Italian Social Republic

When Mussolini was deposed in July 1943, and saved by the Germans a few months later, the National Fascist Party collapsed. The organic structure disappeared, the party's cadres, originating from the privileged strata of society, massively defected to Badoglio's government and Italy found itself divided in two (to the south of Rome the Allies pushed towards the North). Mussolini gathers the most faithful, all of them comrades from the first hour and young enthusiasts, almost no high-ranking cadres, who still believed in the Fascist Revolution, and proclaims the

Italian Social Republic. Fascism immediately seems to return to its revolutionary origins and Nicola Bombacci joins the proclaimed Republic, fully supporting Mussolini. His dream is to achieve the construction of that “Republic of Workers” for which both he and Mussolini fought together at the beginning of the century. Like Bombacci, other well-known left-wing intellectuals joined the new government such as Carlo Silvestri (socialist deputy and post-war defender of the Duce's memory), Edmondo Cione (socialist philosopher who will be authorized to create a Socialist Party separate from the Republican Fascist), etc.

Bombacci had his first contact with Mussolini on the 11th of October, just one month after the proclamation of the RSI, and it was an epistolary one. Bombacci writes to Mussolini from Rome, a city where Fascism has clamorously collapsed, where the Romans have destroyed all the outward symbols of the former regime, but where many convinced Fascists still remain, and this is the moment he chooses to declare his allegiance to Mussolini. Not when everything was joy and celebration but in difficult times as only true comrades do:

“Today I am completely with you more than ever” – Bombacci reveals to him. “The vile betrayal of the king and of Badoglio brought complete ruin and dishonor upon Italy, but freed you from the plutomonarchical compromises of [19]22.

Today the path is clear and from what I see a person can only turn to support socialism. First of all: military victory.

But to secure victory you must secure the support of the proletarian masses. As? Decisive and radical effects in the economic-productive unionist sector...

Always at your disposal, with a great esteem that has lasted for thirty years.”

Mussolini, very concerned about the military situation, but more determined than ever to bring his revolution to the end, now that he has freed himself from the shackles of the past, authorizes the most radical sectors of the party to begin a phase called "Socialization" (name proposed by Bombacci and accepted by the Duce) which will result in the proclamation of laws of clear socialist inspiration regarding the creation of unions, co-managed companies, distribution of profits, nationalization of crucial sectors of industry. All of this is summarized in the 18 points of the first (and only) Congress of the Republican Fascist Party in Verona, a document composed by Mussolini and Bombacci, which should become the basis of the Social Republican State. As far as foreign policy is concerned, he will try to convince Mussolini that a peace agreement with the USSR has to be made and continue the war against the Anglo-Saxon plutocracy, resurrecting the Rome-Berlin-Moscow axis of the geopolitical thinkers of the 1920s, a proposal that seems to have gained weight with Mussolini who wrote several articles in the republican press about it, even though he knew that this proposal was tenaciously opposed by a large sector of the party, particularly Roberto Farinacci. Bombacci travels north and settles down close to his friend Walter Mocchi, another veteran communist leader converted to Mussolinian fascism who works for the Ministry of Popular Culture.

If for many the last Mussolini was a broken man, a puppet of the Germans, we cannot help being surprised by the support he received from men like Bombacci, a true idealist, tall, with a long beard and attractive oratory, allergic to any form of framework and bourgeoisie, which even now will not accept any wages or salaries (it was only at the beginning of 1945 that his name appeared on a list of nominations by the Ministry of Economy as Head of the Unified Association of Labor and Technology). Bombacci become

He became Mussolini's personal assistant and confidant, to once again attract the workers to the party base. He proposes the creation of union committees, open to non-fascist militants, free union elections, he will travel through the industrialized factories of the North (Milan-Turin) explaining the social revolution of the new regime and the reasons for his loyalty to it. It seems that the old revolutionary fighter is rejuvenated again. After a meeting in Verona and several visits to socialized companies, he wrote to the Duce on December 22, 1944: "*I spoke for an hour and a half in an enthusiastic and conquered theater... the audience, made up mostly of workers, vibrated shouting: yes, we want to fight for Italy, for the Republic, for Socialization... in the morning I visited Mondadori, already socialized, I spoke with the workers who make up the management board, who I found full of enthusiasm and understanding for our mission*". Meanwhile the military situation was deteriorating more and more and the communist terrorist groups (the tragically famous GAP) had already decided to eliminate him due to the danger that his activity brought to their objectives.[\[9\]](#)

But the war is coming to an end. Benito Mussolini, advised by former socialist deputy Carlo Silvestri and Bombacci, proposes handing over power to the socialists, integrated in the Social Liberation Committee, which he prefers to right-wing leaders in the South. However, they fail.[\[10\]](#) In April 1945, the German military authorities surrendered to the Allies, without having informed the Italians, and that was the end. Abandoned and alone.

## **A national-revolutionary twilight**

During the last months of the RSI, Bombacci continued, even then, the campaign to recover the popular masses and prevent them from inclining towards Bolshevism. In a pamphlet entitled *This is Bolshevism*, published at the end of 1944, reproduced in the catholic newspaper *Italian Crusade* in March 1945, Bombacci insists on Stalinist deviations from true communism, which destroyed true European revolutionary syndicalism with Russian interference. In these last weeks of the republican experience, Bombacci takes a stand with those who still believe that a compromise solution with the enemy is possible, thus avoiding the ruin of the country. Loyal to the end, he will remain with Mussolini, even

when everything is definitely lost. Prophetically, he speaks of this to his workers in one of his last public appearances, on March 14, 1945:

*“Brothers in faith and struggle... I have not renounced my ideals for which I have been fighting and for which, if God grants me to live a little longer, I will always fight. But now, I find myself in the ranks of the colors that support the Italian Social Republic, and I come back to you again because this is now serious and it is truly crucial to claim the rights of workers...”*

Nicola Bombacci, ever faithful, ever serene, will accompany Mussolini on his dramatic and final journey to his death. On the 25th of April he is in Milan. The report by Vittorio Mussolini, son of the Duce, of his last meeting with his father, who was accompanied by Bombacci, shows us the interim of the latter.

“I thought about the fate of this man, a true apostle of the proletarians, once a fierce enemy of fascism, and now standing there beside my father, without any position or remuneration, faithful to two different leaders until death. Your calm comforted me.”[\[11\]](#)

A little later, after Mussolini has distanced himself from his last faithful, to spare them having to share his fate, Bombacci is arrested by a band of communist partisans along with a group of fascist hierarchs. On the morning of the 28th of April, he faced the firing squad in Dongo, in the north of the country. At his side were Barracu, a valiant veteran, a war maimed; Pavolini, the poet-secretary of the Party; Valerio Zerbino, an intellectual; Coppolla, another thinker. All shouted before the firing squad that murdered them: *“Long live Italy!”*, while, and little less than paradoxically, a faithful reflection of the controversial personality of Nicola Bombacci, he would, as his body fell pockmarked by the bullets of the communists, would shout: *“Long live Socialism!”*



## II

# A Revolutionary Experience, the Italian Social Republic, 1943-1945

So denigrated - even by those who declare themselves the heirs of fascism - as unknown, the last phase of Italian fascism developed an intense radicalization in its national-revolutionary theories. An experience that was put into practice and that gave rise to some hopeful results, frightening some Marxist sectors of the anti-fascist resistance due to the successes achieved in just twenty months of fascist Social-Republican government.

## The Italian Social Republic is born

In July 1943, Mussolini was deposed by the Fascist Grand Council and arrested. Meanwhile, fascist hierarchs, military high commands and the Royal House are negotiating with the Anglo-American Allies to put an end to hostilities and change sides. For many it is the end of *Vintennium* fascist movement that began in the early 1920s and which transformed Italy into a modern, industrialized country. A military man is appointed to head the government, Marshal Badoglio, with the approval of the monarch, with the aim of trying to get out of the deep crisis in which the country found itself after several years of war: Allied troops on Italian soil, the country converted into a battlefield and a large part of public opinion demoralized. All over Italy, the symbols of fascism are destroyed: the headquarters of the National Fascist Party are attacked by the mob; Party cadres tear up their membership cards and go underground, fearing reprisals. From one day to the next a regime that had enjoyed a vast social consensus vanishes, without any opposition - none. On September 8, Badoglio announces a unilateral armistice with the Allies: the war is over, believe all those who congratulated the overthrow of fascism, likewise the army collapses and the soldiers simply put down their weapons and go home. The tragedy of the 8th of September, which began on the 25th of July, was the corollary of a dramatic material and moral earthquake of the very foundations of the Italian Nation. Worn out by years of fighting, discouraged and scared, without a leader, the Italians leap over the cliff. Allied troops already occupy the southern half of the country, just a few kilometers from Rome. However, there are many fascists who still have a strong desire to remain faithful to their ideals, to their commitment as a German ally, to the Duce. For them, the 8th of September was a black day, a day of national mourning, of dishonor, which has to be amended. It is everyone's duty to keep the torch burning, the principles for which so many Italians have been sacrificed cannot be betrayed, it is imperative that Mussolini returns and leads the Black Legions to reconquer the country. They are the other side of the conflict that is spawning a bloody civil war. It is in this climate that the Italian Social Republic was born.

Bearing this in mind (the need to recover Mussolini), the Germans rescued and released him on the 12th of September. On the 18th he addresses the Italians in a radio speech: there are still many doubters, but the most faithful receive him with a wave of popular enthusiasm. Oled Returns to take the reins of Italy, from the North which was not occupied by Anglo-American troops, and to place himself at the head of a cabinet that can restore Italy's honor and do its best to avoid the difficulties that the bellicose situation affects the civilian population. On September 15, Mussolini already met Hitler once more. At that meeting, the latter convinces him (Mussolini was considering withdrawing) that he must return to Italy because otherwise Germany would have no choice but to treat the country as a battlefield and as an occupied nation like some of your collaborators demand it. Mussolini has no way out. He confides to his

son Vittorio: “*there is no other way: it is necessary to save Italy from greater disasters.*”

Obviously Hitler considers Mussolini's overthrow almost a personal insult, but first and foremost Above all, he is aware of his capacity for organization and he knows that his leadership can serve to prevent Italy from sinking into chaos and that the Allies advance more quickly towards the center of the continent. The fierce resistance of Italians and Germans on the Italian peninsula, which the Allies never managed to break, will demonstrate that Hitler was not mistaken. Mussolini's dilemma and the decision to assume leadership of the new Republican Fascism is one of the chapters in the life of the lead, which should do more to increase its myth among later generations of fascists. Mussolini did not abandon his faith when he could. Nor did he betray them and, most important of all, he did so only and exclusively for the love of the Fatherland. The most reputed historian of fascism, unsuspecting of a fascist past, the Italian Renzo de Felice, wrote “*Mussolini, whether we like it or not, accepted Hitler's project out of patriotism: a true sacrifice on the altar of Italy's defense. It wasn't out of a desire for revenge... nor out of political ambition... everything had already faded away. Mussolini returned to power to serve the Fatherland.*”

The moral situation in which the Fascists find themselves, and Mussolini in the first place, is in clear decline. They believe that the time for defeat has come and feel ashamed even to comment on what happened. A disdain they feel in the air every time they have to come into contact with the Germans. Badoglio's defection provoked a cataclysm in Italian national sentiment, even among anti-fascists it was considered an insult to the honor of the Fatherland, and the credibility of fascism suffered considerably. Even in countries as close to Italian fascism as Spain, the overthrow and subsequent armistice were considered the end for Mussolini. In Francoist Spain iron censorship allowed the publication, in 1943, of a book by a Spanish correspondent in Italy, Ismael Herraiz, which caused a commotion and of which several editions were printed, entitled *Italy, out of combat*, which could predict a similar change in Spain.[\[12\]](#)

Immediately after the lead decrees five brief agendas that are simultaneously made public. In the first, he announces that he assumes, once again, the supreme leadership of fascism; in the second, he appoints Alessandro Pavolini as secretary of the Republican Fascist Party; on the third order of business orders all authorities, both military and civilian, to resume their positions, including those who may have been ousted by Badoglio; in the fourth he declares that he will restore the party, support the German army in its struggle against the Allies, assist the people, and seek exemplary punishment for traitors; in the fifth and last order of business, he reorganizes the Volunteer Militia for National Security (MVSN), which is like saying the party's militia. He immediately rebuilt the party, which he renamed the Republican Fascist Party, which in a few weeks received the support of 250,000 militants, a number that shows us the broad affection that the figure of Mussolini aroused in the Italian people, even more if we bear in mind that a few weeks before their images were being destroyed in the streets and all seemed to be lost. He was aware that he could not trust the old party hierarchies (Church, Employers, Army, Aristocracy) that formerly, in the twenty *years fascists* had been so diligently at his side, that in a matter of days they had revealed themselves as traitors. Because of this, he surrounds himself with new and enthusiastic cadres, most of them fascist veterans, “old shirts” who had been relegated by the opportunists during those years to organizations like the trade union or youth wing where it was thought that they would be in a position unable to deal damage to traditional powers. Meanwhile, the Armed Forces are reorganized, now following a model of a popular and political army (700,000 men will pass through its ranks), and state administration. Within months Mussolini was again successful in raising a defeated Italy, filling its militants with hope.[\[13\]](#)

## **Italy-Republic-Socialization!**

Disappointed by his unequivocal failure in the attempt to attract the conservative strata of society (Church-Army-Patronage) Mussolini does not have the slightest doubt and returns to his socialist origins, and returns to his comrades from the first hour who gave their loyalty to fascism, due to its National and

Social inclination. It was not in vain that the first fascism was considered as a radical-syndicalist reaction before being neutralized. Before a group of old Milanese fascist veterans, Mussolini launches his proclamation, the basis of the new proletarian and union state, which he wanted to build:

“Some still ask us: what do you want? We responded with three words that sum up our entire program: Here they are... Italy, Republic, Socialization. .. Socialization is nothing more than the implantation of an Italian socialism, human, ours and possible; and I say “our”, since it constitutes the only foundation of the economy, removing mechanical levers, non-existent in Nature and impossible in History.”<sup>[14]</sup> All of this was embodied in the famous “Manifesto of Verona” where the party had held its first, and only, congress in November 1943. Read by Pavolini, the party's general secretary, and written by the party himself, the 18 points that constitute it are all an appeal in favor of a Republic of Workers, with the definitive overcoming of capitalism and a return to the co-management of companies by workers and an exaltation of the national feeling that should serve as a basis for the design of a future Constitution of the Republic. As expected, the Manifesto was embraced with hope by the most radical and revolutionary sectors of the party, while the most conservative saw with displeasure the increase in influence of trade unionists and revolutionaries around Mussolini. Republican fascism is not at all like that experienced in Italy a few years earlier, and it was, as the Italian researcher of the phenomenon, Luca L. Rimbotti, said, “*from the outset, a willingness to go beyond Ventennio's gradualist and conditioned policy to resolutely go to the heart of the matter*”.

RSI will be, much more than at Ventennio, a true attempt to politicize and create a state built on a social and revolutionary ideology. On this occasion the Fascist Party will not show the same totalitarian condition but the evolution of the war, the imposition of revolutionary measures of its own political program and the militarization of its militants as a consequence of the civil war experienced by Italy in those months transform the Republican Fascist Party in the spine backbone of the entire history of the last Mussolini. Also, the first and only Congress of the Republican Fascist Party in Verona is essential for us to have a complete vision of the later policies of the RSI, so we will dedicate special attention to this event that will mark a before and an after in the ideology of fascism. , and we can consider that in Verona the foundations of the modern neo-fascist ideology were laid, which until today continue to be present in Italy with different political parties.

Among the first measures dictated by Mussolini on 15 September was the appointment of Pavolini as, provisionally the order says, Secretary of the new party”*which from this day forward will be called the Republican Fascist Party*”. Immediately, the various fascist federations in the free zone (not occupied by the Allies) reopened the party headquarters that had remained closed during the confused days of that summer. There are numerous testimonies of confusion and uncertainty, present at first, soon transformed into fanatical and patient political activism. In practically all cities, federations are organized, led by fascist militants who elect their governing bodies in improvised assemblies until the directives begin to be

emanating from the General Secretariat. As Romualdi recalls, he who will be the party's deputy secretary and member of the National Directorate during this period, the party was quickly reconstituted: “*Between the 15th and the 30th of September, it can be said that the re-establishment of fascist activity in the territory from Naples to Bolzano was absolute. Membership, very modest in the early days, will reach a remarkable figure of around half a million members in the coming months...*

*The federation that saw the highest number of members was Roma, with 35,000 members. Followed by Milan with 20,000 and Ferrara, which after the Ghisellini crime saw its affiliates explode in the space of three days from an already remarkable number of 8,000 to 14,000. Then came Venice, Turin and Genoa.”*

It is interesting to highlight the rapid growth of the party, in two months it had 250,000 members, reaching almost half a million in 1944 at a time when prudence was the order of the day for the vast majority of the population. The anti-fascist resistance parties had the same problem, they also could not count on support and activism from the general population, as in all conflicts 90% preferred the easiest

solution. In percentage terms, the PFR would comprise more than 3% of the population, which is a very high number (it should be borne in mind that the National Socialist Party had only 0.9% when it came to power in 1933) and even more in these circumstances when partisan reprisals were the order of the day against the families of those who dared publicly show their support for fascism.

We have already seen how Pavolini had moved to Rome in September to reorganize the party and recruit some well-known figures for the new government. In Rome he appoints a provisional directorate, which is to act as a central organ of the party, and orders the party to resume its activities. The definitive directory of the Republican Fascist Party will only be appointed on January 22, 1944 when the *lead* approves its composition. At his head we will find men of absolute confidence in Pavolini who will take care of the various services of the party: regional delegates, delegates for the occupied territories (clandestine fascism in the southern zone), youth wings, delegates for external relations, the National Association of Veterans, Fallen for the Fascist cause, national volunteers, etc.

On October 28, 1943, a large assembly of the new party's militants took place in Rome. In the capital, with less than four weeks of existence, the party had already registered more than 10,000 members. The old files of the National Fascist Party were not used by the new formation as many of its members were now on the side of the Allies and because of the desire of the new fascist leaders to create a new militant base. The assembly, which ends with a public demonstration headed by the *federal* Bardi in Colorina square, in front of the Party headquarters, gathers more than 4000 fascist militants. As the German military intelligence services confided on the same day, the demonstration caused astonishment because the atmosphere experienced at the time in the eternal city was one of tense expectation, waiting for the Allies to enter the city, seeing how thousands of fascists made a public profession of faith, after having lived through the bitter day of the summer, when they were persecuted by the populace who had taken to the streets, he also convinced the population of Rome, the vast majority of which kept away from any political activity, that the end of the war it wasn't as close as first thought.

The first major public demonstration, of a transcendent national level, which should serve to outline the party's program in preparation, will take place in Verona. It will be the first congress of the Republican Fascist Party and its primary objective was to discuss the new Republican Constitution, the first step towards convening a legislative constituent assembly that would establish the foundations for the new State. The congress would be attended by the new leaders provincial governors, some provincial governors and cabinet members. *Olead* should chair the PFR congress.

On the 14th of November the congress met, baptized as *1st National Assembly of the P.F.R.*, in the northern city of Verona, in the main auditorium, the Hall of Music, of Castelvechio, the city's fortress. Union and party delegates participated, representing the approximately two thousand affiliated members. A vast space, decorated with old fascist lictors and a single flag, that of the Social Republic, to the right of the president's table. Outside, the delegates await your entrance; a mixture of squadrons and military, workers and civil servants, with various uniforms, weapons attached to their belts, carrying machine guns, which gave a special atmosphere to the congress, the only common feature being the black shirt. Many of them were veterans of early fascism who answered the call of the leading this new phase, others were young with the desire to relive those myths. Present were Ricci, the militia commander; the Minister of Justice, Pisenti; the Minister of Public Works, Romano; Corporate Economics, Gay; the leader of the province of Verona, Cosmin; and others. The congress lasted only one day, divided into two sessions: one in the morning and the other in the afternoon with interventions by delegates and the approval of all items on the agenda.

Alessandro Pavolini presided over the assembly, in civilian clothes but with a black shirt (he would not wear uniforms regularly until the summer of 1944). The congress opened with the reading of a message from Mussolini, who was unable to attend (in fact, he wanted the party to achieve independence from the State and see the myth about his person debunked, as he had demonstrated its uselessness during Badoglio's coup). . Oled Appealed to the need for fascist militants, "*in arms again*", defending the Social

Republic by giving it an authentic revolutionary meaning as primitive fascism had given it. *"It's time to start over. All we have left is a strong will accompanied by a dogmatic faith..."* at this moment in which *"everything is scattered, destroyed, lost"*.

Then Secretary General Pavolini read the main communication where the issue of terrorism was a central issue. For many of the participants this was a pressing matter of everyday life: defending their families and comrades from terrorist attacks. So the party declared all-out war against the partisans, *"no mildness"* said Pavolini, as the former declared against fascism. He stated, however, that the organization of the party should, from now on, be based on the quality of its members and not on the quantity as had happened in the past, moving on to the most transcendent point of the agenda: the Verona Manifesto.

This national-revolutionary policy could have remained a mere effect of propaganda or ideological propaganda, but the republican fascist government immediately took action. On January 30, 1944, a few months after the Congress of Verona, the preliminary Basic Law of the Law of Socialization is enacted, *"fundamental premise for the creation of a new Italian economic structure"*, which is materialized by the Executive Socialization Order approved by the Council of Ministers on February 12 of the same year. In this law we find principles such as the co-management of companies, nationalization of those [companies] necessary for the development of the national economy, distribution of profits, etc.

