

The London School of Economics and Political Science

*FASCISTIZING TURIN: COMPROMISING WITH TRADITION
AND CLASHING WITH OPPOSITION*

Giovanni Graglia

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Abstract

The thesis focuses on the response of the population of the Piedmontese city of Turin to the rise of Fascism and to the regime's attempts to *fascistize* Italian society. Key concepts discussed in this thesis include regionalism, identity, local myths, forms of individual and group loyalty, passive resistance, and social mobilization – all factors often mentioned by historians looking at Turin but that have not yet been subject of a methodical study. This thesis also contributes to the ongoing historiographical debate on the nature of Fascist power by arguing that the dictatorship did not manage to fulfill its totalitarian aspirations and that the regime ultimately remained an authoritarian one. Moreover, this thesis highlights the overlooked concept of passive resistance and the way in which this limited the local consensus for the Fascist regime.

In order to offer a discussion of the extent to which Turinese society was *fascistized*, this thesis looks at numerous local social groups, at their attitude towards the regime, and at how the rise of Fascism changed their internal dynamics. The thesis begins with a discussion of the Turinese press, which works as an introduction to the climate of the city during the Fascist period and as a study of local media. The focus then shifts to the traditionalist institutions present in Turin and the way in which these came to terms – or locked horns – with the Fascist regime: the second chapter deals with the royal family and its Piedmontese origins, the third is dedicated to the Catholic Church, and the fourth is a case-study of the two expositions (in 1931 and 1933) of the Holy Shroud (a Catholic relic belonging to the royal family). Lastly, the fifth chapter studies the city's progressive forces, comparing the ways in which anti-fascist working-class and intellectual networks opposed the regime.

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List of Abbreviations

In the Main Text

ACI:	Azione Cattolica Italiana
ASCI:	Associazione Scout Cattolici Italiani
FIUC:	Federazione Italiana Uomini Cattolici
FUCI:	Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana
GC:	Gioventù Cattolica
GF:	Gioventù Femminile
GUF:	Gruppo Universitario Fascista
MinCulPop:	Ministero della Cultura Popolare
ONB:	Opera Nazionale Balilla
OND:	Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro
PNF:	Partito Nazionale Fascista
PPI:	Partito Popolare Italiano
UFCl:	Unione Femminile Cattolica Italiana

CS:	Casa Savoia
CSi:	Corrispondenza Sindone
CTAS:	Cultura, Turismo, Attività Sportive
CV:	Carte Varie
DF:	Direttorio Federale
DN:	Direttorio Nazionale
DGP:	Direzione Generale Propaganda
DGPS:	Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza
FF:	Fondo Fossati
FG:	Fondo Gamba
FP:	Fascicoli Personali
FPTG:	Fascicoli di Personalità e Testate Giornalistiche
FRPR:	Famiglia Reale, Poi Presidenza della Repubblica
ISTORETO:	Istituto Piemontese per la Storia della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea

In the Footnotes

ACI:	Azione Cattolica Italiana
ACS:	Archivio Centrale di Stato
AELCAC:	Autorità Ecclesiastiche Locali, Clero, Azione Cattolica
AF:	Archivi Fascisti
AOF:	Assistenza e Organizzazioni Fasciste
ASD:	Archivio Storico Diocesano
AST:	Archivio di Stato di Torino
ASUT:	Archivio Storico dell'Università di Torino
CIS:	Centro Internazionale Sindonologia
CP:	Carte Personali

MI:	Ministero dell'interno
MinCulPop:	Ministero della Cultura Popolare
NU.P.I.E.:	Nuclei di Propaganda in Italia e all'Estero
PD:	Politica Demografica
PNF:	Partito Nazionale Fascista
POP:	Partiti e Organizzazioni Politiche
PT:	Prefettura di Torino
PV:	Primo Versamento
SC:	Stampa Cattolica
SCA:	Scioglimento Circoli e Associazioni
SP:	Segreteria Politica
SPNP:	Situazione Politica Nelle Provincie
UCP:	Ufficio Confino Politico

Introduction

The cold shoulder given by the city of Turin to the Fascist regime is a recurring theme in the historiography of Fascist Italy. Ever since the 1970s both Italian and Anglo-Saxon historians have mentioned the challenges to the dictatorship presented by the city. However, the implications of these claims – often asserted rather than proved – have rarely been analyzed. This thesis will aim at shedding some light on this issue by looking at why and with what success Turin and its population resisted both the regime – either actively or passively – and the process of fascistization of local society.