One of the main aspects, characteristic of the new fascist phase, is the affiliation of recognized anti-fascists, socialists and communists, who saw with hope the change made by Mussolini. Therefore, characters like Walter Mocchi (one of the most talked about intellectuals of the left, Soreliano, co-founder of the Italian Communist Party), Nicola Bombacci (the "Red Pope" of the 1920s for the Italian bourgeoisie, personal friend of Lenin and founder of the Italian Communist), the renowned juriconsult Rolandi Ricci, philosophers such as Gentile or Edmondo Cione, or socialist Carlo Silvestri (Mussolini's fierce enemy during the twenty *years*), converged and gave their definitive support to the Social Republic, in which they saw their dreams of a true Republic of Workers materialize.

## **The workers with Mussolini**

The support that RSI received cannot be understood if not for the intense social revolution that was being carried out, attracting numerous elements of the left that converged to the ranks of the new Fascist Party. But we cannot forget that in Italy the revolutionary tradition was especially rooted in working-class circles and that fascist socialization was nothing more than a natural evolution of a national-revolutionary conception of society that had existed in Italy since the beginning of the century, as the Israeli historian Zeev Sternhell<sup>[15]</sup> clearly demonstrated.

The reaction to this reform was immediate, and indeed it made a strong impression on the workers, even if in the post-war period, attempts were made to minimize those effects. In many factories orders of the day were voted on, meetings were held and motions passed. Co-management was a fact. More than 80 companies were Socialized in a few months, together employing around 150,000 workers. The policy of transferring ownership of workers' accommodation was a reality (days before the end of the war, there were still accommodations to be acquired) while workers' participation in companies was a fact. And with that in mind, as Spampanato tells us, *"the passive resistance of the industrialists, supported by general engineer Leyers, German intendant of the war economy in Italy, who in good faith feared possible economic disturbances"*. This opposition from the capitalist classes and the German authorities, always reluctant to any kind of experiment that could interfere with their war effort, was supported by the strategy of anti-fascist communists and socialists who saw their main propaganda premises taken over by the fascists. We are not taken by surprise by the bloodlust of the terrorist groups, attacking union leaders and fascist grassroots militants, signing a strange alliance with the Italian patronage, now their fellow travelers, with the support of the Catholic Church to sabotage Socialization. Therefore, one of the post-war measures of the new government will be the annulment of the Socialization law, which had even

received favorable criticism from the national leadership of the Communist and Socialist Parties. After the war not a few fascist trade union leaders will return to the ranks of the trade unions.[\[16\]](#)

When the war enters its last year, Mussolini and his Social Republic have only four months to live, the sectors that support him are the most disadvantaged: the workers. In all the factories they ask him to advance with social reforms, to force the Revolution to comply, while the squadrons of the Black Brigades witness the arrival of thousands of volunteers in their ranks, willing and able to sacrifice themselves for the social revolution. mussolini. Mussolini's words at his last impromptu big public rally are eloquent. It was on December 16, 1944, at the Teatro Lirico in Milan, before a crowd of tens of thousands of fascists, coming from all corners of the city, having heard the news that he was to speak there. In the street the fascists gather, and most of them follow the speech through the loudspeakers, listening one last time to their leadin what has been considered the political testament of the lead of fascism. Amid applause and cheers, talking enthusiastically about the Socialization, Mussolini says:

“After the recent events we are ready to give the action a new impetus and expand it both in the political field and in the social field.

In fact, more than a new position, we should say more precisely: a return to the original positions... But now, the seed has already been sown. Despite what may happen, this seed is destined to germinate... Fascist Socialization is the logical and rational solution that avoids the bureaucratization of the economy through a totalitarian State on the one hand, overcoming the individualism of the liberal economy on the other... It must be considered today as a solution that meets the demands of the social traits of national communities.”[\[17\]](#)

Mussolini, a communist? We can never accuse him of this, in fact he will oppose it with the same firmness that he used against capitalism, but like many other well-known national revolutionaries of the time, such as Drieu la Rochelle in France or Montero Díaz in Spain, the communist solution was preferable to seeing their countries immersed in the Anglo-American pluto-capitalist current: *“tomorrow, the Italians will have to choose a master. In the certainty of this eventuality, I, as an Italian citizen, would not hesitate for a moment to choose Stalin... Today, Stalin is in a position to do what Hitler was unable to do but could have done with positive results”*[\[18\]](#)

## to civil war

The saddest aspect of the RSI period was precisely the specter of civil war, never accepted by historians resistance ists- as the notorious Italian historian Renzo de Felice baptized them - that hide it as a liberation *war against* the German occupier and his*accomplices*Italians (the fascists). The truth is quite different. It was a true civil war, with the suffering, blood and dishonor that it brings. Partisans against fascists, Italians against Italians, took place between September 1943 and May 1945, in addition to the other dispute that was taking place on Italian soil, World War II and the clash between the Axis and the Allies. The best study done on the Italian civil war was authored by the Italian historian Giorgio Pisano, who died in 1997, who like his encyclopedic work*History of the civil war in Italy* It showed all the horror of a conflict between brothers for ideological reasons, provoked by interests foreign to Italy. We cannot forget that this war was triggered by the communists when, having received orders from Moscow, they had to avoid at all costs that the revolutionary experience of the RSI could consolidate. Italian communist leader Togliatti launched the slogan, by radio Moscow, to all communist militants in Italy: *“Death to the German invaders! Death to the traitors of the Fatherland!”* Slogans Identical broadcasts are broadcast by Allied radio services in the South: *“Eliminate the fascists!”*. It will be a fight without quarters. Provocations, reprisals, massacres on both sides, but with a clear supremacy of horror in the war carried out by the communists. Above all it must sow terror, provoke the fascists to react as they do and thereby get the civilian population - about 90% of whom were non-belligerent, just interested in surviving as best

they could - to become involved. .

The assassination of Gentile, a senator, president of the Italian Academy, a moderate intellectual personality, alien to all hatred, who had joined the RSI out of conviction and because he wanted to make his effort for national reconciliation, marks a before and after in the civil war. The Florentine philosopher, considered an international eminence, is shot down by the communists on April 5 1944. His family pleads with the fascists not to take any further reprisals. His assassination was immediately condemned, completely unnecessary, even anti-fascist personalities joined in the intense pain, which led the communists to spread the idea that it was the fascists who had murdered him. His execution is a symbol of the civil war. But he is not the only one. Fascists had been victims of attacks for months now, such as the assassination of the popular federal de Ferrara, Igino Ghisellini, dejected communists as he drove home in November 1943, his death led to a group of fascists avenging him by murdering eleven well-known anti-fascist figures in the city. From Ghisellini to Gentile, the murders of fascists and other RSI affiliates can only be explained by the Italian Communist Party's achieved intention to consolidate itself as a military force capable of opposing the fascists. The PCI was an insignificant party and only the civil war made it grow enough to become the hegemonic party of the Italian left for decades after the war.

On December 28, 1943, the seven Cervi brothers were killed at the hands of the *Republican National Guard* after his complicity with partisan actions in that region, Reggio Emilia, was demonstrated. This episode became the ultimate symbol of the cruelty of the Civil War and the fascists, according to official historiography. However, no one remembers the, also seven, Govoni brothers from Pieve di Cento (Bologna) - among them a woman - who on May 11, 1945 - when the fighting was over and the whole of Italy was occupied by the Allies, were massacred by a communist gang after being horribly tortured and maimed. Two images from the same civil war where fascists met a bitter end. Another cruel and dramatic episode of the civil war was the famous assault on the Roman Via Rasella in March 1944, when a German police column - made up of Bolzanos, that is to say Italians of German ethnicity - was slaughtered without defense in Rome at the hands of the *Gruppi di Azione Patriottica (Patriotic Action Groups)* Furthermore, the attack killed several civilians, including an innocent child. The 33 Bolzano policemen - all too old to be able to serve in first-line military units - were avenged, in accordance with the strict norm of International Law, by the execution of 335 hostages in the Ardeatine Fosses. Episode that gave rise to several films praising the communist action to a level of legend, when everything was nothing more than a savage attack, which had no meaning other than to provoke German reprisals. All this bearing in mind that Rome was considered an open city, where military actions could not take place. The Fosse Ardeatine tragedy, and that of the attack, regained relevance in the mid-1990s when the German Erich Priebke, assistant to the Chief of Security in Rome, extradited from Argentina, was prosecuted in Italy. The Germans, usually not interested in developments in Italian fraternal warfare, would only react if German troops were targeted in attacks, as in Via Rasella. Their reprisals and execution of hostages were always more selective than those of the RSI which were always done on the spur of the moment.

The episode of the capture of Florence is equally relevant to understand the intensity of this fratricidal war. Florence, like Rome, had been declared an open city to preserve it from fighting. This was not respected, either by the Allies - who will bomb it - or by the communists, who will use it for their terrorist attacks. On the 6th of August the British Army began to encircle the city. To delay the Allied offensive the British are attacked while German units withdraw from the city, followed by the bulk of the authorities and republican units. On the other hand, around 400 fascists decided to remain in the city, occupying key points to protect the retreat and the civilian population. Only the intervention of these brave fighters will prevent the communists from taking the city before the Allies and causing a bloodbath as expected.

Pavolini personally ordered the constitution of these fascist volunteer units, among which were about 80 female auxiliaries. Distributed in groups of two to three members, each of these was assigned a position. If they could not continue to resist, they would successively withdraw to other positions. On

August 8, the communist divisions approached the city and the fascists put up fierce resistance. In one of these confrontations, the communist commander “Potante”, leader Amo, fell as a result of mortar fire. After several days of hesitation, the communists finally determined the 11th as the day for the capture of the city. Fascist resistance impressed the attackers, “*young people fanaticized by Saló's social demagoguery*” said some anti-fascists in order to explain the value and bravery of these volunteers. The fighting was done house to house, against snipers placed in every window and roof, supported by some German sections. Between the 15th and the 18th of August the Germans ordered the definitive evacuation of the city but the fascists decided to stay, in a desperate fight. When the Allies entered the city, on 31 August, some fascist cells still resisted. The battle finally ended on September 2nd when the last fascists were confined and slaughtered.

The testimony of the - then - anti-fascist writer Curzio Malaparte, in his novel *The Skin* - where he narrates in a biographical tone his experience on the American side - about this fascist value is revealing. It narrates the arrival in Florence, just occupied by the Allies. There, he sees a Dantesque scene: he will witness the execution, on the stairs of Santa Maria Novella, of young fascists at the hands of communist partisans. Even facing death they will uphold their motto of honor. They were just young... *Fascists of 15 to 16 years old, loose hair and broad forehead, black eyes shining in their pale cheeks... There was also a young girl, almost a child, among them...*” recalls Malaparte. The communist commander pointed to one of these young men and said: “*it's your turn. What is your name?*” to which Blackshirt replied with contempt: “*today is my turn, but one of these days it will be yours.*” Shortly after the young people would shout “*Long live Mussolini!*” as the bullets of the communists pierced them. Their sacrifice made it possible for the saga of the RSI fighters to be remembered even today, while that of the partisans is a topic that would be better forgotten.

The civil war will continue on its bloody course even after the end of the war, and will leave behind a trail of nearly 200,000 dead. One of the bloodiest domestic wars Western Europe has witnessed, surpassed only by the Spanish one in 1936-1939 and followed by the French one in 1943-1945 where 105,000 French people died at the hands of their compatriots.

## the end of a dream

At the end of April 1945, the war was almost over. The Germans negotiate with the Allies, while in Berlin the Russians are about to destroy the capital of the Reich. The most radical fascists ask Mussolini to resist, not to follow the Germans in their defeat, because they still have large areas of the country that have not yet been taken over by the Allies. With a column of faith he travels north, but all is over. Mussolini is assassinated, as well as the fascist leaders: throughout the country, the fascist *hunt*, with the connivance of Allied troops who were supposed to maintain order.

Republican fascism came to an end, but the ideals they fought for did not die: unlike in Germany and other countries, in Italy the former fascists will reorganize immediately and shortly thereafter they will be back in politics. MSI was born (*Italian Social Movement*)[\[19\]](#).



# III

## Long live Europe!

### Europeanism and Fascism

(1930-1945)

One of the most revolutionary aspects of fascism, especially the German one, was its conception of Europe. For the first time, large sections of the European population believe in the possibility of moving beyond the national plan and on the march towards European unity. It was a very intense debate, much more so than we commonly believe today, not limited to the intellectual strata, but which thanks to war propaganda took root at the popular level, showing the path of what would be the post-war European Economic Community. Throughout Europe of the New Order advocated by the Third Reich, proposals were discussed and elaborated on the future reconstruction of the continent after a military victory, and not only in the years of the dream of victory (1940-1943) but also in the worst moments in which that everything was setbacks (1944-1945).[\[20\]](#) In Italy too, the birthplace of fascism, this debate had to take place, and it was strongly intensified during the turbulent months of the Social Republic. An ideal that can be personified by those young fascist volunteers who shouted “*Long live Europe!*” while being shot down by the enemy.

### When dreaming was possible: the twenty years (1922-1943)

The myth of European Fascism was not born (and certainly does not die) in the years of World War II. We must remember the pan-Europeanist movement on the part of some fascist intellectuals during the 1930s, with characters of the stature of Asvero Gravelli, Pellizzi, Evola, who at the time had little influence on the doctrinal construction of fascism but who after the war would emerge as the true spiritual guides of a new generation of neo-fascists.

In the Europeanist vision of this primitive fascism, elements such as confidence in Fascist doctrine as a universal recipe, the 19th century revision of the concept of the Nation, corporatist ideas that necessarily included an economic reordering of the united continent, and a desire to praise the myth of Rome as the predecessor of the European imperial idea.[\[21\]](#)

In October 1922, Benito Mussolini, founder and soul of the Fascist movement, was appointed Prime Minister of Italy after the famous march *on rome*. With it began the long period of dominance of Italian fascism, which would last until 1945 and thus the possibility of using state resources to promote and disseminate a totalitarian ideology that inspired the squadristi fascisti in their struggle for power. From the beginning, fascism was characterized essentially as a Nationalist ideology, among other aspects. Thus, in his first phase Mussolini refused any possibility of export fascism, something that he would maintain even until the beginning of the 1930s when he answered a question from a journalist, inquiring whether or not it was possible to export fascism, with a harsh answer: “*No sir, for any country. It's an Italian product*”.[\[22\]](#) This position was in keeping with the times; Italy was in a phase of national *reconstruction* in which fascism focused on solving internal problems and had little expansionist leanings in foreign affairs. This did not prevent Fascism, as such, from being conceived as a revolutionary ideology capable

of presenting itself as a doctrine of universal reach, capable of going beyond the ideologies in force up to the moment, all of it imbued with a redemptive nature. In 1925, in the movement's official ideological magazine *Hierarchy*, Mussolini himself had declared that “possibly not too long hence, a large part of Europe will be Fascist in one way or another” and the Grand Fascist Council had discussed the possibility of forming a kind of *Fascist International*, which was never carried out. To this was added the immense echo and demonstrations of sympathy that the fascist revolution had caused in the rest of the world, and due to this, very soon, intellectual and political currents began to emerge throughout the West that claimed the possibility of using those aspects positive ways to solve the internal problems of their own countries. There are many historians who have dealt with this chapter of Fascist irradiation in the pre-belligerent stage of Mussolini's government and we should not dwell on this any longer than necessary to add that this idyllic image of Fascist Italy, a prosperous and socially pacified country, contributed enormously to spread interest in fascism as an ideology capable of overcoming the contradictions in which both liberalism and Marxism were involved. The proliferation of statements of sympathy directed at Mussolini and his form of government, including atmospheres with a long parliamentary political tradition like England and circles of liberal intellectuals, are a good demonstration of this.

## **Fascist evolution towards ideological expansion abroad**

By the time of the 10th anniversary of the March on Rome in 1932, coinciding with the resolution of the main internal problems, when the fascist state stabilizes, we can observe the rapid evolution of the regime's propaganda towards the possibility of an external spread of fascism. This external projection will be supported by the will of Mussolini himself. As Professor Ismael Saz has rightly pointed out, this major shift is in part explained by the growing sympathy of the *lead* by the younger groups of fascism who claimed an international spread of fascism as part of that redemptive mission that it contained, and also in part because it contributed to the development of his foreign policy plans of which he was openly fond.<sup>[23]</sup> Furthermore, we can add the modern and internationalist conception of Mussolinian thought which, let us not forget, originated from the ranks of revolutionary syndicalism and drank from the sources of internationalist socialism. He did not understand this revolution as limited only to the Italian people, but used such generic - and internationalist - concepts as Man, Nation, Humanity, Universality.<sup>[24]</sup>

The fascist idea of ideological expansion and the doctrinal conception of universal *fascism* it began to be generated as a current in Italy at the end of the 1920s, in various publications directed by young intellectuals linked to the regime.<sup>[25]</sup> Among these stand out Giuseppe Bottai, Camillo Pellizzi, Carlo Emilio Ferri, Asvero Gravelli with their publications *Fascist Criticism*, *Fascist universality*, *October*, *Anti Europa*, etc., which initiated what the Italian professor Dino Confrancesco defined as a semi-public debate on the *European myth of Fascism*. A clear evolution of the ultra-nationalist postulates that that ideology professed and that fed the first fascism. It was a theme, that of the overcoming of the national state, and of European unity through the Roman way, which will achieve great success in various intellectual sectors and which will be in keeping with the new era in Europe where the ideal of European unity promoted by the German propagandists was to become an essential element of European fascist ideology to the point that post-war neo-fascism will be above all Europeanist.<sup>[26]</sup>

Giuseppe Bottai, founder in 1923 of one of the official journals of fascism, *Fascist Criticism*, is one of the party's most influential ideologues.<sup>[27]</sup> From the beginning Camillo Pellizzi collaborated closely with him, a journalist like Bottai and one of the pioneers in launching the expression “*universal fascism*” in 1925. Both will require the internal renewal of fascism to proceed with the Fascist Revolution, its universal projection could be the adequate instrument to achieve the objective of the spiritual revolution

of Humanity, together with the recognition of the role of Italy in this redemptive mission. The same trend is followed by the Milanese Carlo Emilio Ferri, director of the magazine *Italian universality* and also the pioneer *Center for International Studies on Fascism*.

After listing some of the first intellectuals of universal *fascism* we have to look at the most notorious defender of the idea of the universality of Fascism as a doctrine: Asvero Gravelli. A young and passionate journalist with a no less interesting record as a militant: a first-time fascist in Fascio di Milano, Gravelli took part with D'Annunzio in the odyssey of Fiume in 1919 at the age of less than 20, he was one of the first leaders of the youth fascists and secretary to Bianchi, and member of the first Quadrumvirate. In addition to this, he founded numerous magazines and publishing houses.<sup>[28]</sup> Your work on behalf of Universal Fascism truly begins in the pages of your magazine *Antieuropa*, founded in 1928, closely followed by the bi-weekly *October*, founded in 1932 as a tribute to the 10th anniversary of the March on Rome. In a few months *October* will be converted into a daily especially aimed at the youth sector of the party. Its subtitle was *Universal Fascism newspaper*, the same as the magazine *Antieuropa* which was defined as *Universal Review of Fascism*. Gravelli will have a fundamental role in the initial phase of the ideological elaboration of Universal Fascism. Starting with the institutionalization of the projection of Universal Fascism, through the CAUR, as we will see later, around 1934-35, its Europeanist vision will be defeated by those who interpret Universal Fascism as a mere projection from *Via Romana*. His position within the regime will not allow him to have an influence that could be considered as decisive, he observes as a non-participating spectator how his

interpretation of Universal Fascism must be transformed, being manipulated, into a mere nationalist defense of Roman culture, that is, Italian, with the exaltation of the myth of Universal Rome. As we have already seen, it is in the 1930s that the idea of Universal Fascism is assumed by Mussolini himself, declaring in October 1930 that Fascism “*as an idea, a doctrine, and a realization, it is universal*”.<sup>[29]</sup> With explicit support from lead, soon the current of Universal Fascism began to be institutionally shaped thanks to the creation of study centers (such as the Milanese center in Ferri) or international congresses (the most famous being the 1932 in Volta). This change in attitude will be noticeable especially in the evolution of the postulates of the fascist regime's propaganda apparatus, which will do its best to spread fascism internationally and to propagate its universalist character anchored in the myth of Rome. Several public or semi-public organizations and institutions are created or strengthened to disseminate fascist propaganda abroad. Therefore, we can find the *Fasci Abroad*, the Dante Alighieri Society, the *Houses of Italy* in the main capitals of the world, Italian press agencies and from 1933 onwards the Committees of Action for Roman Universalism, known as CAUR. From this moment, which we can date coinciding with the celebrations in honor of the 10th anniversary of the fascist government, in 1932, the second phase of the ideological expansion of fascism began, this time directed abroad. This will not be consolidated as such until the Spanish Civil War, after the conquest of Ethiopia. This second period will be characterized by the abandonment of the ideological elaboration of the conception of Universal Fascism to be used, already as an instrument of foreign policy of Fascist Italy in its intention to position itself as a leading power. Therefore, it will compete first with the emerging national-socialist Germany, and then it will end up involved in several armed conflicts (Ethiopia, Spain, World War II) that will show the failure of this expansionist policy, causing the intellectual decline of the very conception of Universal Fascism. This will eventually be replaced by that of the European New Order added this time by Germany at the outbreak of World War II. Myth of *rome* will be swallowed up by another, more attractive myth that will establish the foundations of post-war neo-fascist ideology: the *Myth from Europe*.

## Universalist Ideological Principles of Fascism

Pan-Fascism or Universal Fascism was an ideological concept elaborated outside the usual forums of the intellectuals of the fascist movement, except for the debate that can be witnessed in the magazine *Fascist Criticism*. Mussolini himself and other theorists of fascism will devote a few words to this idea, so it is difficult to characterize or locate the universalist ideological principles in primitive fascism. It is easy to see that the first works of the journalist Asvero Gravelli largely contain the basic parameters around which fascist propaganda will be developed, studying his prolific legacy can help us to understand the later political expansion of the organizations that assume the role of diffusion of Universal Fascism.

Your monthly magazine *Antieuropa* the ideological elaboration of the doctrine of Universal Fascism began early on, as we have already seen. The very title of the magazine was suggestive, contradictory and controversial, a characteristic of the avant-garde Italians of the time: it intended to break with the old *europe*, decadent and bourgeois in the eyes of revolutionary idealists, to impose *anew Europe Where* the spiritual principles of the fascist revolution would reign. Europe as an ideal conception will be one of the most significant components of Gravelli and his circle of primitive Universal Fascists. In 1932 he would publish a brief essay entitled *Defense from Europe and anti-European function of fascism which* claimed the Europeanist component of fascism, in opposition to those who would highlight its Latin or Italian bent:

“On the other hand there is a Europeanism that tends towards the re-establishment of Western civilization and towards a unitary revival of Europe... And to that end we Italians possess the spirit of our land and a synthesis of Europe that has the virtue of being a universal idea.”[\[30\]](#)

The spiritual and social crisis that threatens Europe is palpable in the early 1930s and as such it is indispensable, writes Gravelli, that fascism assumes its role as the redemptive ideology of Europe:

“We are the heresy of modern Europe... We shall establish the religious unity of Europe to find a return to ideals. Fascism, like the idea of classical and modern Italy, is the restorer of a civilization: Rome is the moral center of action... The Fascist Revolution must be the most creative and historic of all. Blackshirt Anti-Europe will be an idea of redemption and unity.”[\[31\]](#)

To achieve this double objective, revolution on the one hand and the consequent overthrow of the demo-liberal state on the other, the concept of Universal Fascism must be spread at all levels, inspiring related movements in other countries and organizing a Fascist International that could facilitate the its reception by similar sectors that can support this change in attitude and civilization. Let us not forget that Gravelli is first and foremost a journalist and propagandist. It was no small matter that fascism was successful in its first revolutionary experience in Italy, now it will be the turn of the remaining countries for fascism as an ideology to overcome its nationalist stage. Consequently, Gravelli considers that:

“Fascism must serve European fascist elements as a revolutionary tactical model to establish movements similar to ours in more mature countries, because fascism today is no longer just an Italian phenomenon.”[\[32\]](#)

As far as the idea of a Fascist International is concerned, as early as 1931 he wrote about it, using a vocabulary that will be very similar to that of the propagandists of the Europeanist ideal during World War II. We must bear in mind that it is not in vain that Gravelli will end the war as a member of the European Waffen SS propaganda services with the rank of SS Commander. In it, he will combine innovative elements, such as youth, internationalism, Europeanism:

“The international alliance of fascism is the superior form of organizing the European fascist youth forces... The fascist and European youth must be able not only to destroy the old world but moreover to build and create a new European and world entity ... The Fascist International organization... It will be the effective means to amplify and maintain a European dictatorship of fascism. It is about bringing the spirit of the Fascist Revolution to Europe.”[\[33\]](#)

However, with the institutionalization of the external projection of Universal Fascism, through the CAUR, the doctrinal elaboration of Asvero Gravelli gradually lost influence. This happened while he deepened his Europeanist vision of Universal Fascism, with fundamental titles such as *Europe, with*

*noi!*(1933) or Panfascism(1935), but when the *Undersecretariat for Press and Propaganda* was structured he found himself outside the circles of power. This ministry, at first a sub-secretariat, was the true organ for disseminating the regime's propaganda since 1934 and firmly led all fascist demonstrations. From the moment Gravelli is put aside, an interpretative change of Universal Fascism becomes clear, which will progressively be transformed into a *Universalism Novel*, centered in Rome, from which the new civility it is projected.

This conception of Universal Fascism was not new, in fact it was Latinity that had attracted the first sympathizers of fascism from countries with Latin languages, such as Ernesto Giménez Caballero in Spain. The change in Italian foreign policy, which was beginning an expansionist phase at the time, helped to strengthen this vision. Italy, the *Universal Rome*, should be converted into the central axis of the West. Therefore, the elaboration of a doctrine that would support this type of aspirations was immediate. In fact, Mussolini himself seems to be the main supporter of this interpretation when, in March 1934, he delivers the famous speech to the second five-year assembly of the regime, which Asvero Gravelli labeled "the most important document on the affirmation of the universality of fascism". . *Olead* then said that:

“From 1929 until today Fascism as an Italian phenomenon has been converted into a Universal phenomenon... In a decade Europe will be fascist or *fascistized!* There is only one way to overcome the antithesis of what distinguishes civilization: with the doctrine and wisdom of Rome.”[\[34\]](#)

The creation of CAUR or *Action Committees for the Universality of Rome* in the summer of 1933 he was a faithful exponent of this new line of action. It is yet another manifestation of that much more conservative and Catholic drift that was being shaped among fascist propaganda theorists. Much more conservative and nationalist than that marked by Gravelli, much closer, as we have seen, to avant-garde and revolutionary positions. It is no coincidence that the first work published by the president of the Committee, General Eugenio Coselschi, is entitled *Universality of Fascism*, although it is in any case just an attempt to assimilate the concepts of Universal Fascism and Universal Rome, in its publication both concepts are intertwined and are converted into synonyms, something that did not happen with Gravelli who clearly distinguished the importance of differentiating them . Here is how Coselschi interprets the notion of Universal Fascism:

“It is the name of the past and the present.  
It is the name of the future and the eternal.  
It is the name of the church and the Empire.  
IT'S ROME.”[\[35\]](#)

The agenda adopted at the first, and only, congress of the CAUR in Montreux (Switzerland) in December 1934, “*On the Universality of Fascism*” follows the same trend, giving it a more conservative, less revolutionary character. It is eloquent and summarizes the main characteristics of this conception that they will adopt (the *Italic* below is from the original):

“a) Considering that fascism, the political, economic and social theory created by the genius of Mussolini, became a phenomenon of a universal which by the strength of its principles and its successes imposed itself on nations desirous of youth and regeneration, *the congress of Montreaux confirms the universality of fascism.*

b) Considering that fascism founds a new order which, in order to maintain and reorganize the moral, spiritual, familial and national discipline necessary for the people, restricts the individual in such a way that he can achieve excellence in the name of a superior ideal...

c) Considering that fascism is essentially a revolutionary movement... *The congress reaffirms the constructive and revolutionary spirit of fascism, the only doctrine capable of leading the world of workers along the path of well-being.*”[\[36\]](#)

From the resolution adopted, the main aspects of Universal Fascism can be deduced: totalitarianism, universalism and revolutionary spirit, while the cult of personality of Mussolini, which until then had not been excessively demonstrated in fascist propaganda, witnesses a

crescendo. CAUR's publications and the rest of the regime's external propaganda apparatus were expressly worked on in the cult of Mussolini. We can interpret this as part of its evolution, as a consequence of the need to compete with German propaganda. In the face of German racism they opposed Latinity, in the face of *Führer, Olead*.

Hitler's 1933 run to power and his successful pre-war foreign policy saw Fascist Italy lose its hegemonic role as a redemptive and revolutionary power, having to compete with National Socialist Germany. Italian propaganda of the mid-1930s clearly manifests this situation. For the propagandists of Universal Fascism, keeping a distance from National Socialist ideals was imperative. They will not openly manifest this, given that among those adhering to their committees there are many who sympathize with the rise of Hitler's Germany, nevertheless they will not invite National Socialist groups to participate in CAUR meetings, alleging the supposed impartiality of the projected International. In the records of the meetings of the Coordination Commission, consequently of a restricted and confidential nature, more sensitive themes could be addressed in it, one can observe a reiterated criticism of National Socialist theories, especially their conception of race and anti-Semitism. . This was very common among Italian theorists, Gravelli had already highlighted it years before.[\[37\]](#)

In 1935, at the meeting in Amsterdam of the Commission for the Coordination of the Fascist movement integrated in the CAUR, a controversy broke out between the Nordic and Southern participants. Coselschi will have to intervene, visibly annoyed, clearly stating the position of Universal Fascism on the issue of race. In this address, the general would even go on to personally attack the racialist theories of Third Reich Minister Alfred Rosenberg, author of one of the most emblematic ideological works of National Socialism. We are referring to *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, although this clearly demonstrates again the lack of practical knowledge that the Italians had of the situation inside Germany. In this era of common knowledge Rosenberg had only had a practical influence, his theories having a very limited radius of diffusion, yet abroad he seemed to be the maximum exponent of German racism due to anti-Nazi propaganda. This intervention by its top leader once again sums up the CAUR directives and their essential differences from the National Socialist ideology as permanent:

“The exacerbation of Race cannot lead to a Universal idea... As I see it, the universality of fascism and the intransigent conception of race cannot be compatible. Putting it better, universality in the fascist sense, in the sense manifested in Montreux, means European cooperation...

...On the contrary, universality in the racist sense, as is conceived, if not by all of Germany, at least by its official theorist Rosenberg, cannot exist...

If Universal Fascism wants to be truly Universal and if it wants to safeguard peace, it must confirm that it considers cooperation between the peoples [of the world] and the different European races and civilizations...

As I have said this racist question will always prevent German fascism from being a Universal force...”.[\[38\]](#)

At the next meeting of the Coordination Commission, in September of the same year, again in Montreux, Coselschi returned to the subject, introducing on this occasion an added nuance to clarify the differences between both ideologies; according to him National Socialism is anti-Christian, and as such:

“We have profound differences with National Socialism which have been clearly affirmed at the congress of Montreux; for example, we don't have such an intransigent conception of race, we don't fight against religion.”[\[39\]](#)

The same is true with regard to the Jewish question. Since a consensus agreement was made to avoid it at the Montreux congress of 1934, the matter would not be dealt with due to the presence of well-known anti-Semitic personalities as representatives of national parties. However, at the meeting that took place in the same place almost a year later, Coselschi, as usual, will clearly state the position of CAUR and Universal Fascism on the subject to put an end to further misunderstandings, given the insistence on the part of some members to invite groups anti-semites. These would not form part of the Entente, due to the fact that they were so far removed from fascist ideology:

“We defined our position on anti-Semitism in Montreux. For us it is not a question of race... I think we should invite [only] parties that have a constructive ideal and that want corporatism.”[\[40\]](#)

The character of Latinity with which Universal Fascism was impregnated from that moment on contributed to the decline of CAUR propagandists and Universal Fascism in countries outside the Latin orbit. Of course, other factors also played a role, but this one was important for psychologically understanding the turning away of many well-known intellectuals who had previously declared themselves fascists and who would eventually embrace National Socialism.

This is the case of personalities of the stature of Quisling in Norway or Mussert in Holland who have left proof of their annoyance with this character, even expressing it in the meetings of the Coordination Committee in which they took part. The Rome Universality that replaced Universal Fascism will have its influence reduced as the national socialist star rises in the late 1930s, and especially during the world conflict in which Italy will no longer be a power. In this we can see the path of Universal/Roman Fascism converted into a kind of *Hispanism* defended by Francoism, without any transcendence beyond the intention of grouping countries with a common language and culture, with the Universalist political aspect reduced to a very secondary plane. However, in Italy the universalist sectors would radically evolve towards Europeanist postures during World War II. Therefore Cantillo Pellizzi was the promoter, in 1942, of a national congress under the auspices of the National Institute for Fascist Culture. An identical evolution can be observed in Giuseppe Bottai who, from the pages of *Fascist Criticism Maintained* a constant debate on Europe being considered by Italian academics as the true creator and inspirer of the Euro-fascist current of Italian fascism of the immediate post-war period. Thus, Dino Confrancesco, an Italian professor who has studied this evolution, points out in his writings that “*euro-fascism was therefore one of the reasons for the popularity of the latest and fortunate Bottainian creation*”[\[41\]](#)

That said, he stresses the internationalist character of Universal Fascism, not only in its universalist guidelines but also in its doctrinal elaboration that borrowed contributions from many foreign intellectuals. From the beginning, non-Italian collaborators sent their chronicles and articles to the main diffusion organs of Universal Fascism. One of the pioneers will be the British James Strachey Barnes, with his *The Universal Aspects of Fascism*. In Spain we find Ernesto Jimenez Caballero with his articles in *The Literary Gazette* And later books of essays on Italian Fascism as *genius of Spain*(1932) and *The new Catholicity*(1933) where he analyzes fascism as a world alternative. It is especially interesting to go through the countless articles published in magazines such as *Antieuropa* or *October*, which were not intended for foreign audiences but for Italians and which had “*the honor of being able to interpret Mussolini's universal conception from the columns of our publication*”, said Gravelli in 1935 presenting the work of these intellectuals, “*young fascist intelligentsia from all over Europe*.”[\[42\]](#) Characters such as the Dutch Simón P. Hooms, the Spaniard Ernesto Jimenez Caballero, the Germans Dr. Koppen and Hans Keller, Georg Moenius, Albert Bieler, Mommsen, Mirko Jelusich, M. Wundt, Hilckman and a large et cetera of non-Italian names wrote in these publications, many of whom we see taking part in European fascist political and intellectual activities in the 1930s and during the conflict.

## **The lost ideal: Europeanism in the RSI (1943-1945)**

As we already know, the 25th of July and the armistice that followed in September 1943 meant an irremediable fracture for Italy and for fascism, but it did not stop the ideological evolution of fascism in its unstoppable march towards militant Europeanism. From the first months, the RSI intellectuals and leaders did their best in the theoretical elaboration of some Europeanist directives, insufficient for the desires of the more radical ones, but much more important than in the previous phase. Republican socialism, presented as a revolutionary alternative, took on some directives, among which was the certainty that Europe had been led to the abyss as a result of past mistakes that had to be overcome. We

are not referring only to the desperate Europeanism of the Waffen SS, whose propaganda in Italy will be very effective (produced by Europeanist intellectuals like Asvero Gravelli), nor to the propagandistic Europeanism fed by the German propaganda apparatus, but to those proposals that supposed a breakthrough and a deepening of the social principles of the first fascism, no longer confined to the sterile debates of a few scarce intellectuals who wrote in cultural magazines.

RSI included Europeanism in its government program, being the first European State to do so. When the *Verona Manifesto* Was published in the press on November 15, 1943, its 8th point stated:

“The essential objective of foreign policy must be the unity, independence and territorial integrity of the Homeland within its maritime and alpine limits designated by Nature, by blood sacrifice and by History, borders threatened by the enemy with the invasion and with the promises to the exiled government in London. Another essential objective will be to see recognition of the need for vital spaces that are indispensable for a people of 45 million inhabitants, located in an area insufficient to feed them.

Furthermore, such a policy should be adopted for the establishment of a European community, federating all Nations that accept the following fundamental principles: a) Elimination of centuries-old British intrigues in our continent.

b) Abolition of the internal [European] capitalist system, opposition to plutocracies. c) Enhancement, on behalf of European and indigenous peoples, of Africa's natural resources, with absolute respect for those peoples, especially Muslims who, like in Egypt, are nationally and civilly organized.”.

An ambitious program – mere rhetoric? – which today may seem unattainable knowing the tragic circumstances in which it was released. Nevertheless, as we analyze more closely the initiatives of twilight fascism we can come to the conclusion that

there was a real European conscience in the last fascism. The fascist leaders will do their best to deepen this Europeanist line, as happened in other countries in the German orbit, during these last months of struggle, with more or less explicit declarations of intentions in this sense. Gino Meschiari, delegate of the Fascist Republican Party of Tuscany in the party's national directory, published a brochure in 1944 demanding a Europeanist orientation; the same did Ambassador Capasso Torre di Caprara when, in the same year, he published his *The Axis and Europe*, an appeal in that direction.[\[43\]](#)

Also in this year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of RSI launched the idea of creating a European front of Nations with the capacity to be the counterpoint of the USSR, which would be baptized as URSE (Union of European Socialist Republics), the latter having little or no success. Immersed in this line, Italian diplomats tried to participate in all German initiatives concerning this matter, trying to influence them, but without result. In August 1944, Vittorio Mussolini wrote to Italy, from Germany, in his capacity as republican fascist delegate to the Third Reich, a confidential report where we can gauge the frustration these Europeanists felt at the slowness of German measures, and how convinced they were that only a Europeanist policy could turn the conflict around:

“I continue to believe that the initial error of German propaganda in not having defined from the beginning the objectives of the war, as the “new order” and in not giving officially, until now, any update on how Europe will be structured after the victory , was pretty serious...

... Nowadays there is talk of Europe, of the Napoleonic idea, of Mazzini, to create a continental front, to convince you that this is a war for a European resurgence. But it is too late and too little has been done. Would it have sufficed, as I have been proposing, a solemn assembly, for example in Vienna, of the leaders of the European Nations, of the *Führer*, do *lead*, by Antonescu, Laval, Pavelic, Quisling, etc., to reaffirm European unity.”.

Mussolini, who had embarked on his last adventure, fully participated in the Europeanist ideal, however doubting those who wanted to completely surpass the nationalities of the 19th century. In his last major public appearance, at the Teatro lyrico in Milan, on December 16, 1944, one of the most important Mussolini interventions, he found time to expressly dedicate a few moments to the European question:



“At this point, [referring to the 8th point of the Verona manifesto], a few words about Europe are necessary. I do not want to dwell on the question of what Europe is, where it begins and where it ends from a geographical, moral and economic point of view; Nor do I ask myself, today, whether an attempt at unification could have a better result than the previous ones. That would take me too far. I limit myself to saying that the formation of a European community is desirable and even possible, but I must state in the most explicit way that we do not feel Italian because we are European, but that we feel European because we are Italian. This is not a subtle distinction but a fundamental one. Since the Nation is the result of millions of families that have their own physiognomy and that have a common national denominator, each Nation should join the European community as a well-defined entity, to prevent the community from sinking into socialist internationalism or vegetate in equivocal and generic cosmopolitanism with a Jewish and Masonic imprint.”[\[44\]](#)

In February 1945, a few weeks before the end, the theoretical magazine of the Ministry of Economy, *Social Republic*, directed by Professor Manlio Sargenti, made a summary of the state of the European question at RSI.[\[45\]](#) In an unsigned article entitled “*Cardinal points: 1) of European unity*”, the different positions held in the republican press on the subject will be critically reviewed, helping us to get an overview of the debate. The magazine, which represented the most radical wing of Republican Fascism, echoed the 8th point of the Verona Manifesto and the words of the *lead* in Milan, meeting explicitly with the group that demanded a serious study of the subject: “*The problem of the unity of Europe is an issue that must be examined, discussed and studied because it is the problem of the future of our continent, a continent of which Italy is a part*”. This official publication recognizes, let us not forget that this is February 1945, that defeat is near (“*it being likely not a peace agreed upon, but a peace imposed by the victors*”), that Italy lost its moral authority with the armistice of 8 September but that this should not be an impediment for Italy to be “*an ally of Germany, (...) in this fight until the last drop of blood, its civilization, its history, have been a barrier to an idea that could have world value: all of these are elements for which it must actively participate in the european construction*”.

It is not by chance that many of the collaborators of this magazine will be found after the war in the MSI, being champions of the Europeanist ideal in the Italian national-revolutionary movements.[\[46\]](#)

## IV

# The Black Brigades: a Party in arms

One of the most interesting chapters of the brief period of RSI was the transformation of the Republican Fascist Party (PFR) into a militarized organization that included the most fearsome militants of revolutionary fascism. These units were baptized with the expressive name of Black Brigades. In a relentless war like the Italian one between 1943 and 1945 both sides committed excesses, but the winners managed to impose a sinister image of these units that were born precisely to stop the war and whose members suffered the worst part of the harsh post-war repression. But they were something more, they represented the old yearning for a party in arms, a connection between the people and the warrior class, a kind of Italian SS but with a revolutionary and populist style differing from the German order which was always elitist.

## The Black Brigades are born

Due to the increase in terrorist activities, the different fascist federations had been autonomously organizing themselves into defense units composed of those blackshirts who for whatever reason were not at the front. In early June, the idea of creating an armed wing within the party began to take shape, following the organizational example promoted by the federal (Governor) of Milan Vincenzo Costa who had created a force of 1800 men for these purposes. At the end of June Mussolini approved the project. On the 25th of that same month he signed the order for the constitution of the Black Brigades and by a legislative decree of the *lead*, the 446th dated June 30, 1944, with 13 articles, the birth of the so-called Black Brigades was legally formalized, “*auxiliary corps of the blackshirt action squadrons*” stated the decree,

It is “*civil militia in the service of the Italian Social Republic*”.

Provision that had the objective of transforming the Republican Fascist Party into a combat unit. The decision to reorganize the party into a paramilitary unit was due to the alarmingly defenseless situation of fascist militants and the pessimism that reigned in the spring-summer of 1944. The Allies were at the gates of Rome, the partisans were relentless in their terrorist attacks, any militant fascist was a target and as such they were the main victims of the GAP. Isolated, weakly armed, PFR members were ideal targets for some terrorist groups that avoided confrontation with military units but cowardly massacred any individual when isolated and defenseless following a strategy of terror ordered by the Moscow and Washington chiefs of staff. The birth of the Black Brigades intended to remedy this disturbing situation, promoting self-defense in all fascist sections, thus maintaining the structure of a party that risked being dismantled, as well as creating a paramilitary structure capable of opposing terrorists using the same weapons.

A month later, on July 25, the secretary general of the Republican Fascist Party, Alessandro Pavolini, speaking from Radio Turin, detailed the structure and functions of the Black Brigades (BN in the RSI military nomenclature) thus automatically incorporating into the Brigades all PFR members over 18 and under 60 who did not belong to any military background. The party directorate was therefore transformed into a kind of general staff of a paramilitary, not parapolice, body, since its functions were clearly delimited from the beginning. The Black Brigades were not supposed to play the role of maintaining internal order, but repressing terrorist groups, a frontier that was difficult to define. For this purpose the Minister of the Interior was obliged to telegraph the provincial leaders on August 26, 1944, “*I say again that by order of Mussolini any police action by the Brigades is prohibited*”. Each Brigade would carry the name of a martyr of the Republican Fascist cause and any PFR militant who was serving in a military unit would be allowed to request a transfer to the Black Brigades in order to be closer to his family.

The objectives pursued by Pavolini were not just self-defense as one might think at first, they went further. The revolutionary origins and his dream of a popular revolution were not foreign to the maximum leader of the PFR when he announced the creation of the BN. He himself was a child of this revolutionary fascism of the first hour; he had marched on Rome in 1922, an essayist, from a well-known family of intellectuals; his fiefdom was Florentine fascism, the cradle of so many party leaders. In October 1939 he was appointed Minister of Popular Culture, in what he tried to be the equivalent of Dr. Goebbels in Germany. In February 1943, he left the ministry to direct the newspaper *The Messenger*. Again in the same year, he had no qualms about siding with Mussolini: he ordered him to rebuild the party. As such, he will become a key figure in RSI.

GNs, in Pavolini's words, should symbolize faithfulness, “*the fidelity of those men who have not betrayed, who have not hesitated, who have given their lives to an Ideal and a Leader*”. Words that inexorably remind us of the motto of the SS: “*My honor is called loyalty*”.

## Organization

The chain of command of the Black Brigades was simple: each one was autonomous, but with a

single command always subordinated only to the party, never to the German authorities, nor to the Armed Forces.

Armadas de Graziani. At the head of the Brigades was therefore the general secretary of the PFR, Alessandro Pavolini, acting as general of division. Pavolini will be the centerpiece of Republican Fascism and the main driver of its creation against the opinion of Graziani who would have preferred a traditional style army without interference from autonomous units independent of the military chain of command. Fascist militants, led by their local leaders, were under military law and discipline.

In each city a Brigade was organized to ensure its security, and with the remaining provincial staff another, a mobile Brigade, which would patrol throughout the region. Pavolini's assistant chief, coordinator of all the Brigades, was Puccio Pucci. Colonel Giovanni Battista Riggio took charge of the Brigades General Staff (replaced on October 30, 1944, by General Eduardo Facdouelle), which was organized to look like a divisional General Staff, with its inspections, commissariat, court-martial, chaplains, etc. In November 1944, a court-martial of war was constituted, exclusively for the BN. To further separate them from the Armed Forces.

Being party militias, not explicitly constituted as military units, they did not have posts, they used those of the party, however the company and battalion leaders (in this matter the Brigades followed military nomenclature) received military denominations: lieutenant, captain, commander. The enlisted black shirt (in the Brigades) was called "*squadrist*" according to the vocabulary inaugurated during the tumultuous years that preceded the seizure of power in 1922. This differentiated him from the non-combatant party militant [in the Black Brigades]. The uniform, according to regulations, consisted of a black shirt or sweater, a black military cap with a skull and crossbones on the front, military trousers and the party emblem, the Fascio Littorio, in red. On the collar some formations wore their own emblems. In winter they wore army jackets. Unit leaders were also distinguishable by the fact that they wore a white shoulder cord on their right side. However, the very militia character of the BN gave rise to the proliferation of emblems, insignia, uniforms and other clothing.

It is interesting to point out that female militants could also take part in the defense of fascism. The role of women in fascism has always been highly recognized, so their support could not be lacking in these difficult times either. Each brigade was assigned a female auxiliary corps, *Women's Auxiliary Service*, who were assigned missions of stewardship, administration and other auxiliary services while the men were on the front lines. Many of them will be fascist doctors, and wives who share those ideals. They will suffer terrorist actions in their own flesh and in the post-war period will be crucial for maintaining the ideal that led them to wear the black shirt when many of their husbands and fathers had already fallen in battle.

## Eye for an eye

The reputation of the Black Brigades will grow as the civil war progresses. It is a fight without mercy and without barracks. Both parties go to extremes in their intent to exterminate the opponent. The Law of Talion is the rule. It does not go unnoticed by anyone that this terrible counter-reaction, provoked by the communists and socialists, bore fruit when the fascists decided to arm themselves and defend themselves. The kind words and the desire to appease the fascist ideology were pushed into the background. We have to recognize that the Black Brigades were part of that terrible spiral of hatred and violence in which they were involved, preventing them to have time to reflect.

On some occasions the Brigades acted in cooperation with the military authorities, in fact all *squadristi* were combatants (no one considered special training necessary for these units), they would soon have many casualties. Pavolini himself took part in several anti-partisan actions, being wounded on 12 August 1944 while leading an anti-partisan patrol. That no one would deviate from the front line is shown by the

fact that in the same ambush the *vice federale* (sub-governor) of Turin and the federal commissioner of Brescia. In total, around 30,000 fascist militants will be included in the 59 Brigades that were formed. A report by General Facdouelle, dated April 1945, states that “*the Black Brigades, to this day, have 29,000 men in arms. Eleven Brigade Commanders fell in action, as did 47 officers, 1641 squadristi, and nine female auxiliaries.*”. The high number of fallen Brigade leaders, no less than 11, shows that practically one in five Brigades lost at least one of their commanders during those bloody months of 1944-45. Each province and major city will have its own Brigade. The main ones are, from Milan, “Aldo Resega”, from Turin, “Ather Cappelli”, from Aosta, “Emilio Picot”, from Novara, “Augusto Cristina”, etc.

Undoubtedly the most famous will be the Milanese “Aldo Resega”. Founded on June 30, 1944, it had more than 4000 squadristi armed, in two battalions, and had at least 600 casualties. The first battalion was assigned to the city of Milan, the second to the province, the name of the Brigade corresponded to the first republican fascist assassinated on December 8, 1943, in Milan, Aldo Resega, shot down by a communist group. The Brigade Commander will be federal city fascist Vincenzo Costa. Not to be confused with the notorious Autonomous Legion Ettore Mutti<sup>[47]</sup> that acted independently of the Black Brigades.

## twilight of the gods

The last heroic acts of Italian fascism were carried out by these fighters in the Black Shirt. On the afternoon of April 25, 1945, when the German capitulation in Italy was already a fact, the mobile battalion of “Aldo Resega” left for the North, towards Ivrea. Meanwhile, the city's battalion entrenches itself in the Milanese headquarters of the PFR ready to resist. This headquarters was located in Piazza San Sepolcro, where Fascism was founded in 1919. However, they received instructions from their commander to join a column of several Black Brigades withdrawing towards Como.

On the 26th of April, at dawn, a column composed of the “Aldo Resega” Brigade together with the Black Brigades “Tognu”, “Turchetti”, “Azzara”, “Fachini”, “Capanni”, “Cavazzoni”, “Tevere” and “Ricciarelli” departs from Milan. They are accompanied by men from the Autonomous Legion Mutti and the National Republican Guard.

Until they reached Mornasco, the journey had passed without incident, leaving the village the column was attacked by British fighter planes. In a matter of seconds, an ammunition truck explodes killing two squadristi and seriously injuring a female orderly. Despite this, fascist machine guns manage to shoot down a British plane. Finally they arrive at Como where they await orders to continue their march towards Valtellina – the redoubt where it was thought possible to resist and defend the lead– but these are not enough. The orders they receive on the morning of the 27th are confusing. They continue their march but are surrounded by partisans in Cernobbio, where they are forced to surrender by being murdered and executed by the dozens.

The fate of the remaining members of the Black Brigades was equally tragic. The mobile battalion of “Aldo Resega” which, as we have seen, did not accompany the main column, was also attacked by the communists on the 25th of April but managed to repel the attacks with the help of a unit of *Caçadores Alpinos*. On the afternoon of the 27th the unit reaches Savigliano where it rests and regroups scattered fascist units which join them seeking refuge. Open hunting season for fascists was unleashed everywhere. They had been joined by men from the Black Brigades of Cuneo and Savigliano as well as Alpine Hunters commanded by a colonel. When they reach their goal, Ivrea, only the partisans are waiting for them. They will resist his attacks until the arrival of American troops on May 5th, to whom they will surrender with full military honors.

The furthest outposts of squadristi in rural villages and towns progressively surrender to the partisans but are immediately annihilated without mercy or due process. With the end of the war comes the worst part of this terrible repression. Communists massacre families and members of the BN (their worst

enemies in the recent past) and thousands of them will be vilely murdered during the bloody “purge” of 1945-1946. Pavolini himself will be assassinated, as will almost all the Brigade leaders, by communist partisans. Some authors consider that the BN suffered casualties of around 60% in combat (including post-war repression).

The bloody post-war period will soon give rise to the appearance of neo-fascist groups, the memory of the fallen must be respected and their names rehabilitated. A consequence not foreseen by the communists and socialists when they unleashed the civil war and which decisively helped, as we have seen, to the creation of a mass neo-fascist movement. Veterans banded together in associations whose aim was to counteract the horrible image of the GN in public opinion. For this purpose, for example, the Associazione D’ Arma Fiammanere of Milan was born, part of the Unione Nazionale Combattenti Della RSI[48]. Its activities have been numerous and diversified, including the edition, for decades, of a magazine, “*The Legion*”, dedicated to the GN and which constitutes a considerable source of information for historians.

## IN

# The “socializers” of Italian Fascism (1922-1945)

An important intellectual debate broke out in Italy with the publication by the well-known Bologna publishing house, Il Mulino, of the extensive and well-documented essay by Giuseppe Parlato, *Left fascism. Story of a failed project*[49] [Left Fascism. History of a failed project]. The outstanding thesis that has scandalized numerous sectors of intelligentsia political correctness of the Italian left, is that fascism may have had a large leftist component, much larger than previously thought, thus breaking with one of the most publicized myths that defined it as an extreme right-wing doctrine. This discussion, however, is not new; already in the early 1990s, when the first serious works on the subject were published, it could be seen how wrong the approach to fascism had been until then.

## Fascism, leftist?

It is no irony of fate that Nicola Bombacci – founder of Italian communism – was shot down along with other fascist hierarchs in April 1945. Nor that in the last months of fascism, in the so-called Italian Social Republic (RSI), policies and principles that many considered extremely leftist, a moment in which, moreover, language and aesthetics were proletarianized. *OVerona Manifesto*, laws such as the Socialization of 1944, workers' councils, the co-management of companies, the idealization of the Socialist Republican state, *madelast mussolini and* of its Republican Fascism a permanent paradox. How to accommodate the propaganda of Marxist historians with the stubborn reality of facts? How can this historical period be framed without recognizing its uniqueness? How to legitimize an anti-fascist resistance that was built precisely on the myth of having fought against the enemies of the Italian worker?

Quite simply, a curtain of silence was descended, circumvented by a handful of nostalgic people who, rightly, went to great lengths to preserve the sources, a task that we must qualify as extraordinary and that History – in capital letters – will one day celebrate. thank you generously. The taboos remained for more than six decades, but today Italian historians have managed to rethink the past with unusual interest.[50]

Fascist Socialism has its roots in its own tradition of fascism as a revolutionary movement, in which socialism and revolutionary syndicalism contributed decisively to its foundation. Fascism being a complex phenomenon as it is, this apparent paradox may be surprising at first, but on the other hand it explains it and, in fact, facilitates its interpretation.

At first, the mussolinian regime was perceived as a socialist reaction, only with the instructions of the Communist International of strict opposition to fascism (second half of the 1930s), will the equation fascism=extreme-right take shape and install a “pattern”. Thus, we can read in a propaganda bulletin by a publisher with communist leanings, and therefore unsuspected of fascist tendencies, printed in 1933 in Valencia, that “*fascism has an intimate relationship with the ideas of Sorel*”, while acknowledging that many of the former Italian socialist leaders are now on the fascist side.[51] An identical reflection was made, in those years, by a then young communist who wrote about fascism, a political doctrine, in which he saw, more than a mere enemy of communism, a serious competitor in the conquest of the State and the proletarian masses. Montero Diaz, who later became a fascist doctrinaire in Spain, wrote quoting another communist/fascist, Curzio Malaparte, that “*the tactic followed by Mussolini to seize the state could not have been conceived by anyone other than a Marxist. We can never forget that Mussolini's upbringing is Marxist.*”[52]

## **From Piazza San Sepolcro to the Congress of Verona**

In 1989 Luca Leonello Rimbotti published his revealing study *Left fascism. From Piazza San Sepolcro to the Congress of Verona*. [53] The controversy was triggered. There were several historians who argued about the fact that this study opened, by inertia, a historiographical debate on the role of fascism and its condition in Italian society, its result was, we can say it with a degree of certainty, the beginning of the demystification of a good part of the negative prejudices that were held in relation to this historical period. In the same year, in France, the fundamental study was published, coordinated by the Israeli professor Zeev Sternhell, *The birth of Fascist ideology*. [54] In it, Sternhell and his team, until then almost exclusively dedicated to the French origins of fascism, insisted abundantly on the revolutionary origins of primitive fascism and analyzed in detail the gestation of a revolutionary syndicalism, markedly socialist, which inspired by the revolutionary theorists of the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, will be the germ from which fascism will be born.

We must bear in mind that the first proposals, those proclaimed in the founding act of the Fasci de Combate (Milan, 1919), had an enormous revolutionary emphasis on which no one could foresee the future connivance of the twenty years with traditional powers (Church, Finance, reactionary agrarianism...): republicanism, universal suffrage, abolition of titles of nobility, dissolution of private financial entities, support for the superiority of labor value compared to money value, agrarian reform, international solidarity against imperialism. This did not stop fascism from waving the flag of red *danger* to attract the most sensitive anti-Bolshevik sectors of Italian society. There was no contradiction in this speech, even if the former companions of the land classified him as a “traitor”, since he saw fascism as an overcoming, a Third Way, both on the Right and on the Left, and although he never denied his socialist origins, he was fully convinced that he had surpassed them. On this matter, Mussolini even wrote that “*in the great river of Fascism can be found the currents that flow from Sorel, from the Movement Socialiste from Lagardelle, from Péguy, and from the court of the Italian syndicalists.*”[55]

In 1922 Mussolini took power and immediately began a series of reforms that aroused the admiration of the entire world. To do so, however, he had to make a pact with the traditional powers and withdraw

(or freeze) some of his initial proposals. The most revolutionary sectors of the party, concentrated in the unions, raised their voices in protest on more than one occasion. You Uncompromising, as the fascists who demanded that Mussolini put the pending revolution into practice were called (a vocabulary that, curiously, would be assumed in Spain by the Phalangists Discontented With the Francoist regime), were practically defenestrated or incorporated (again similarities with Spain are evident) in the fascist state before the end of the 1920s.[\[56\]](#)

## Fascism, Communism

The last months of fascism in power, the Italian Social Republic (RSI), were – as already mentioned – extremely intense and passionate. They witnessed the rebirth of the fascist wing baptized as left, which, in reality, was the main loser in 1945. The civil war was directed against it, started by the communists to end the influence that these resolute fascist proletarian leaders could exert on the workers. The secretary general of the Republican Fascist Party, Alessandro Pavolini, came from the Florentine core, which distinguished itself by contribution he had made during the twenty *years*, from syndicalist and socialization theorists to fascism.[\[57\]](#) Shortly after the war, many of these left fascists were, after the bloody repression ended, received with open arms by the communists, in need as they were of capable leaders to manage and organize the PCI trade unions. Professor Pietro Neglie of the University of Trieste has studied in detail this transfer of fascist trade unionist militants to communist trade unions in *Brothers in black shirts. Communists and Fascists from corporatism to the GGIL (1928-1948)*[\[58\]](#), where it is concluded that the so-called transfer was the logical consequence of some militant guidelines that were generated by fascism itself, resolutely emerging in the Social Republic, but whose direct antecedents have to be sought in the mid-1920s.

An identical contribution to the history of the survivors of the so-called left wing of the defeated Social Republic can be found in Paolo Buchignani's detailed study, *Red Fascists. From Saló to the PCI. The associated history of political migration 1943-1945*.[\[59\]](#) It reveals the connections and attempts to lure the ex-republicans, as they were called, into the PCI area using Stanis Ruinas as a guiding thread, a veteran fascist leader who will follow Mussolini during the twenty *years* and the Social Republic, at times subject to disciplinary sanctions, at others reconciled with the Fascist regime, and which as late as February 1945 continued to issue revolutionary proclamations. Anti-Americanism, Europeanism, anti-Zionism and socialism were arguments that led him closer to the PCI than to the right wing. In the orbit of this singular character, a well-nurtured group of Mussolinian followers will find their way to the left through communism.[\[60\]](#)

Another noteworthy group of fascist militants, whose anti-communism prevented them from embracing the left side, although they were much closer to it than the right, got together and founded the *Italian Social Movement*. A party that should have a special importance in Italian politics. The unionist section of the MSI included more than a million Italian workers in its best years, in the 1970s. This movement, which brought together numerous tendencies, from right-wing monarchists to national-popular revolutionaries, has always distinguished itself by maintaining in its propaganda the most revolutionary arguments of the last *mussolini*, of whom they have always declared themselves to be the spiritual *heirs* (and, in practice, also material heirs, so it was not in vain that many of its first leaders had also been leaders of the Republican Fascist Party).[\[61\]](#) Splits and groups born in the radiance and orbit of the MSI were to converge in the 1960s-70s on the edge of national communism. Well known are the connections of many leaders of national-revolutionary groups of that time, which later reappeared within the framework of the Italian left, including radical leftist groups such as the Red Brigades.[\[62\]](#)

# Epilogue

The vitality of the debate in Italy, even if in the rest of the continent it may be suffocated by the current suffocating ideological lid of “political correctness”, highlights a reality that cannot be avoided: that the true history of fascism is still being written, a situation which, for obvious reasons, should only be resolved when the prejudices and myths of anti-fascist propaganda are definitively evaporated. Certainly the fascist phenomenon, the great *revolution of ideas* as it was classified by its contemporary co-religionists, it was a phenomenon as vast and complex. The simplification and generalization made by Marxism-Leninism (and adopted out of comfort and/or out of cowardice by right-wing authors who let *go with her*) did not help, nor does it help, or will help your understanding. Only if the starting point is that fascism was an open *universe*, which encompassed all layers of society, where virtually all citizens could fit, only then will a significant step be taken towards a successful understanding of the fascist phenomenon. Leaving aside your good *deeds or perversions*.

## Appendices

### I

#### Separation from the Italian Socialist Party

(Speech delivered by Mussolini on November 25, 1914, before the Socialist Assembly in Milan, conducted at the Teatro Popular, which decided on his expulsion from the Socialist Party.)

My lot is cast, and it seems that you would like to give a certain atmosphere of solemnity to the act of my elimination.

*Some voices: Strong! Strong!*[\[63\]](#) (*The speaker, at such imperious insistence, taps a glass nervously on the table.*).

You are more severe than bourgeois judges, who always leave an open door and a free way for a fuller and more complete defense, even after the condemnatory sentence has been pronounced, granting ten days for a fair appeal. Well, if the matter is already resolved, if your desire to declare me unworthy to remain among you corroborates...

*- Yes yes! - Shout with one voice the most exalted.*

Cast me out if you want; but I have a right to demand an indictment in due form. In this assembly, the prosecution has not yet presented either the political or the moral question, in fact I am being beheaded due to an agenda that says nothing at all. In it, what was expected was that it would be said categorically: “you are unworthy to be among us for these or those reasons”, and then I would have accepted my fate. However, nothing of the kind was said to me, and many of you, if not all, will leave with remorse on your conscience.

*Loud voices: - No! No!*

As far as the moral question is concerned, I say once more that I am ready to submit myself to a commission - any one - that will inquire into this matter and present its report. As far as the question of discipline is concerned, I say that it has not been raised, or anything like that, because there are real and precise precedents which, however, I should not invoke, because I am sure of myself, I have a clear conscience. You believe that you have lost me, yet I tell you that you are wrong. You hate me because you still love me, because... (*once again the speaker is interrupted, either by applause or by whistles*).

But, you must not lose me; twelve years of my life devoted to the party are, or should be, sufficient guarantee of my socialist faith. Socialism is something that has its roots in one's own blood. What



separates us today is a question that is not of little value, it is a transcendental issue that divides all of socialism. Amilcare Cipriani, in whose name we conducted a memorable fight in the Sixth Electoral College (remember that fierce dispute?), Amilcare Cipriani can no longer be your candidate, because he declared both in word and in writing that if it were not for his 75 years, he would already be in the trenches fighting against the European militarist reaction that suffocates the revolution. Time will tell, and then a person will be able to clearly see who was wrong and who was right in this formidable matter that socialism has never faced before, simply because also never before in the history of mankind has it faced such a conflict, in which millions of proletarians fight each other. against others. Such a war as the current one does not break out every day, it has some similarities with the Napoleonic epic. Waterloo was in 1814; we will see if in 1914 another prince is overthrown, if another throne falls to pieces, if another crown is undone; perhaps it is also the release of freedom and that a new era in world history begins... (*applause*) especially in the history of the proletariat which, at all critical times, has seen me here in this very place, and also in the streets.

But I also tell you, that from now on I will not forgive anyone, I will not show mercy to those who in this tragic hour will not speak for fear of whistles or cries of disapproval. (*applause*)

There will be no forgiveness, no mercy for the abstainers, for the hypocrites, for the cowards! As for me, you will always find me at your side. Do not believe that the bourgeoisie sees our interventionist attitude with enthusiasm; on the contrary, it murmurs, it accuses us of being adventurous and shudders at the thought that the proletariat, provided with bayonets, might use them for other purposes.

(*Some applaud; others shout: No! No!*)

Do not believe for a moment that by stripping me of my membership card you are stripping me of my socialist convictions, nor that you will prevent me from continuing my work for socialism and the revolution. (*Applause*)

## II

### The Foundational Program of Fascism

(February 23, 1919)

(*Delivered by Mussolini in the hall of the Circle of the Industrial Alliance in Piazza San Sepolcro, Milan*)

More than a hundred followers and supporters were present when Mussolini presented his program, which has always been regarded as tainted with strong overtones. *leftists*. The key points were:

- 1) Convene a National Constituent Assembly.
- 2) Proclaim the Italian Republic. Decentralization and autonomies. Popular sovereignty carried out by universal suffrage and equal rights for citizens of both sexes. Elimination of irresponsible bureaucracy and reorganization of state administration from scratch.
- 3) Abolition of the Senate and the political police; creation of a Citizens' Guard. 4) Abolition of all caste titles, keeping only those of honor and nobility of talent and those derived from the honorability of work.
- 5) Abolition of conscript military service, general disarmament and ban on the manufacture of any war artifacts in the country.
- 6) Freedom of thought and conscience, religion, association, press, propaganda, individual and collective agitation.
- 7) Absence
- 8) Absence

9) Dissolution of all public limited companies and financial industries, suppression of all kinds of speculation originating in banks and stock markets.

10) Inspection and reduction of individual fortunes. Confiscation of non-productive income. Payment of the old state debt by those who owned the wealth.

11) Prohibition of child labor for minors under 16 years of age. Legally prescribed eight-hour working day. Banishment of useless parasites for society.

12) Direct participation of useful citizens in all elements of the work. Land for the peasants. Industries, transport and public services will be managed by unions of technicians and workers. Elimination of all kinds of personal speculation.

13) Abolition of secret diplomacy.

14) International policy inspired by the solidarity of peoples.

### **III**

## **Program of the Italian Fasci of Combat**

Italians!

Contemplate the national program of a genuinely Italian movement.

Revolutionary, as it is anti-dogmatic and anti-demagogic; powerfully innovative, as it is stripped of any kind of prior. We place above all the revaluation of the revolutionary war.

All other problems: bureaucracy, administration, law, schools, colonies, etc., we will deal with them when we have created the ruling class.

That's why we want:

### **Regarding the political program**

a) Universal suffrage with regionalist ballot and proportional representation, voting rights and equality for women.

b) Reduction of the age limit to 18 years for voters and to 25 years for deputies.

c) Abolition of the Senate.

d) Convening, for a period of three years, of a National Assembly whose main task will be to establish the form of the constitution of the State.

e) Establishment of national technical councils for work, industry, transport, social hygiene, communications, etc., elected by professional or trade associations, with legislative powers and the right to elect a general adviser for legislative powers and the right to elect a general commissioner sworn in as a minister.

## **Regarding the social program**

We want:

a) Rapid enactment of a law imposing the legal eight hours of the daily working day for all workers. b) Minimum wages.

c) Participation of workers' representatives in the technical management of industries.

d) Grant to proletarian organizations (provided they are worthy of it, morally and materially) the management of industries or public services.

e) Rapid and complete organization of workers in the railways and in all industries and transport. f) A necessary amendment to the draft law on insurance policies for accidents and old age, which lowers the age limit for admission from 65 to 55 years.

## **Regarding the military problem**

We want:

a) The establishment of a national militia, with brief training periods and an exclusively defensive objective. b) Nationalization of all weapons and explosives industries. A national foreign policy that revalues the Italian nation before the world, in the peaceful competitions of civilization.

## **Regarding the financial problem**

We want:

a) Heavy extraordinary taxation, progressive in nature, which will represent an authentic partial expropriation of all wealth.

b) Confiscation of all property of religious congregations and suppression of all ecclesiastical episcopal revenues, which constitute an enormous deficit for the Nation and a privilege for a minority.

c) Review of all contracts made by ministers of war and confiscation of 85% of all war profits. [\[64\]](#)

# **IV**

## **Benito Mussolini's Speech to the Italian People**

**(September 18, 1943)**

**Black Shirts! Italians!**

After a prolonged silence you hear my voice again. I'm sure you'll recognize her. It is the same voice that has called you so many times in difficult times and that has celebrated with you the most beautiful days of the Homeland.

For some time I hesitated to appear before you again. I needed, first of all, to make a spiritual retreat before showing myself to the world, whose contact, after my moral retreat, I needed.

Radio is not suitable for long speeches. So I won't spend too much time on previous events, but will start by mentioning those of July 25th.

It was the most incredible experience of my life, already so rich in adventures. My conversation with the king lasted just over twenty minutes. Any agreement was then impossible, since the king had already made up his mind. The onset of the crisis was imminent. Times of peace and war have often led to the

dismissal of ministers or even the elimination of a given general; but

Until now, it had never been heard of a man who, like me, with absolute fidelity served his king for more than twenty years, being arrested on the very steps of the royal residence, forced into an ambulance with the pretext of saving him from an alleged conspiracy directed against him, and taken from barracks to barracks. Already when they transferred me to Ponza I was seized by a sudden suspicion, which would become certainty when I was taken from there to the island of La Magdalena and from there to Gran Sasso, that among the projects adopted I must be handed over to the enemy. Though without communication with the outside world, I nevertheless had the firm inner feeling that the *Führer* cared for me more like a brother than a comrade. The word fidelity has a deep meaning, or rather, an eternal meaning in the German heart, a meaning that is reflected, both in general and in particular, in its spiritual world. I was certain that I would receive proof of this. Upon learning of the conditions of the armistice, I had not the slightest doubt about the meaning of Article 12. A high-level public official told me I was a hostage. On the night of the 11th to the 12th of September, however, I made it known that I would not fall alive into enemy hands.

In the clear mountain air there was an atmosphere of hope. It was 2 am when I saw the first paratrooper to descend, followed by the rest, ready to overcome any kind of resistance. The people who had me in their custody understood this and didn't open fire. All this took place in a few minutes. The rescue, the whole action in general, constitutes an example of German organization and decision that will go down in history, and a fact that time will convert into legend. This closes the chapter that might be called my personal drama, and that is but a trifle compared to the horrible tragedy into which the democratic government plunged the Italian people on the 25th of July.

An incredible optimism on the part of some fascists made it unacceptable that this government carried out such catastrophic projects against the party, the regime and the nation itself. However, the measures dictated immediately after the 25th of July outlined a program whose purpose was to destroy twenty years of work and erase twenty years of glory, as well as to eliminate the memory of the creation of an empire and a status never achieved before by the Fatherland. Today, in the presence of the ruins of the war, which continues, they desperately seek to reach a compromise, to justify the one on which the greatest responsibility rests and to persist in error. Those who attack the Party today are the same self-indulgent beings who already at the beginning of our movement sought to sabotage social advancement and diminish our national and imperial achievements. Meanwhile, as for us, we fully assume our responsibility, let us now put the responsibility of others to the test, starting with the first of them all.

The king, who has already been unmasked but who, against the wishes of the majority of Italians, has not abdicated, has a direct responsibility. He represented his dynasty in every period and episode of the war, which he declared the center of defeatism and anti-German propaganda. He, the most cautious of all, though sometimes not so, made all the enemy's speculations his own, while his heir took command of the southern army without ever appearing on the field of battle. I am convinced that it was the House of Savoy, together with its accomplice Badoglio, some cowardly generals and some traitors from the ranks of the Fascist Party, which first prepared, down to the last detail, and then carried out the coup d'état. There can be no doubt that immediately after my arrest, Badoglio was given plenipotentiary powers to open armistice negotiations, negotiations which had already been underway before my arrest, between the House of Savoy and England. The king therefore betrayed Germany in a most regrettable manner, even going so far as to deny, after the armistice was signed, that such negotiations had ever taken place. The dynasty itself, the one I saved from collapsing twenty years ago, was the one that created, according to the old statute of 1848, a new government and a new freedom under the sign of a state of war and bayonets. As far as the terms of the armistice are concerned, which should be generous, they are instead the harshest imaginable. Nothing about these terms, nor my intended surrender to the enemy, merited the king's objection. Solely for the sole concern of his crown, he threw Italy into chaos, shame and misery. On all continents, from the Far East to America, the crimes of the House of Savoy are well known. Not even our enemies who coerced us into this shameful capitulation hide their contempt for us.

From the moment this shame fell on us, it can happen that an Italian, even in his private affairs, becomes suspect in the eyes of others. If this situation affected only the group of authentically responsible people, it could be accepted; but it must be conveyed that the consequences of this shame affect all Italians, from the first to the last.

After losing our honor, we also lost the countries we have been occupying in this war: the possessions in the Adriatic Sea, in the Ionian Sea and in the Aegean Sea, in the South of France and in the Balkans. The army, humiliated and left in trouble, dissolved, being disarmed by its own allies, in front of the enjoyment of the civilian population.

This humiliation had to be borne by soldiers who on so many battlefields, side by side with their German allies, fought so bravely. Also in Russian cemeteries, where so many heroes meet, and on other battlefields where Italians and Germans rest together, this shame must be felt. The Royal Italian Navy, created during these last twenty flourishing years, surrendered in Malta. On that island, a pillar of British imperialism in the Mediterranean, which constantly threatens vital Italian interests. These are the responsibilities exposed also by the *Führer* in his last speech and which underline the betrayal of Badoglio, who even after the capitulation allowed the bombing of small and large cities in the south and center of Italy with the aim of deceiving the Germans. Fascism did not betray the monarchy, it was the last one that alone achieved such that no one trusts it anymore. However, the unity of the Italian people has not collapsed. If the monarchy is not able to fulfill its historical role, it loses its purpose. On the other hand, Italian fundamental trends were always more republican than monarchical until the advent of the era of Italian unification. It was Mazzini's republican movement that fought the Italian monarchies, mainly foreign ones.

The new state we aim to lay the foundations for will be national and social in the broadest sense; it will be a Fascist State with the same orientation as it had in its initial phase. Convinced that our movement will be irresistible, we formulate the following demands:

- 1) Resuming the struggle side by side with Germany, Japan and other allies. Only blood can erase such a dishonorable page in the history of our country.
- 2) Immediate reconstruction of the army, which will regroup around a core made up of the Militia. Only he who bears arms and who fights for his creed can win.
- 3) Elimination of traitors, particularly those who on the 25th of July, at 9.30 am recognized the new government, thus joining the enemy ranks.
- 4) Elimination of plutocracy and establishment of a social base on which the State can be built, supported by the work of its citizens.

Blackshirts, loyal supporters from all over Italy! Once again I call you to work and to weapons. The enemies' joy over Italy's capitulation does not mean that they already have victory in hand. Our allies, Germany and Japan, will continue to fight until final victory, without even thinking about capitulation. Blackshirts, rebuild your battalions, which have performed such heroic deeds! You young Fascists join the divisions that so bravely fought in Birlgobi; you, aviators, who countered enemy attacks on our cities so well; and you, fascist women, become once again the moral and material support of our people, which they are so in need of! Peasants, workers, artisans! The coming State will be your State. Defend him so that no one can ever again put him in danger. Our courage, our faith and our will will give Italy a new future, and with it, new possibilities for life and its place in the sun. Convert this hope into an unshakable certainty! Long live Italy! Long live the new Republican Fascist Party!

# IN

## Verona's "Manifesto"

The Verona Manifesto, the name by which the PFR programmatic declaration became known[\[65\]](#), was scrutinized on Sunday, November 14, 1943, at the Party congress in Verona.

### the 18 points

#### Regarding internal constitutional matters:

1. A Constituent Assembly, a sovereign power of popular origin, shall be convened to declare the abolition of the monarchy and the solemn condemnation of its last king as a traitor and a deserter, and, once the Social Republic has been proclaimed, shall appoint your leader.

2. The Constituent Assembly is made up of representatives of all trade union associations and administrative districts, including those representing the provinces occupied through refugee delegations in the free territory.

Furthermore, it must include the representation of combatants, prisoners of war through repatriated minorities, Italian expatriates, the judiciary, universities and any corporation or institute whose participation can contribute to making the Constituent Assembly the synthesis of all Nation's values.

3. The Republican Constitution must guarantee the citizen – soldier, worker or taxpayer – the right to critically control the actions of the public administration. Every five years, the citizens will be asked to choose the election of the leader of the Republic.

No citizen, whether caught in the act of committing an offense or by coercive preventive measures, may be imprisoned for more than seven days without the corresponding court order. In addition moreover, with the exception of the *flagrant delinquency*, a court order must be required to carry out any house search. When exercising its powers, the judiciary must act with complete independence.

4. The negative outcome of the electoral experience already carried out in Italy, as well as the partially negative experience with regard to electoral procedures, hierarchized too rigidly, gives rise to a solution that reconciles the opposing demands. A mixed system (for example, popular election of representatives in Parliament and appointment of ministers by the leader of both the Republic and government, and, in the Party, elections to the Fasci, subject to ratification, and election of the directorate by the *lead*) seems to be the most advisable.

5. There will be a single competent organization for the political education of the people. Within the party, made up of combatants and sympathizers, there must exist a body of absolute political purity, worthy of becoming the safeguard of the revolutionary idea. Party membership card shall not be required to fill any job or position.

6. The religion of the Republic is Catholic, Apostolic and Roman. Any other cult that does not oppose the laws must be respected.

7. All persons belonging to the Hebrew race shall be considered foreigners. During the duration of this war they are considered to belong to an enemy nationality.

## With regard to foreign policy

8. The essential objective of foreign policy must be the unity, independence and territorial integrity of the Homeland within its maritime and alpine limits drawn by Nature, by blood sacrifice and by History, borders threatened by the enemy with the invasion and with the promises to the refugee government in London. Another essential objective will be to see recognition of the need for vital spaces that are indispensable for a people of 45 million inhabitants, located in an area insufficient to feed them.

Furthermore, such a policy should be adopted for the establishment of a European community, federating all Nations that accept the following fundamental principles: a) Elimination of centuries-old British intrigues in our continent.

b) Abolition of the internal (European) capitalist system, opposition to plutocracies. c) Enhancement, on behalf of Europeans and indigenous peoples, of Africa's natural resources, with absolute respect for those peoples, especially Muslims, who, like in Egypt, are nationally and civilly organized.

## Regarding Social Affairs:

9. The basis and primary object of the Social Republic is manual, technical and intellectual work in all its manifestations.

10. Private property, the result of work and personal savings, an integral part of human personality is guaranteed by the State. However, he cannot disintegrate the moral and physical personality of others through the exploitation of his work.

11. Within the national economy, all those who, due to their dimensions or functions, go beyond the sphere of private interest to enter that of national interest, fall within the area of State intervention. Public services, and therefore war production by nature, will be managed by the State through parastatal entities.

12. In all companies (industrial, private, parastatal and state) the delegations of technicians and workers will closely cooperate, through direct knowledge of their management, in the task of establishing equitable wages, as well as the fair distribution of profits between the reserve fund, income from equity capital and the employees' share in such income.

In some companies, this can be achieved by giving broader prerogatives to factory committees already in place. In other cases, replacing the board of directors with company boards made up of technicians, workers and a representative of the State. Finally, it could also be implemented through a para-union cooperative.

13. In agriculture, the owner's private initiative should be limited only by his own lack of initiative. Uncultivated land and poorly managed properties can be expropriated and even parceled out and given to rural workers as direct workers, or become cooperative, para-union or para-state properties, according to the needs of the agricultural economy. All of this is already covered by the laws already in force, for whose implementation the party and the trade union organizations must work together to give the necessary stimulus.

14. Direct growers, craftsmen, professionals and artists have the right to fully explore their own productive activities, individually, as a family or in groups, being obliged to deliver the quantity of products established by law and to subject service fees to control. rendered.

15. Renting a house is not just an [abstract] right to property, but a [concrete] right of possession. The party includes in its program the establishment of a national institution for the housing projects of the people; which, absorbing the existing institutions and extending its action to the maximum, should facilitate the ownership of a house for working families of any category, either through the direct construction of new housing, or through the gradual redemption of existing ones. Emphasis should be placed on the general principle that a lease – once the principal has been repaid and the fair profit paid –

constitutes title to property.

As a primary obligation, the Institute will have to solve the problems arising from the destruction caused by the war, confiscating and distributing unoccupied premises and temporary facilities. 16. The worker must be obligatorily registered, with all rights, in the union of his specialty, this does not prevent his transfer to another [union] whenever he has the necessary requirements. The unions converge in a single confederation in which all workers, technicians and professionals are included, excluding owners who are neither managers nor technicians. This should be called the General Confederation of Work, Technique and Arts. Employees of state industrial enterprises and public services will have to form unions, like other workers. All social laws instituted by the Fascist regime during the last twenty years are declared in force. The Charter of Work constitutes, to the letter, in its consecration and spirit, the starting point towards a future life.

17. Under the present circumstances, the party deems necessary an immediate readjustment of workers' wages, through the adoption of national minimum wages and immediate revisions local, concerning above all low- and medium-level employees, whether private or state. To prevent such measures from becoming ineffective and, later, harmful to everyone, efforts should be made to ensure that, through stock management, within cooperatives and private companies, ample "social" help and through the confiscation of businesses, guilty of past infractions, henceforth placed under cooperative or parastatal management, it is possible to pay part of the wages for groceries at the official market price. Only through this can we achieve price and currency stabilization and market restoration. With regard to the black market, we ask that speculators, like traitors and defeatists, fall under the jurisdiction of extraordinary courts and may be sentenced to the death penalty.

18. With this preamble to the Constitutive Assembly, the party demonstrates that it not only walks in the direction of the people, but that it is with the people. Ultimately, the Italian people must be aware that there is only one way to defend the conquests of yesterday, today and tomorrow: to refuse the enslaving invasion of the Anglo-American plutocracies, whose aim is to accentuate by all means the anguished life and sad of the Italians. There is only one way to achieve all social goals: fight, work, win.



## **The Socialization: law of the Italian Social Republic**

On June 13, 1944, the Council of Ministers had already approved a fundamental premise for the creation of the new structure of the Italian economy, in which he gave decisive importance to the intervention of the State in the economy, completely granting work a privileged position with rights and responsibilities not yet attained. The “premise” was presented by Mussolini.

The Council of Ministers of February 12, 1944, approved the “Socialization” law, its main objectives can be summarized as follows:

1. The armed struggle is to be accompanied by the reinforcement of the political ideal;
2. Recovery of the mussolinian conception towards a higher Social Justice, a more equitable distribution of wealth and a participation of work in the life of the State.
3. Normalize the previous situation, with regard to the relations between capital and work, granting their production factors the rights, duties and responsibilities that correspond to each one, in accordance with the very life of the State;
4. Fully value the social role, responsibility and person of the company manager with regard to the organization's productive activity and social relations in the life of the company itself, basing the valuation and methods of each individual on objective concepts ;
5. To increase, through a well-organized production and a normalization of the company's life, the productive capacity of each of the sections, thus creating the most efficient instrument possible for the solution of war problems, with the aim of contributing, with the effort of the Italian economy, for the Axis [war effort] and for the coming post-war period;
6. To counter the communist concept that culminates in state capitalism, in which each of the factors of production is deprived of the rights of representation and participation in the life of the state, the fascist and national socialist concept that tries to bring capital and labor to cooperate in the life of the State;
7. Safeguard and increase private initiative within the sanctioned principles of the Labor Charter, an antidote to both the Communist Party on the one hand and the Plutocracy on the other;
8. Create a New Order that offers people the possibility to build their own tomorrow and conquer their place in the European international scene after the Axis victory.

These objectives correspond to the provision submitted for approval by the Council of Ministers, which enacts, in the form of law, the three guidelines that are inscribed in the programmatic bases approved by the same council on the 11th of January last: integration of work in company management, the transfer to State ownership of those companies which, due to their importance, go beyond the private sphere, limitation of capital profits and labor participation in such profits. Of these guidelines, the first is considered to be the most important, since it establishes, as a general criterion, that labor forces must reach the core of the production mechanism and actively participate in its life through their own representatives. This criterion must be considered as the revolutionary axis of the new structure of the companies, since the State ownership of any companies only constitutes, by itself, a form of State capitalism, a bureaucratization of the economic process, if it is limited to the control of the activity productive by public authorities. But the transfer to the State of some determined and numerically limited companies, conceived by us, is shaped by the general process of Socialization of the country's economic structure and constitutes a more advanced and integral form of Socialization for those sectors that, being predominantly interest to the community require that it directly assume ownership and control, excluding

the

intervention of interests and particularist forces and interests. This can certainly be achieved through the ownership of the State, which is the representative of the community, but also through the direct and integral participation of the work in its management.

The same can be said of the other guideline that inspires the provision submitted for approval by the Council: the participation of labor in earnings. This can neither be conceived nor take place if the work does not acquire knowledge and awareness of the company's productive activity, its problems, its demands and its possibilities, completely assuming the form of a collaborator in the company's own management. The predominant importance of the concept of Socialization explains both the legal basis of the law as well as the systematic order that was followed in it, making the title referring to the Socialized administration of the company precede that referring to the transfer of companies to the ownership of the State and the determination and distribution of income.

## VII

### Corporate Socialization Law

Here is the Socialization Law as approved by the Council of Ministers:

Of the Italian Social Republic

Given the Labor Charter;

Given the project for the new economic and social structure, approved by the Council of Ministers on January 13, 1944;

By proposal of the Minister of Corporate Economy and with and in full agreement with the Ministers of Finance and Justice,

Decrees that:

**(Title one)**

**Art. 1. Business management.**

The management of companies, whether State or privately owned, is hereby Socialised. In it, work assumes a direct role. The functioning of the Socialized companies is regulated by this proposed law, by the statute or regulation of each company, by the norms of the Civil Code and by

special laws as long as they do not contradict these provisions. **Art. 2. Business management bodies.**

The bodies for the management of companies are:

- a) For private companies taking the form of shareholder companies or for limited liability companies with a minimum capital of one million: the head of the company, the assembly, the board of directors and the union college;
- b) For private companies that assume another legal form of society: the head of the company and the board of directors;
- c) For individual private companies: the head of the company and the board of directors; d) For companies owned by the State: the head of the company, the board of directors and the union college.

## **Section I**

### **Management of privately owned companies**

#### **Chapter I. Management of share capital companies**

#### **Art. 3. Joint stock companies and bodies of limited liability companies.**

In joint-stock and limited liability companies, with a minimum capital of one million, the elected representatives of the company's workers: workers, office workers, technicians and managers, take part in the collegiate bodies of administration.

#### **Art.4. Assembly, Management Council and Union College.**

By virtue of the provisions in force in article 2368 of the Civil Code, and following articles, in its regulatory constitution, workers' representatives must participate in the assembly with a number of votes equal to that of the intervening capital.

The assembly appoints a board of directors made up half of member representatives and the other half of employee representatives. In addition, the assembly appoints a trade union college, within which there must be at least one director and a substitute, proposed by the workers' representatives in accordance with the provisions established in the Civil Code for trade union colleges.

#### **Art.5. vote**

In the votes, both for the assembly and for the board of directors, if there is a tie, the vote of the head of the company who, by law, presides over the previous governing bodies, prevails.

#### **Art.6. Board of directors of companies that are neither shareholders nor limited liability.**

In companies that are not covered by Art. 3 and that have a minimum of one million in capital or that have at least 100 workers, the management board will be filled by partners and, in equal number, by elected representatives of the company's workers.

#### **Art. 7. Powers of the Management Board.**

The board of directors of companies with private capital is subject to a systematic and periodic review of their technical, economic and financial management.

- a) Decides on all matters related to the life of the company, on the guidance of production development, within the framework of the national plan established by the competent state bodies;
- b) Explains its reasoning on the stipulation of employment contracts to union associations framed in the General Confederation of Work, Technique and Arts, and on any other matter incumbency, discipline and protection of work and the company;
- c) In general, exercise within the company all the rights conferred by the statute and those inscribed in the laws in force, in view of the directors whenever they do not contravene the provisions of these regulations;

d) Balances the company's books and proposes distributions of benefits in compliance with the provisions of current regulations and the Civil Code.

### **Article 8. Prerogatives of the members of the Management Board.**

Members of management boards elected by workers are not required to take an oath.

### **Article 9. the head of the company**

In joint-stock companies and in limited liability companies with a minimum of one million in capital, the head of the company is elected from among the associates, in accordance with the terms set out in the statutes and regulations governing the incorporation procedure of the companies mentioned above.

### **Article 10. Powers of the head of the company.**

The head of the company calls the assembly and presides over it, moreover: he presides over the board of directors; represents the company in its relations with third parties. He has the responsibility and right to be named by Art. 21, and following articles, and all the powers attributed to it in the statute, as well as those inscribed in current laws, whenever these do not contradict the provisions of these regulations.

## **Chapter II.**

### **Administration of individual capital companies.**

#### **Article 11. Board of Management.**

In individual companies, whenever the invested capital reaches one million and the number of workers one hundred, there must be a management board composed of at least three members elected in accordance with the company's regulations: factory workers, office workers, technicians and managers.

#### **Art. 12. The head of the company and the powers of the management board.**

In individual companies, the entrepreneur, who assumes the legal person of the head of the company with the responsibilities and duties established in Art. 21 and following, is assisted in the management of the company by the management council, which must adjust its activity to the guidelines of the State social policy. The head entrepreneur of the company must periodically convene, at least once a month, the board to submit matters related to the company's production and, annually, during the balance of the company's books, for its approval and distribution of benefits .

## **Section II**

### **Management of state-owned companies.**

#### **Article 13. The head of the company.**

The head of a company owned by the State is appointed by decree of the Minister of Corporate Economy, being previously appointed by the Institute of Management and Finance and must be chosen from among the members of the company's board of directors or from among other elements of the same company or companies belonging to the same branch of production that offer special guarantees of recognized technical or administrative capacities. The head of the company has the responsibilities and duties named by Art. 21 et seq., their powers being determined by the statutes of each company.

#### **Article 14. Administrative Council.**

The board of directors must be chaired by the head of the company and made up of elected representatives from the various categories of company workers: workers, technicians, office workers and managers, as well as a representative proposed by the Institute of Management and Finance and appointed by the Minister of Finance. Election procedures and the number of board members shall be

established by the company's by-laws. Board members should not receive any kind of payment for their management, with the exception of allowances to cover their expenses.

**Art. 15. Powers of the Company Board.**

With regard to the powers of the boards of directors of companies owned by the State, they must be governed by the norms inscribed in the previous Art. 7.

**Article 16. Union College.**

The union college of state-owned companies must be constituted by decree of the Minister of Corporate Economy, in full agreement with the Minister of Finance and by proposal of the Institute of Management and Finance, commissioned to establish the payment of directors.

**Article 17. Balance of books and distribution of benefits.**

The balance of books in state-owned companies and the benefit distribution project, the increase and reduction of capital, as well as mergers, concentrations, selection and liquidation of state-owned companies, are to be carried out on a proposal from the Institute Companies and Credit, having heard the board of directors of interested companies, with prior approval from the Minister of Corporate Economy and in agreement with the Minister of Finance and other interested ministers.

**Section III**

**Provisions common to previous sections.**

**Article 18. Constitutive and statutory acts of companies owned by the State.**

The founding acts and the statutes of state-owned companies, as well as the corresponding modifications, are approved by decree of the Minister of Corporate Economy, in agreement with the Minister of Finance.

**Article 19. Statutes and regulations of privately owned companies.**

Beginning on June 30, 1944, all private equity companies must proceed to adapt their statutes to the norms contained in this decree. Its statutes and regulations shall be submitted within thirty days for approval by the competent territorial court, which, having confirmed their regularity and correspondence with the present decree and other laws in force on the subject, shall order their transcription at the [office] of] business registration.

**Article 20. Method of election of workers' representatives.**

Workers' representatives called to take part in the bodies of socialized companies, whether state or privately owned, are elected by secret ballot by all workers in the company: workers, office workers, technicians and managers. Candidates are promulgated through lists made by the municipal unions of the respective branch, in twice the number of representatives to be elected and proportionally to the respective categories of the company.

**Article 21. Responsibilities of company heads.**

The head of the company, whether owned by the State or privately owned, is personally responsible before the State for the development of the company's production and may be replaced or dismissed in accordance with the following articles and in cases sanctioned by the law in force when his activity does not comply with the requirements of the general production plans and the guidelines of the State's social policy.

## **Article 22. Replacement of the head of a state-owned company.**

In a company owned by the State, the replacement of the head of the company is part of the attributions of the Minister of Corporate Economy in full agreement with the Minister of Finance, by order or proposal of the Institute of Administration and Credit or else of the board of directors or [of the college] of the trustees, with timely prior confirmation.

**Art. 23. Replacement of the head of the company in a private equity company.** In joint-stock companies, the replacement of the head of the company is carried out by resolution of the assembly. In all other companies with share capital, the replacement of the head of the company is regulated by the founding statutes or regulations, although it can also be promoted by the board of directors, through the same procedure set out in article 24 et seq. individual. It is within the range of powers of the Minister of Corporate Economy to replace the head of the company whenever he demonstrates that he does not have a sense of responsibility or fails to fulfill the functions designated in Art. 21.

## **Art. 24. Replacement of the head of the company of an individual capital company.**

In private companies with individual capital, the entrepreneur, head of the company, can only be replaced through a prior verdict of the labor magistracy, a body that has the power to point out responsibilities. The declaration of responsibilities may be brought about by the company's board of directors, by the Instituto da Administração e do Crédito (given the latter's interest in the company), or by the Minister of the Cooperative Economy, through an official request to the State attorney of the Court of Zone resource.

## **Art. 25. Labor Judiciary Procedures.**

The labor magistracy, having heard the entrepreneur, the board of directors of the company, or the Institute of Administration and Credit, and having assessed the probative body of evidence, declares through a verdict the responsibility of the entrepreneur. An appeal is admissible against the verdict, sanctioned in Art. 426 of the Code of Civil Procedures.

## **Article 26. Sanctions against the head of the company.**

Once the verdict declaring the entrepreneur's responsibility has been delivered, the Minister of the Corporate Economy must take the measures he deems most convenient in the case, entrusting, if necessary, the management of the company to a cooperative formed by the workers of such a company.

## **Article 27. Preventive measures.**

Whenever the application of the preceding articles is still pending, the Minister for the Corporate Economy may suspend, by decree, the activities of the head of the company and appoint a commissioner to provisionally manage the company.

## **Article 28. Responsibilities of the board of directors.**

Whenever the management of the board of directors, whether owned by the State or by private capital, demonstrates an insufficient sense of responsibility in fulfilling the functions described in order to adapt the company's activity to the requirements of the social policy and production plans of the Republic, the Minister of the Corporate Economy, in full agreement with the Minister of Finance, may decide, given the probative evidence, the dissolution of the board and the appointment of a commissioner to provisionally manage the company. The intervention of the Minister of Corporate Economy may be carried out on his own initiative or at the request of the Institute of Administration and Credit, the head of the company, the assembly, or union representatives.

## **Article 29. Criminal sanctions.**

The head of the company and the members of its board of directors, whether owned by the State or privately owned, may be subject to the sanctions set out in the laws concerning entrepreneurs, partners and directors of commercial companies.

## **(Title II) Section IV**

### **Responsibilities of the head of the company and administrator.**

#### **Article 30. Transfer of the company to state ownership.**

The ownership of companies designed to be included in the basic sectors necessary for the political and economic independence of the country, as well as those that supply raw materials, energy and services indispensable to the normal development of social life, may be assumed by the State in accordance with this normative agreement. Whenever the company is considered to have several productive activities, the State can assume only part of the ownership of such a company. Furthermore, the State can participate in private equity companies.

**Article 31. Procedures for transferring a company to state ownership.** Those companies that eventually are to be transferred to State ownership must be appointed by a decree of the Head of State, having heard the Council of Ministers, on proposal of the Minister of Corporate Economy, in full agreement with the Minister of Finance.

#### **Article 32. Jurisdiction of Trade Unions, appointment of heads of trade unions and government commissioners.**

By virtue of the enactment of the previous article of the decree and the decrees that will follow, the companies that are to be transferred to State ownership must be under the scope of the unions in accordance with the procedure enshrined in law 1100 of July 17, 1942. The interim management of the company may be entrusted to one of its directors acting as a government commissioner.

**Article 33. Annulment of matters modifying capital ownership titles.** All transactions between private parties that, in any case, modify the ownership relationship with regard to the titles of ownership of the shareholders, which constitute the capital of the companies appointed to be transferred to the ownership of the State, from the date of entry into force of the provisions deciding on the transfer of ownership.

**Article 34. Administration of the capital of companies owned by the State.** The capital of companies that are transferred to State ownership will be managed by the Institute of Administration and Credit, a public entity with its own legal personality. The constitution of the Institute and the approval of the corresponding statute will be carried out by separate provisions.

#### **Article 35. Task of the Institute of Administration and Credit.**

The Institute of Administration and Credit controls the company's activities listed in Art. 30, in accordance with the guidelines of the Minister of Corporate Economy and, in addition, manages the interests of the State in private companies.

#### **Article 36. Transformation of social capital.**

Share capital already invested in companies that will be transferred to State ownership is replaced by social credits issued by the Institute of Administration and Credit in accordance with the following

articles.

**Article 37. Transfer of share capital value.**

The replacement of share capital, already invested in a company that will be transferred to State ownership, by securities of the Institute of Administration and Credit will be carried out considering the total amount of the real value of the aforementioned capital.

**Article 38. Determination of the value of share capital.**

Whenever there is a disagreement with the company's administrators, the real value of the share capital of the companies that will be transferred to State ownership must be determined by a decree of the Minister of Corporate Economy, on a proposal by the Institute of Administration and Credit. This decree of the Minister of Corporate Economy may be the subject of an appeal, within 60 days after its publication, to the Council of State, either by the directors of the company or by a number of shareholders representing at least the 10th part of the share capital. .

**Article 39. Characteristics of the titles of the Institute of Administration and Credit.** The titles of the Institute of Administration and Credit are nominative, negotiable and transferable and with variable yields. They are issued in separate series corresponding to the various production sectors. The yield of each of these series must be determined annually by the Ministerial Committee for the Protection of Savings and Credit, on a proposal from the Institute of Administration and Credit, taking into account the development of the corresponding productive sectors.

**Art.40. Limitations on Tradability of Securities.**

The limitation of the negotiability of Instituto da Administração e do Crédito securities, issued in replacement of the capital subscribed by the shareholders, and the registration in the Instituto de Crédito books of the owners of such securities, without their material consignment, are hereby delegated to the Ministerial Committee for the Protection of Savings and Credit.

**Article 41. Modalities of transfer to State property.**

The decree that stipulates the transfer to State ownership establishes the executive norms, the modality and the necessary and opportune terms for the transfer of capital to the State and for the designation and distribution of titles of the Institute of Administration and Credit to those to which they are entitled.

**Title VIII  
Shares and equity**

**Article 42. Allocation of income.**

The company's net income depends on the balance sheet resulting from the application of the rules of the Civil Code and is based on administrative accounting that may be unified through an opportune legal provision.

**Article 43. Capital income.**

After the legal allocations for the reserve have been established and any special reserves in favor of the statutes and regulations in force have been established, a remuneration must be granted to the invested capital of the company in a maximum amount established by the productive sectors of the Ministerial Committee for the Protection of Savings and Credit.



#### **Art.44. Allocation of income to workers.**

The remaining income, once the attributions referred to in the previous article have been carried out, must be distributed among the workers: factory workers, office workers, technicians and managers. This attribution should take into account the remuneration that each of them receives in a year. Weighing all factors, the amount distributed may not exceed, in any case, thirty percent of the total net annual salary of employees corresponding to the [accounting] year. The surplus should be allocated to a Savings Bank administered by the Institute of Administration and Credit, and intended for social and productive purposes. In a separate provision, the Minister of Corporate Economy, in full agreement with the Minister of Finance, must approve the regulation of said Savings Bank.

#### **Art.45. Co-participation in earnings.**

In individual capital companies, the part of the income attributed to the benefit of the workers must be proportional to a given percentage of the income included in the tax base of movable property[66].

This decree, which must be published in the “Official Gazette of the Italian Social Republic” and inscribed, with the corresponding seal of the State, in the official collection of laws and decrees, must enter into force on the day designated by the corresponding decree of the lead of the Italian Social Republic.

## **VIII**

### **Workers and Socialization**

State social reform was closely followed and linked to trade union reform. Decree number 853 that created the General (or only) Confederation of Work, Technique and Arts was dated December 20, 1943 and was complemented by a ministerial decree of March 1, 1944. The transfer of the former to a new trade union was the reason for intense legislative activity. The new trade union order was definitively established by decree number 3 of January 18, 1945.

The reaction to the Mussolinian reform was immediate. In many factories agendas were voted on, meetings were held and motions were passed.

The representatives of the Burgo paper mills, meeting in Milan, “*recognized in Socialization a decisive phase of the proletarian revolution which, after having been fought for more than a century by blind capitalism, bellicose and fomenting class hatred, emerges today in the Italian Social Republic, in the most painful moment of History, to achieve and ensure the rebirth of the Nation*”.

In Turin, Fiat's internal commissions rise up against the sabotage attempts by CLN elements, publishing, in turn, another appeal: “*it must be considered a fraud, to the disadvantage of the Fiat workers, the scheme undertaken against the most revolutionary law that has been enacted in the name of the workers: the Law of Socialization... Socialization has only one enemy: capitalism. And those who oppose it are inspired, paid for and guided by the hidden powers of capitalism. For the first time in the history of social life, workers are absolute masters of their own destiny. And they are not willing to waste this occasion just because capitalism doesn't like it.*”

Still on April 10, 1945 (we must bear in mind the date), the representatives of the factory commissions in Milan, at the end of a meeting at the Casa dos Trabalhadores, “*invite the government of the Italian Social Republic to act with inflexible energy against the heads of those companies that have not presented the statutes in due time, committing themselves to develop an effective campaign of control and propaganda, calling all the workers of the remaining Italian provinces, in order to achieve the full realization of the principles of Socialization, in the name of Work*”.

Later, Mussolini will include in the already mentioned “Corrispondenza” some of the most characteristic manifestations of his thinking on social issues from 1919 onwards: “*Consequently, it is absolutely pointless for Italians with a short memory to adopt the attitude of someone who falls from the*

*clouds and is swept away by the truest of surprises with regard to the fundamental disposition of Socialization.”. Later in the same “Corrispondenza”, Mussolini declared that “fascism does not deny its 20-year-old origins, but returns to its most genuine essence, eliminating external obstacles to the achievement of its highest social objectives” and ends by saying that “it is indeed a new milestone that is left behind, but one that we do not deny, of a path that we have tenaciously walked...”*

## IX

### Address to the “Resega” Division

*This speech was pronounced by Mussolini on October 14, 1944 before a group of Milanese fascist veterans and officers of the Black Brigade “Resega”, who adopted the name of Aldo Resega, governor of the Republican Fascist Party in Milan, assassinated on October 18 December 1943. It was in this speech that Mussolini launched the northern slogan: “Italy Republic-Socialization”:*

... At the meeting in Verona, the Republican Fascist Party established its guidelines. If the vicissitudes of war delayed the application of some of those, it does not mean that they have been changed. They are still in effect. In moments of high moral and political tension, it is necessary that slogans are few and extremely clear.

However, there are still those who ask us: “what do you want?”; we responded with three words that sum up our entire program.

Here they are: Italy, Republic, Socialization.

For us, enemies of abstract, calculating and circumstantial patriotism, and for that reason inclined towards compromise and even desertion, Italy means honor, and honor means faith in the promise made – an indispensable title of reputation both for the individual and for the peoples ; and faith in the promise made means collaboration with the ally, whether in work or in combat.

Bear in mind – and history confirms this – that traitors, in politics or war, are used, but also despised.

And precisely at this moment, when Germany is engaged in a supreme struggle and 80 million Germans have become 80 million soldiers, engaged in a superhuman resistance effort; it is precisely at this moment that the enemies anticipate – halfway between hope and illusion – a victory that they will never achieve, because Germany will never capitulate, because for Germany to capitulate would be the same as “dying” politically, morally and physically; It is at this moment that we reaffirm our complete and total solidarity with National Socialist Germany, which is the Germany that fights with a courage and a courage that we can call “Romans” and that has brought them an admired recognition even from those enemies who have not yet completely blinded them. or were turned into brutes by hatred.

All this is clear to everyone. And it is, in turn, the indeclinable object of the Italian Republic. The series of betrayals in which the Savoys, from Carlos Alberto to Vittorio Emanuele II, disqualified themselves, ended with the overthrow of the monarchy. Our Italy is republican. To the north of the Apennines we have the Italian Social Republic. This Republic must be defended centimeter by centimeter down to its last province, its last village, its last farm. Whatever may be the vicissitudes of war in our territory, the idea of the Republic founded by fascism has entered forever into the spirit and customs of the people. The third word in the program, Socialization, is nothing more than the consequence of the first two: Italy and Republic. Socialization is nothing more than the implantation of an Italian socialism, human, ours and possible; and I say “our”, inasmuch as it makes work the only motive for the economy, rejecting mechanical leverage as non-existent in Nature and impossible in History.

All those whose soul is clean of prejudices and seditious sectarianism can recognize themselves in the trinomial: Italy, Republic, Socialization. With this, we intend to summon the best elements of our working

people to the political scene.

The September capitulation means the shameful liquidation of the bourgeoisie globally considered as the ruling class. The spectacle offered by the latter has been scandalous. There were incredible cases of abjection, sordid demonstrations of selfishness repudiating broader social and national values as worthless.

As always, those who have subordinated their feelings and opinions to the development of the war are only worthy of pity, and in some cases of contempt. The state of mind of many people, of all social conditions, dispenses with the positive examination of the state of affairs, which, due to its complexity and universality, cannot be judged as a result of momentary feelings provoked by the absorbing enemy propaganda.

Not only will Germany never capitulate, because it cannot, since the enemies are determined to annihilate her both as a state and racially, but also because she still has many arrows in her bow, beyond what we can call the *unanimous decision and iron will of his people*.

Enemies do not hide that they are in a hurry. We are aware of our pains, as many as they are, but is there anyone so candidly naive that he believes that in England, Russia or the United States everything is going as smoothly as possible? We must believe that in England there is not a considerable number of intelligent people who ask themselves whether it is worth their while to engage in a battle against so-called German imperialism, losing hundreds of thousands of men, as well as all their possessions in the Far East, to consolidate a Slavic imperialism which already grips the whole of Europe from the Vistula to the Baltic and – isn't that a flattering detail for London – to the Mediterranean? Are we to believe that we have not already heard voices proclaiming that Casablanca's absurd and arrogant formula of “unconditional surrender” be revised so as not to provoke the further sacrifice of the lives of millions? The greatest carnage of all times has a name: democracy, a word that hides the voracity of the Zionist capitalist who wants to carry out the scientific exploration of the world through the ruin of humanity and the catastrophe of civilization.

Therefore, the inner recognition of this truth means realizing that, at a given moment, events will have to take another course and that the future development of war – in which science will have to play the main role – will have to drown all predictions of the enemy's victory. At this stage of the war we declare that we must: eliminate all accomplices of the enemy in our midst and call to our ranks all Italians who accept the trinomial of our program.

Whatever happens, we will not modify even a single line of the program that today, addressing you, comrades of the Black Brigades – expression and honor of the primitive Fascio – I wanted to outline.

Under the protection of mercenary and foreign bayonets, the men of unconditional surrender, which is to say, infamous and cowardly, struggle in vain in their pursuit of the fascists and the fascism. They can do nothing more than bear witness to its unbreakable continuity. Their parties are artificially based on a merely negative link: the radical and iconoclastic persecution of fascism.

Their attitude is due to the confirmation that the alleged corpse is nevertheless still alive; that still remains in the air they breathe, in everything they stumble over at every step, in the indelible marks, both material and spiritual, that fascism has left everywhere. No human force can erase from history what has already passed into history as a reality and a faith.

For twenty years now, in peace and war, in Italy, Europe and Africa, tens of thousands of fascists have fallen, the flower of the Italian race, alongside their black flags. Heroic expression of fascism, they are its immortal testimony and safeguard.

I convey to the Milanese comrades, along with my greeting, the echo of my certainty in the victorious conclusion for Italy and for Europe of this colossal clash of civilizations, which goes by the name of Fascism.

## The speech of the Lyric Theater

*The speech at the Teatro Lirico in Milan (December 16, 1944) is the most important political speech of all that Mussolini gave after his return to government. The ministers themselves and the other German and Italian authorities did not find out about it until the last moment. The welcome that Milan gave the Duce was a memory of times gone by, the Duce himself couldn't help but be moved by them. The speech had a wide echo, and gave rise to many comments, even in enemy countries. Here is the full text of the speech which was entitled "The Lyricist's speech".*

Comrades, dear Milanese comrades: Without any kind of preamble and without further ado, I come straight to the main theme of my speech.

Sixteen months after the date of surrender imposed and accepted, in accordance with the democratic and criminal formula of Casablanca, the importance of events makes us, once again, face this question: who betrayed? Who immediately suffered the consequences of betrayal? Let me be clear about this: I do not intend to pass judgment on matters of historical revisionism, nor, still less, do I intend to justify myself.

I have been accused by a certain neutral newspaper, but I reject it most categorically, both with regard to its content and the very source from which it originates. Who cheated? The surrender announced on September 8, 1943 was desired by the monarchy, by the judicial entourages, by the plutocratic circles of the Italian bourgeoisie, by well-determined clerical powers occasionally united with those of Freemasonry, by the headquarters that no longer believed in victory and that met in around Badoglio. In May 1943, precisely on the 15th, the former king noted in his diary – which has recently come into our hands – that he needed, more than ever, to “get rid” of the alliance with Germany. The surrender was ordered by the former king, beyond all doubt; its performer was Badoglio.

But to arrive on the 8th of September, it is necessary to have previously experienced the 25th of July, which is, as it were, carrying out the coup d'état and the change of regime. The justification for the surrender, namely the impossibility of continuing the war any further, was unmasked forty days later, on the 13th of October, with the declaration of war on Germany, a declaration that was not merely symbolic, given that it began from that point on. a collaboration – even if only in the rear and in work activities – between Badoglio Italy and the Allies; not to mention that the fleet, wholly built up by fascism, switched sides en bloc so as to begin operating immediately with the enemy fleets. Peace was not in mind however, but, through the co-belligerence mentioned above, the continuation of war; peace was not in mind, the entire territory of the Nation was converted into an immense battlefield, which is to say an immense field of ruins; peace was not in mind, on the contrary Italian ships and Italian troops were supposed to participate in the war against Japan. Therefore, those who suffered most as a result of the betrayal were mainly the Italian people. We can say that with regard to relations with the German ally, the Italian people did not commit treason. With the exception of a few cases, sections of the army dissolved without resisting disarmament orders from the German authorities. Important Army contingents, deployed outside the metropolitan territory, and even the aviation itself, were immediately able to side with the German forces – and it must be borne in mind that we are talking about tens of thousands of men -; all Militia formations – with the exception of a Corsican battalion – remained on the side of the Germans until the last moment.

The so-called P.44 plan which should be referred to in the generals' imminent lawsuit and which envisaged the collapse of the front as prepared by the king and Badoglio, was not carried out by the commanding officers, and this is proved in the lawsuit which was filed, in Bonomi's Italy, against a group of generals who did not follow the orders of such a plan. So did army commanders posted outside the

borders.

If such commanders avoided the worst, that is, the extreme infamy that would have resulted from stabbing in the back one, who for three years, had been their ally, their conduct from the national point of view has been disastrous: obeying the voice of conscience and honor, they should have switched sides, with all their belongings. In this way they could have maintained our territorial and political positions; our flag should not have been lowered in lands where so much Italian blood has been spilled; the armed forces would have preserved their organic constitution; hundreds of thousands of soldiers could have been prevented from being forcibly interned [in German concentration camps], thus avoiding their great suffering, above all moral; our ally would not have been burdened with the imposition of new and unexpected military problems that were supposed to influence the strategic development of the war.

These are the specific responsibilities of the Italian people.

Furthermore, it must be recognized that the betrayals of the summer of 1944 gave way to even more shameful displays, as the Romanians, Bulgarians and Finns, after having ignominiously capitulated, especially the Bulgarians, without having fired a single carbine bullet, dismantled the front in the space of 24 hours and attacked, with all mobilized forces, the German units, thus converting their withdrawal into a difficult and bloody operation.

In this case, betrayal reached perfection in the most disgusting sense of the word.

The Italian people are, however, the ones that intervened the least and that suffered to an extent that I have no doubts in classifying as superhuman. It is not enough. I have to add that while a part of the Italian people accepted – out of unconsciousness or tiredness – the surrender, the other part took the side of Germany.

It is time to say to the Italians, the German comrades and the Japanese comrades, that the contribution made by the Italian Republic to the common cause from September 1943 onwards – despite the circumstantial reduction of the Republic's territory – is much more important than is commonly understood. believe.

I cannot, for obvious reasons, go so far as to detail the data of such a contribution, complex to the maximum degree – both from an economic and military point of view -, made by Italy. Our collaboration with *Reich* in soldiers and workers can be represented by this figure: 786,000 men, according to data collected up to 30 September. This is indisputable data, given that it comes from a German source. Furthermore, the number of former military internees must be added, representing hundreds of thousands of men immersed in the development of German production, as well as other tens of thousands of Italians who were already in the *Reich* as free workers in factories and fields.

Given these facts, Italians living in the territory of the Social Republic have the right to raise their heads and demand that their effort be equally evaluated by all the components of the Tripartite Pact.

We heard yesterday's Eden statements about the casualties Great Britain suffered in the defense of Greece. For three years Italy has inflicted heavy damage on the British and, above all, has borne enormous sacrifices both in goods and in blood.

It is not enough.

In 1945 Italy's participation in the war was to achieve greater development through the progressive strengthening of our military organizations, entrusted to the faith and proven experience of that soldier who holds the rank of Field Marshal of Italy, Rodolfo Graziani.

During the turbulent period of transition from the autumn to the winter of 1943, more or less autonomous military groups emerged around men who, with their past and their prestige, knew how to recruit the nuclei of first combatants. It was the time for individual enrollment of battalions, regiments and specialists. The old commanders sounded the bugle. It was an excellent initiative, above all from a moral point of view. But modern warfare demands unity, and we are moving towards it.

I dare say that the Italians, whatever their thoughts, should feel happy on the day when all the armed forces of the Republic are integrated into a single organism, and a single police force is constituted and that both, articulated according to their respective function, can live closely identified with the climate

and spirit of fascism and the Republic, given that in a war like this, which has taken on the appearance of a “political” war, the apolitical spirit has no meaning, and by all means, it is completely outdated.

“Politics” is one thing, which is like saying a convinced and fanatical adherence to the idea for which one is fighting, another thing is the activity of the political soldier, who, constrained by orders and the fulfillment of his duty, does not even have enough time to explain, given that its policy must be restricted to its readiness to fight and to set an example in any situation, whether in peace or war.

On 15 September the National Fascist Party was converted into the Republican Fascist Party. There was then no lack of elements that opportunistically motivated or perhaps in a state of mental confusion raised the question whether it would not have been more strategic to eliminate the word “Fascist” to replace it with that of “Republic”. I declined then, as I would refuse today, this useless and vile suggestion.

It would have been a mistake and baseness to lower our flag, consecrated with so much blood, and therefore almost make clandestine those ideas that today are the watchword in all battles on the continent. Being nothing more than the formality of a flag of convenience, we would have lost face in front of our adversaries and, above all, in front of ourselves.

Naming ourselves once again, as always, as Fascists and dedicating ourselves to the cause of Fascism as we have done from 1919 until today, and as we will continue to do tomorrow, after the events that have occurred, we wanted to give new impetus and move to action either in the political field as well as in the social field.

In truth, more than a new impulse, we should say more precisely: a return to original positions.

It is a historical fact that fascism tended to be republican until 1922, and the reasons why the 1922 insurrection respected the monarchy are obvious.

From a social point of view, the Republican Fascist program is nothing more than the logical continuation of the splendid years between the Labor Charter and the conquest of the Empire. Nature does not develop in leaps and bounds, nor does the economy.

We needed to lay the groundwork, with union laws and corporate bodies, to prepare for the further phase of Socialization. Already from the first meeting of the Council of Ministers on September 27, 1943, I declared that “the Republic should be unified in the political field and decentralized in the administrative field, as well as have a higher social continence with the purpose of resolving the social question at least in its most important aspects, such as establishing the place, function and responsibility of work in a truly modern national society”.

At the same meeting, I took the first steps towards the widest possible national agreement, announcing that the government would not adopt strict measures against anti-fascist elements.

During the month of October, I elaborated and revised what in Italian political history is called the “Manifesto of Verona”, which established in some sufficiently explicit points the program not only of the party, but of the Republic. This took place exactly on the 4th of November, two months after the formation of the Republican Fascist Party. In the manifesto of the national assembly of the PFR, after paying tribute to the memory of the Fallen for the fascist cause and reaffirming as a supreme demand the continuation of the struggle alongside the Tripartite powers and the reorganization of the armed forces, the 18 points of the program were established. Let's look at what was done, what wasn't done, and, above all, why it wasn't done.

The “Manifesto” began by demanding the convening of a Constitutive Assembly, specifying the members who should compose it, so that it would be – as mentioned – “the synthesis of all the values of the Nation”.

Well, the Constitutive Assembly was never convened. This guideline has not yet been complied with. Nor can it be achieved before the end of the war. I want to tell you clearly that I have thought it superfluous to convene a Constitutive Assembly while the territory of the Republic cannot be considered definitive in any way, due to the development of military operations. I believe it is premature to create a true rule of law in the fullness of its

institutions until we have the armed forces capable of sustaining it. A state that does not have armed forces is anything but a state.

The “Manifesto” stated that no citizen could be detained for more than seven days without a court order. This has not always been the case. The causes must be sought in the plurality of police agencies, both ours and our allies, and in the activity of the “outlaws” who transformed these problems into a civil war made of reprisals and counter-reprisals. Antifascism started speculation around such episodes, exaggerating and generalizing them.

I have to state most explicitly that such methods disgust me to the core, even in an episodic way. The State, as such, cannot adopt methods that degrade it. For centuries, there has been talk of the law of talion. Well, it is a law, not an arbitrary act, still less personal.

Mazzini - the inflexible apostle of the republican idea - sent, at the dawn of the Roman Republic in 1849, a commissioner to Ancona to teach the Jacobins that it was lawful to fight against the Papists; but not killing them outside the law or requisitioning – as we would say today – the silver of their houses. If someone did, in possession of the party membership card, he would be twice a criminal.

No severity is too excessive, if we want the party – as can be read in the “Manifesto of Verona” – to be truly a front of fighters and believers, an organism of absolute political purity, a worthy depository of the revolutionary idea. A high personification of this type of fascism was Comrade Resega, whom we remember today with deep emotion on the occasion of the first anniversary of his death, caused by enemy hand.

Thus, through the Constitution of the Black Brigades, the party is being converted into a “front of combatants”, the guidelines of Verona have the character of a dogmatic and sacred commitment. In its 5th article, in which it was established that by no compromise or influence should the Party's insignia be compromised, the problem which I shall name as the cooperation of other elements as far as the Republic is concerned, was resolved. In my telegram XXII, dated March 10th, to the provincial leaders, this formula would be presented in more detail. From then on, the entire discussion on the matter of party plurality is anachronistic.

Historically – in the various forms that the Republic has taken among different peoples – there have been many republics of a totalitarian type, and therefore of a single party. I shall not cite the most totalitarian of these, that of the soviets, but I must recall one that enjoys the affection of the high priests of the democratic gospel: the Turkish Republic, supported by a single party – the Republican People's Party – and a single organization of youth – the Houses of the People.

At a given moment in the historical evolution of Italy, the presence of other groups, which, as established in the “Manifesto of Verona”, exercise the right of verification and critical responsibility over the acts of public administration, can have fruitful results, outside the party, solely responsible for the overall direction of the state. Groups which, given their loyal, full and unreserved acceptance of the trinomial Italy, Republic, Socialization, have the responsibility of examining the guidelines of the government and local authorities, of examining the methods of applying orders and the people who exercise public officials who, as such, must be held accountable for their actions before the citizen in his capacity as a soldier/worker/taxpayer.

The assembly of Verona established in Art. 8th the guidelines of its foreign policy. It was simply stated that the essential objective of the Republic's foreign policy is “the unity, independence and territorial integrity of the Homeland within its maritime and alpine limits designated by Nature, blood sacrifice and History”.

As for territorial unity, I refuse – knowing Sicily and the Sicilian brothers – to take seriously the so-called separatist attempts of the enemy's despicable mercenaries. It may well be that this separatism has another reason: that the Sicilian brothers want to separate themselves from Bonomi's Italy in order to rejoin the Italian Republic.

I am profoundly convinced that – despite all the struggles and once the criminal phenomenon of outlaws is over – the moral unity of the Italians of tomorrow will be infinitely stronger than that of those

of yesterday, given that it will have to be cemented on exceptional sufferings that did not spare a single family. And when, through moral unity, the soul of a people is safeguarded, its territorial integrity and political independence are also safeguarded.

At this point, a few words about Europe are in order. I don't want to stop and ask what Europe is, where it begins and where it ends from a geographical, historical, moral and economic point of view; Nor do I ask myself, today, whether an attempt at unification could achieve a better result than previous attempts. That would take me too far. I limit myself to saying that the formation of a European community is desirable and even possible, but I have to declare in the most explicit way that we do not feel Italian because we are European, but that we feel European because we are Italian. This is not a subtle distinction but a fundamental one. Since the Nation is the result of millions of families that have their own physiognomy and that have a common national denominator, each Nation should join the European community as a well-defined entity, to prevent the community from sinking into internationalist socialism or vegetating in the generic and misguided cosmopolitanism with a Jewish and Masonic undertone.

While such points of the "Manifesto of Verona" were set aside by a succession of military events, in the economic and social field more concrete achievements were carried out.

In this respect, innovations acquire a radical character. Exact in the "premise of the new economic structure of the Nation", its practical application can be found in the law of Socialization. The interest it aroused in the world was truly great and today, everywhere, including Italy, dominated and tortured by Anglo-Americans, all political programs contain the guidelines of Socialization.

The workers, more or less skeptical at first, ended up understanding its importance. Its effective realization is underway. At other times, his pace would have been faster. But now the seed has been sown. No matter what happens, this seed is destined to germinate. It is the principle that inaugurates what I predicted eight years ago, here in Milan, in front of 150,000 people who cheered me on, the "century of work" in which the worker rises from his economic and moral condition of wage earner to assume a as a producer, a party directly interested in the development of the economy and the well-being of the Nation.

Fascist Socialization is the logical and rational solution, which avoids the bureaucratization of the economy through state totalitarianism on the one hand, surpassing, on the other, the individualism of the liberal economy, which was an effective instrument of progress in the principles of the capitalist economy, but which today it cannot be considered a solution in accordance with the demands of the social nature of the national community.

Through Socialization the best elements of the working classes shall prove their worth.

I am determined to continue in this direction.

I entrusted two sectors to the working classes: local administration and supply. These sectors, which are of the utmost importance in the current circumstances, are already in the hands of the workers.

These they have to demonstrate, and I hope they will, their specific preparation and civic awareness. As you can see, we have really achieved something during these twelve months, in the midst of increasing and incredible difficulties, due to the objective circumstances of the war and the stupid opposition of elements sold to the enemy, as well as the extreme moral apathy into which past events have plunged many sectors. of the people.

In recent times the situation has improved. The opportunists, those who were waiting for the Anglo-Americans, are fewer every day. The events taking place in Bonomi's Italy have disappointed us. Everything the Anglo-Americans promised turned out to be nothing more than a miserable propaganda scheme.

I believe I am right when I say that in the Po Valley, [the people] not only do not desire, but actually dread, the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons; they want nothing to do with a government which, by having a Togliatti as its vice-president, would awaken reactionary forces in the North, plutocratic and dynastic, especially the latter, clearly protected by England.

How ridiculous are those republicans who do not want the Republic due to the simple fact that it was



proclaimed by Mussolini and, on the other hand, allow themselves to be subjugated by the monarchy, desired by Churchill! This demonstrates irrefutably that the Savoy monarchy serves the policy of Great Britain and not of Italy.

There is no doubt that the fall of Rome constitutes a high point in the history of warfare. General Alexander has declared that it was necessary, on the eve of the landing in France, a victory that was linked to a name of greatness - and there is no greater and more universal name than that of Rome - and that, with it, an atmosphere of optimism would be created.

The Anglo-Americans entered Rome on June 5th. On the following day, the 6th, the first "allied" sections landed on the coast of Normandy, between the Vire and Orne rivers. The following months have been extremely hard, above all on the fronts where the soldiers of the *Reich* they were, and still are, engaged in the struggle.

Germany called all its human reserves into ranks, with a total mobilization led by Goebbels and with the creation of the *Volkssturm*. Only a people like the Germans, united around the *Führer*, could withstand such enormous pressure; only an army like the National Socialist could so quickly overcome the crisis of the 20th of July and continue to fight in the four corners of the world with the exceptional valor and tenacity recognized even by the enemy himself.

There was a moment when the conquests of Brussels and Paris, the unconditional surrender of Rumania, Bulgaria and Finland gave rise to such a state of euphoria that - giving credit to war correspondents - one could believe that by this Christmas the war would have practically ended with the triumphant entry of the Allies into Berlin.

In the period of euphoria to which we have alluded, the new German weapons, which have been incorrectly called "secret", were devalued and disdained.

Many believe that due to the use of such weapons, at a given moment, like someone ringing a bell, the war would suddenly end, this reliance on a miracle, rather than an if, must be considered harmful. We are not dealing with secret weapons, but with "new weapons" which - needless to say - are only secret until they are used in combat. That such weapons exist is known, through bitter experience, to the English; that the former must be replaced by others, I can with knowledge assert; that they are so efficient that they can, from the beginning, come close to reestablishing a balance and shortly afterwards allow the initiative to be resumed is, within the limits of human foresight, something almost certain and not far away.

Nothing is more understandable than impatience after five years of war, but these are instruments in which the science, technique, experience and training of each soldier and unit are mandatory. It is indeed true that the series of surprises is not infinite, and that thousands of German scientists are working day and night to increase the power of Germany's war potential. Meanwhile the German resistance becomes more solid and many of the illusions that the enemy propaganda harbored have already fallen. No, however, weakening the morals of the German people, fully aware that their physical existence and their future as a race is at stake; no sign whatsoever of a revolution, not even of unrest among the millions and millions of foreign workers, despite the appeals and proclamations of the American generalissimo. One of the most eloquent indicators of the Nation's spirit is the percentage of volunteers in the last recruitment, very close to the total number of those enlisted. Germany is capable of resisting and disrupting enemy plans.

Minimizing the loss of territories, once conquered and held at the cost of blood, is not a smart tactic, nor is it, nevertheless, the object of war to conquer or control territories, but the destruction of enemy forces and, therefore, the end of hostilities.

Today, not only is the German armed forces not destroyed, but they are in a phase of increasing development and power.

If we look at the situation from a political point of view, this last period of 1944 has seen some interesting developments and moods ripen. Without exaggeration, it can be said that the political situation today is not favorable to the Allies. Especially in America and England, where currents of opinion

contrary to demands for unconditional surrender have been rising. The Casablanca formula means the death of millions of young people, since it prolongs the war indefinitely: peoples like the Germans and the Japanese will not surrender bound and muzzled before an enemy whose plans include the total annihilation of the countries that make up the Tripartite.

This explains the cold shower that Mr. Churchill was forced to give to his countrymen, extending the end date of the conflict until the summer of 1945 for Europe and 1947 for Japan. The Soviet ambassador in Rome, Potemkin, once told me: "World War I Bolshevized Russia, World War II will Bolshevise Europe."

This prophecy is not to be fulfilled; however, if this were to happen, all responsibility would rest with Great Britain.

Politically, Albion is already eliminated. Russian armies are now between the Vistula and the Danube, which is to say, halfway across Europe. Communist parties, rather, parties acting under Field Marshal Stalin, are in power in most Western countries.

What does the word "liberation" mean in Belgium, Italy and Greece? The information we receive daily enlightens us: misery, despair and civil war. The "liberated" Greeks awaiting their English "liberators" are nothing more than Russian communists awaiting their British conservatives.

In view of this panorama, English policy had to adopt a defensive attitude. Firstly, liquidating in a dramatic and bloody way – as in Athens – the "partisan" movements that constitute the operational and fighting wing of the extreme left of Bolshevism; second, by supporting the democratic forces that reject the totalitarianism that finds its most refined expression in Soviet Russia.

Churchill waved the anti-communist flag most categorically in his last speech before the House of Commons, but this did not sit well with Stalin. Britain wants to book Europe West as a zone of democratic influence, and does not want it to be, in any case, contaminated by communism.

But this "frond" can only reach a certain limit, since otherwise the great Kremlin field marshal could become suspicious.

Churchill wanted the zone of influence of Western Europe reserved for democracy to be protected by a pact between France, England, Belgium, Holland and Norway, directed against, first of all, Germany and eventually against Russia.

The Stalin-De Gaulle agreement stifled this idea in its infancy, launched as it was – in accordance with instructions from London – by the Belgian Spaak. The game failed, and Churchill could do no more than – as the British say – eat his own hat, and, thinking of Russian entry into the Mediterranean and Russian pressure on Iran, he must ask himself whether the policy of Casablanca has not, in reality, constituted a failed policy for "poor old England".

Caught between two military colossuses, East and West, her insolent and insatiable cousins across the ocean and the endless Eurasians, Britain sees the future of her empire in jeopardy, which is to say, your destiny. That "political" relations between the Allies are not very good is shown by the tiresome preparations for the next meeting of the Three.

Let us now speak of the remote and [yet] near Japan. It is irrefutable that the empire of the rising sun will never surrender and that it will fight to victory. In these past few months, the Japanese military has achieved great successes. The units of the much proclaimed landing on the island of Leyte - one of the hundreds of islands that form the Philippine archipelago -, a landing that was carried out for electoral purposes are, after two months, [paralyzed] in almost the same place.

Japan's will and spirit has been demonstrated by suicide volunteers. They are not just a few dozen, but tens of thousands of young people who act under this slogan: "for every plane, an enemy ship". And they do. In view of this superhuman and heroic decision, one can perceive the attitude of some American circles who wonder whether it would not have been better for the United States if Roosevelt had fulfilled his promise to American mothers that no soldier would be sent to fight and die. abroad. The president lied, as is usual in all democracies.

For us, Italians of the Republic, it is a source of pride to have such faithful and educated comrades by our side – Tenno soldiers, sailors and airmen – who, with their epic deeds, are the object of admiration of the world.

Now I ask you: should the good seed of Italians, of those healthy Italians – the best – who see death in the service of the Fatherland as eternal life, should be considered as already extinct? Was there not, during the war, an aviator who, being unable to shoot down an enemy plane, dived into it? Do you remember your name? He was a humble sergeant: Dall'Oro.

In 1935, when England wanted to corner us in our sea, I took up her gauntlet of defiance and had more than 400,000 legionaries parade in front of Her British Majesty's ships anchored in Mediterranean ports. It was then that death squads were formed in Rome. I have to say, truth be told, that the first to enlist was the commander of the air force. Well, if tomorrow it should prove necessary to reconstitute these squadrons, if it were necessary to demonstrate that in our veins the blood of Roman legionaries still flows, would my appeal fall on deaf ears?

We want to defend the Po Valley, tooth and nail if need be; we want the Po valley to remain republican in the hope that all of Italy will also become republican.

On the day when the Po valley was occupied by the enemy, the fate of the entire Nation would be compromised. But I feel, I see, that tomorrow there will arise a type of organization, armed and irresistible, which will make life for the invaders practically impossible. We will convert the entire Po valley into a single Athens.

It is evident, from everything I have told you, that the enemy coalition not only did not win, but that it will not win.

The monstrous alliance between the plutocracy and Bolshevism was able to unleash its barbaric war, thus perpetrating an enormous crime that sacrificed a multitude of innocents and destroyed what European civilization had created in twenty centuries. But it will not succeed in annihilating with its barbarism the eternal spirit extolled by such monuments. Our absolute faith in victory is not supported by sentimental and subjective reasons, but by positive and decisive elements. If we doubt our victory, we should also question the existence of the One who regulates, according to justice, the destiny of men.

When we soldiers of the Republic make contact with the Italians on the other side of the Apennines, we will experience a pleasant surprise to find fascism even more alive than we left it. Disillusionment, misery and moral and political abjection not only explode in the old phrase: “we were better when we were worse”, but the revolt is already spreading through Palermo, Catania, Otranto, in Rome itself and throughout Italy “liberated”.

The Italian people south of the Apennines have a soul full of nostalgia. The enemy operation on the one hand, and the government's bestial persecution on the other, only foment the fascist movement. The task of eliminating its external symbols was easy, but that of suppressing the idea is impossible.

The six anti-fascist parties rushed to proclaim that fascism is dead, precisely because they feel it [so] alive. Millions of Italians compare past and present days; of days gone by when the flag of the motherland flew from the Alps to the Equator, and the Italian was one of the most respected peoples on Earth.

There isn't a single Italian who doesn't feel his heart beat in his chest when he hears an African name, when he hears the hymn that accompanied the Mediterranean legions to the Red Sea, or at the sight of a colonial helmet. There are millions of Italians who from 1929 to 1939 lived what can be defined as the epic of the Fatherland. These Italians still exist, they suffer and believe and are capable of closing ranks and marching again to regain all that was lost between the Libyan dunes and the borders of Ethiopia, guarded [as they are] by thousands and thousands of fallen, the flower of countless Italian families who have not forgotten and cannot forget him.

One can already foresee the heralding signs of the reconquest, above all here, in pioneer and first-rate Milan, which the enemy so savagely attacked but was not able to make it bow even a little.

Comrades, dear Milanese comrades!

It is Milan who must and will give the men, the weapons, the will and the signal for the rescue!

# XI

## Timeline: the 600 days of the RSI

### 1943

24/25 July - Session of the Grand Council that dismisses Mussolini.

July 25 - The King, Vittorio Emanuele III, orders Mussolini's arrest. Badoglio will be the head of government.

September 3 - Secret Armistice of Cassibile. Landing in Calabria of the British 8th Army.

September 8 - The armistice is made public. The Germans take countermeasures.

September 9 - Allied landings at Taranto and Salerno.

September 10 - Hitler orders the occupation of Italy and its division into two zones.

September 12 - Mussolini is released from Gran Sasso.

September 14 - Meeting between Mussolini and Hitler at Covil do Lobo.

September 18 - Mussolini addresses Italians from Radio Munich. 23

September - Constitution of the RSI government.

September 27 - First session of the RSI government at Rocca delle Caminate. 1 October – Speech by Field Marshal Graziani at the Teatro Lirico in Rome. The Germans evacuate Naples.

October 8 – Mussolini moves his government to Gargnano near Lake Garda.

October 13 – Badoglio's government declares war on Germany.

27 October – Second session of the RSI government.

November 8 – The British 8th Army crosses the River Sangro.

11 November – Creation of the exceptional special court and exceptional provincial courts.

November 14 – Congress of Verona.

20 November – The creation of the National Republican Guard is made public. 21 November – Field Marshal Kesselring takes over the defense of Italy in his capacity as commander of the Southwest Front.

25 November – Third session of the RSI government.

1 December – The new State assumes the name of the Italian Social Republic.

December 2/3 – The Germans bomb Bari. Destroy 90 merchant ships. 16 December – Fourth session of the RSI government.

December 29 – The British 8th Army conquers Ortona.

### 1944

January 8/10 – Criminal prosecution in Verona against fascists who voted against the lead at the Grand Council Session.

January 11 – Ciano, De Bono, Marienlli, Pareschi and Gottardi are executed by firing squad in Verona.

13 January – Fifth session of the RSI government. Announcement of Socialization.

January 22 – American landings at Anzio and Neptune.

January 24 – The first Battle of Monte Cassino begins.

12 February – Sixth session of the RSI government.

February 15/18 – Second Battle of Monte Cassino.

February 15 – The Allies destroy the monastery of Monte Cassino by bombing.

February 16/21 – The Anzio counter-offensive fails.

29 February – Second German counter-offensive at Anzio, also fails on 1 March. 9 March –

Creation of the Female Auxiliary Service (SAF).

11 March – Seventh session of the RSI Council of Ministers.

March 15/24 – Third Battle of Monte Cassino. Allied defeat.

March 23 – Assault, on Via Rasella in Rome, against a Tyrolean police unit. March 24 – Reprisal of the Ardeatine Fosses in Rome.

March 29 – Republican aviation shoots down 14 Allied bombers.

April 15 – The philosopher Giovanni Gentile is assassinated by communists in Florence. 18 April – Eighth session of the RSI government.

April 22/23 – Meeting between Hitler and Mussolini at Clesheim Castle, near Salzburg. April

24th – The *lead* visits the San Marco division at the Grafenwöhr training facility. May 12 – Allied Offensive against the German 10th Army at Garigoliano. May 17 – German paratroopers evacuate Monte Cassino.

May 24 – Admirals Campione and Mascherpa are shot by a firing squad after being sentenced to death by the Special Court.

May 25 – General withdrawal of Germans from the Adriatic to the Tyrrhenian Sea.

June 4 – Rome falls to the Allies.

4/5 June – Republican aviation attacks Gibraltar.

June 6 – Allied landing in Normandy.

June 19 – The Allies conquer Perugia.

July 2/3 – The Germans evacuate Siena.

July 15/22 – Mussolini travels to Germany.

July 18 – The Allies occupy Ancona.

July 22 – Attack on Hitler. Last meeting between Hitler and Mussolini. July 25 – The PFR is militarized. Pavolini announces the creation of the Black Brigades. August 2 – Field Marshal Graziani assumes command of the Ligurian corps. August 4 – German paratroopers evacuate south of Florence. The fascists decide to offer a desperate resistance.

August 10 – German troops withdraw from Florence.

August 15 – The Allies land on the French Mediterranean coast.

August 21 – San Marino declares war on Germany.

September 1 – The German 10th Army resists the Allied offensive in Rimini.

September 2 – The Germans evacuate Pisa.

September 15 – The Ionian Islands are evacuated by the Germans.

September 21 – British units capture Rimini.

12 October – Eleventh session of the RSI government.

October 26 – The Allies fail to break through the Apennine defense line in order to reach Bologna.

16 November – Twelfth session of the RSI government.

December 5 – Ravenna is evacuated by the Germans.

9 December – Thirteenth session of the RSI government.

December 16 – Ardennes Offensive. Mussolini's speech at the Teatro Lirico in Milan.

December 16/17 – The British 8th Army conquers Faenza.

26/30 December – Successful Italian-German offensive in the Cerchio valley. December 29 – All types of hotel units are transformed into collective canteens.

## 1945

19 January – Fourteenth session of the RSI government.

January 22 – Fiat is Socialised.

24 de Janeiro – Pavolini visits the Italian unidades in Venezia Giulia.

February 1st – Socialization extends to other companies.

14 February – The creation of the National Socialist Republican Group is announced.

February 21 – Mussolini dismisses Buffarini Guidi.

March 8 – Secret talks between General Wolff and the Allies.

March 12 – In Rome, criminal proceedings against fascist hierarchs come to an end. Anfuso is sentenced to death in *the absence of*.

15 March – Sixteenth session of the RSI government.

9 April – Beginning of the major offensive by the British 8th Army in the eastern sector of the Italian front.

April 14 – The US Fifth Army begins the offensive in the western sector.

16 April – Seventeenth session of the RSI government.

April 18 – Mussolini arrives in Milan.

April 25 – The Allies cross the Po, occupying Mantova, Reggio and Parma. Mussolini and his government leave Milan.

April 27 – Mussolini is captured by partisans. The French occupy Ventimiglia and Bordighera.

April 28 – Mussolini is assassinated in Giulino de Mezzagra. In Dongo the fascist hierarchs are slaughtered.

April 29 – The capitulation of German forces in Italy is signed in Caserta. April

30 – Hitler commits suicide. The Americans occupy Turin.

May 2 – The German surrender in Italy, to take place at 2 pm, is publicly announced.

[1] On the revolutionary movement before Fascism, see Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, Princeton University Press, 1995. Where curiously only Bombacci is mentioned.

[2] There is an excellent book about Bombacci's revolutionary trajectory, *Nicola Bombacci of Moscow in Salò*, Guglielmo Salotti, Rome, Bonacci Editore, 1986.

[3] We are talking about the capture of the Dalmatian city in 1919 by the poet-soldier Gabriel D'annunzio, which has been considered by many authors as the first chapter of the Fascist revolution. Carlos Caballero, "The fascinating story of D'annunzio en Fiume", in *Revision*, Alicante, Year 1, Vol. IV, October, 1990.

[4] About the esquierda wing of fascism ver: Luca Leonello Rimbotti, *Left fascism. From Piazza San Sepolcro to the Congress of Verona*, Rome, Setiimo Sigillo, 1989. As well as *The Fascist Left. Story of a failed project*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2000 [5] Quoted by Arrigo Petacco, *The communist in black shirt. Nicola Bombacci between Lenin and Mussolini*, Milan, Mondadori Editori, 1996, p. 115.

[6] *Mussolini the Duce. II. The totalitarian state 1936-1940*, Turin, Einaudi, 1981 (2nd edition, 1996), p. 331. [7] Bombacci's correspondence with Mussolini (but not Mussolini with the former) is partially preserved in the Central Archive of the Italian State (ACS) in a special folio.

[8] Nicola Bombacci, *Peasants in Mussolini's Italy*, Rome, 1943, pp. 34 BC

[9] More than 50,000 fascists will be executed by these terrorist groups over these two years and another 50,000 in the tragic spring-summer of 1945. They especially had in mind those fascist leaders who had a halo of popularity and who could embody a more populist

face of fascism. The most outstanding case was that of the philosopher Giovanni Gentile, who even gave rise to protests even within the same anti-fascist resistance. There is an extensive bibliography relating to these facts, however nowadays attempts have been made to reduce the numbers and impact of this bloody civil war.

[10] It is curious to recognize how in several European countries, at the end of the war, the only elements faithful to the new order are the so-called "proletarian" wings of the national-revolutionary movements, and that the handover of power is negotiated with socialist resistance groups instead of with the communists or bourgeois. This will happen in Norway, where the trade union sectors propose a government coalition of the social-democratic resistance in April 1945, or in France where, after the fall of Marshal Pétain's government in Autumn 1944, Marcel Déat and Jacques Doriot struggle to establish a socialist government.

[11] *La vida con mi padre*, Madrid, Ediciones Cid, 1958, p. 267 [12] *Italia fuera de combate*, Madrid, Ediciones Atlas, 1944 (8th edition) [13] Little or nothing has been written about the Italian Social Republic outside Italy; for Castilian readers we recommend, although it is only a memoir, nevertheless very well documented, the work of who would become a senator of the MSI, Bruno Spampanato, *El último Mussolini*, Ediciones Destino, Barcelona, 1957. For works of a more academic tone, in Italian: *La Repubblica Sociale Italiana 1943-1945*, VA, Fondazione Luigi Micheletti, Brescia, 1986; Franco Massobrio and Umberto Guglielmotti, *Storia della Repubblica Sociale Italiana*, CEN, Rome, 1978. [14] Mussolini addressing Milanese Fascists and officers of the Black Brigade "Resega", October 14, 1944, op. cit. Spampanato, pp. 682-683. [15] *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*, Princeton University Press; New edition (July 3, 1995). Spanish edition: *El nacimiento de la ideología fascista*, Siglo XXI Editores, Madrid, 1994). Perhaps the most serious and profound study on the proletarian origins of Italian fascism. [16] The work of the Italian Pietro Neglie, *Fratelli in camicia nera. Comunisti I fascisti dal Corporativismo alla CGIL (1928-1948)*, Mulino, Bologna, 1996, is an excellent exposition of this trend. No wonder that the MSI, heir to Republican Fascism, and a real political force in Italy until its dissolution in 1995, has always hesitated between the "left" and "right" wings, the latter triumphed, giving rise to Fini's National Alliance, today integrated into the rightist party of Silvio Berlusconi. [17] Rep. in *Storia della Repubblica Sociale Italiana*, Massobrio & Guglielmotti, pp. 1120 to 1151. [18] Quoted in *La agonía de Mussolini*, Giovanni Dolfín, AHR, Barcelona, 1955, pp. 253-255. Mussolini's personal secretary at one stage of the IHR, his testimony is on the whole inclined towards an excessively anti-German and pro-conservative view. [19] *Italian Social Movement*. [20] H.W. Neulen, *Europa und das 3. Reich*, Munich, Universitas Verlag, 1987 [21] Dino, Confrancesco, "Il mito europeo del fascismo (1939-1945)", in *Storia Contemporanea*, Il Mulino, Bologna, February 1983, year XIV, no. 1, pp. 5-45. [22] Emil Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini*, 1933. Spanish edition: *Mussolini, Conversaciones con Emil Ludwig*, Barcelona, Ed. Juventud, 1932, p. 158. Interview made in April 1932. [23] See Ismael Saz Campos, *Mussolini contra la II República*, Valencia, Ed. Alfons El Magnànim, 1986, pp 124-125. [24] See Benito Mussolini, *Escritos y discursos*, Barcelona, Bosch, 1935, pp. 69-102, volume VIII, which can be found precisely in the Italian encyclopedia *Treccani* in the entry "Fascism" where this cultural substratum on the part of the Duce is recognized. On the revolutionary origins of fascism see the excellent study by Israeli professor Zeev Sternhell et al, *The birth of Fascist ideology*. [25] Michael Arthur Ledeen, *L'Internazionale Fascista*, Bari, Laterza, 1973. A pioneering work in which the aspect of fascist youth choosing internationalism is highlighted. [26] Confrancesco, *Il mito europeo del fascismo (1939-1945)*, in "Storia Contemporanea", Bologna, Il Mulino, no. 1, year XIV, February 1983, pp. 5-45. [27] On Bottai and the other Fascist leaders mentioned, see Marco Innocenti, *I Gerarchia del fascismo*, Milan, Mursia, 1992. [28] See Davide Sabatini, *L'Internazionale di Mussolini. La diffusione del fascismo in Europa nel progetto di Asvero Gravelli*, Rome, Edizioni Tusculum, undated (although published in 1998). [29] Speech presented to the governors, federales, on October 27, 1930, quoted in Asvero Gravelli, *Panfascismo*, Rome, Nuova Europa, 1935, p. 59. [30] Gravelli, *Difesa dall'Europa e funzione antieuropea del fascismo*, Rome, Nuova Europa, 1932, p. 21. [31] *Ibid*, p. 53-55. [32] Gravelli, *Verso l'Internazionale fascista*, Rome, Nuova Europa, 1932, p. 225. [33] *Ibid* p. 226-227. [34] Quoted in Gravelli, *Panfascismo*, Rome, Nuova Europa, 1935, pp. 61-53. [35] *Universalità del fascismo*, Florence, 1933, p. 14, quoted by Ledeen, op. cit. 124. [36] *Universalità del fascismo*, Florence, 1933, p. 14, quoted by Ledeen, op. cit. 124. [37] Gravelli, *Europa con noi!*, Rome, Nuova Europa, 1933, p. 129 ff. [38] Coselschi, records of the meeting of the Commission pour l'Entente du Fascisme Universel, Amsterdam, 25-III, 1935, reproduced by Gisella Longo in "Storia Contemporanea", Bologna, 1996, no. 3, June, entitled *I tentative per la costituzione di un internazionale fascista: gli incontro di Amsterdam e di Montreux attraverso I verbali delle riunioni*, pp. 475-576. [39] Coselschi, Montreux 11-IX, 1935, reproduced in op. cit, p. 559.

[40] *Ibid*, p. 565. [41] Confrancesco, op. cit, p. 29-30. [42] Gravelli, *Panfascismo*, op. cit., p. 11. [43] G. Meschiari, *Spunti di politica estera*, Venice, Casa Editrice delle Edizioni Popolare, 1944. [44] Spampanato, op. cit., p. 688. [45] *Repubblica Sociale*, year I, no. 6, February 1945. [46] On Europeanism and Italian NR groups, see Orazio Ferrara, *El mito negato. Da Giovane Europa ad Avanguardia di Popolo. La destra erotica negli anni settanta*, Sarno, 1996 [47] Editor's note: this included a battalion also named after Aldo Resega. [48] National Union of IHR Combatants, editor's note. [49] An expert on trade union history in the fascist period, he is the author of numerous works on the subject: *La política social e sindical 1930-1938*, in *Annali della Economía Italiana*, coordinated by G. Rasi, Milan, 1983, Vol. VIII, 1, pp. 293 ff; *Il sindacalismo fascista. Dalla grande crisi alla caduta del regime (1930-1943)*, Rome, 1988. [50] As Renzo de Felice, Summo Pater of historians of Italian fascism, considered the greatest authority on this period, states. His revisionist theses have caused him several problems although he is of Jewish origin and a former member of the Communist Party. On the debate about the advisability of studying the IHR see Rojo y Negro, Barcelona, Ariel, 1996.

[51] Gaetan Pirou, *Georges Sorel (1847-1922)*, p. 34-35. [52] Santiago Montero Díaz, *Fascismo*, Cuadernos de Cultura, Valencia, 1932, p.25. [53] Rome, Settimo Sigillo, 1989. [54] Princeton University Press, 1995. [55] Vallecchi, Florence, 1937, p. 26. [56] Pietro Neglie, *Confronto: Il fascismo di sinistra*, public debate with Marco Tarchi on October 29, 1998, in Bologna, organized by the cultural department

of the City Council, reproduced in *Diorama Letterario*, June 2000, Florence, p. 12. [57] At the same conferences where Neglie and Tarchi debated there was also a presentation by Alessandro Soldani, Alessandro Pavolini: il partito fascista repubblicano, la sinistra fascista al potere. [58] Bologna, Il Mulino, 1996. [59] Mondadori, Milan, 1998. Also author of an interesting and no less pioneering essay on the figure of the frustrated fascist leader Marcello Galian, *La battaglia antiborghese di un fascista anarchico*, Rome, Bonacci Editore, 1988. [60] Stanis Ruinas, was the pseudonym of Giovanni Antonio de Rosas, from Sardinia (1899-1984). A journalist by profession and a well-known writer in the 1930s, he would serve in Spain as a war correspondent with the Italian Volunteer Corps during the Spanish Civil War. "For the glory of Rome and for the triumph of Falangist Spain," he wrote in the dedication of the book he wrote in 1939 after his return, *Vecchi e nuova Spagna*, Milan, Garzanti Editore, 1940. [61] For a demonstration of these principles on the misino side [a nickname for MSI members], see Giano Accame, *Il fascismo inmenso e rosso*, Rome, Settimo Sigillo, 1990; Enrico Landolfi, *Ciao, rossa Salò. Il crepúsculo libertario e socializzatore di Mussolini ultimo*, Rome, Edizioni dell'oleandro, 1996. [62] For an excellent work on this subject, see Orazio Ferrara, *Il mito begato da giovanne Europa ad Avanguardia di popolo. La destra eretica negli anni settanta*, Sarno, 1996. For Spanish-speaking readers, see Anonymous, *De Joven Europa a las Brigadas Rojas. Anti-Americanism y lògica de la tarea Revolucionario*, Alternativa Europea, 1996. [63] Translator's note: Italian expression of strong disagreement, similar to a whistle. [64] In the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* (Italian Fasci of Combat) is the seed of what would later become the National Fascist Party. The program reproduced here was first published in *Il Popolo d'Italia* on June 6, 1919, a newspaper founded and directed by Benito Mussolini. [65] Fascist Republican Party. [66] Translator's note: In this case the exploitation tax.