One might wonder what is the purpose of a detailed case-study on a single city under the Fascist regime and whether its conclusive findings can make a meaningful contribution to the debate on the nature of the dictatorship. After all, Italy, even during the Fascist regime, was still very much the country of the *Cento Città*, each one with its peculiar characteristics, and the conclusions drawn from a study like this one can run the risk of being inapplicable to other Italian cities. Yet, over the past few years, city-studies have generated high interest: one of the best examples is Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert's *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919*, but also Pierre Purseigle's work on local mobilization during the First World War and Stefan Goebel and Derek Keene's *Cities into Battlefields – Metropolitan Scenarios, Experiences and Commemorations of Total War* constitute excellent examples of the importance of city-studies.¹ The local dimension, therefore, allows scholars to reach a better understanding of the way in which the institutional and political system affected society.²

¹ Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War – Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919*, vol. I and II, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 and 2007), Pierre Purseigle, 'Wither the local? Nationalization, modernization, and the mobilization of urban communities in England and France, c.1900-1918', in Oliver Zimmer and William Whyte (eds.), *Nationalism and the Reshaping of Urban Communities in Europe, 1848-1914*, (London: Palgrave, 2011), pp. 182-203, Stefan Goebel and Derek Keene (eds.), *Cities into Battlefields – Metropolitan Scenarios, Experiences and Commemorations of Total War*, (London: Ashgate, 2011).

² Tommaso Baris, 'Dalle Periferie al Centro: l'Apporto della Storia Locale all'Interpretazione del Regime Fascista', in Irsifar (ed.), *Centri e Periferie*, (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2007), p. 93.

Furthermore, the findings of this thesis, will be of use to the historian wishing to explore the social – and not just the political – power enjoyed by traditional Italian institutions (like the House of Savoy or the Catholic Church) throughout the Fascist period. Moreover, this thesis will help further the understanding of the way in which independent networks, often opposed to the regime like the Turinese intellectuals or dissenting groups among the local working-class, preserved their links even during the *Ventennio*. Furthermore, it will also be possible to look at an even bigger picture and reach a better understanding of the extent to which an urban environment can hamper or facilitate independent resistance to a top-down political process like that of the fascistization of Italian society and how this kind of resistance can induce a dictatorial government to potentially lose hope of ever completely controlling an hostile local environment.

The contributions made by this thesis will not be confined to the historiographical debate surrounding the Fascist regime and its actual power. This thesis will in fact aim at highlighting the importance of civic-society in Italian history and bring it to the fore. Whilst the available Anglo-Saxon literature on Fascist Italy has lately been moving towards social and cultural studies, the Italian works on the period are often still rather traditional political or military histories. This thesis, therefore, will contribute to solving this issue by offering a comprehensive cultural history of a city that is often mentioned, but rarely analyzed in full, in the available works published both in English and in Italian.

Totalitarianism, Fascist Power and Resistance

Of all the facets of the historiographical debate on the Fascist regime, the one that is most crucial for this thesis is that on the totalitarian aspirations of the dictatorship and whether these were ultimately fulfilled or not. Before looking at the historiographical debate on the

issue, it will be essential to define totalitarianism in the first place. In order to do this it is possible to look at what Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski identified – borrowing also from the works of Hannah Arendt – as the pillars of totalitarianism: an official ideology, a single hierarchical mass-party usually led by one man, monopolistic control of the armed and police forces (who, in turn, help controlling all aspects of the life of a citizen), and full state-control of the media and the economy.³ It is important to remember that these pillars should form the basis for popular support and consensus, in itself arguably the most crucial characteristic needed in order to assess the success (or the failure) of a totalitarian project.

Over the last two decades the success of the fascistization of Italian society has been the most controversial historiographical issue related to Italian Fascism and it is possible to identify three major strands in this debate. In the first place, there is the line of argument established by Renzo De Felice and more recently defended by Emilio Gentile, both historians who have come to see Italian Fascism as almost unquestionably totalitarian. The second strand is represented by the majority of the Italian historians, who have been profoundly influenced by what can be considered as a “metanarrative of totalitarianism”, whereby the term totalitarian is used without fully acknowledging its implications. These Italian historians in fact often do not actively enter the debate on the totalitarian nature of the dictatorship, and, despite their usage of the term “totalitarian”, even the evidence that they present often seems to paint Italian Fascism as ultimately authoritarian. Lastly, there are a number of foreign historians – most notably Juan J. Linz, R.J.B. Bosworth, and Paul Corner – who have challenged the position of Emilio Gentile by pointing at the many limits of the Fascist totalitarian project.

De Felice defined the Fascist regime as a totalitarian one – despite its imperfections – in his *Interpretations of Fascism*, but it was his protégé, Emilio Gentile, who has ultimately

³ Carl Friedrich, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 305, 341, 419, 437, Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (NY: Harcourt, 1966), pp. 305-483.

come to see his name tied to the idea of an Italian totalitarianism.⁴ In his works Gentile has come to see Italian Fascism both as a form of totalitarianism and of political religion.⁵ He has argued that Italian Fascism was a revolutionary movement that sought ‘the subordination, integration and homogenization of the governed on the basis of the integral politicization of existence’.⁶ What stands out here is the hint at the integration and homogenization of Italian society, something that will be challenged time and again in this thesis. The totalitarian aims of Italian Fascism – as identified by Gentile – are nearly unquestionable. What is questionable, however, is the degree to which these were achieved. In the third edition of his *La via Italiana al Totalitarismo – Il Partito e lo Stato nel regime Fascista*, Gentile has defended himself from the many criticisms he has received from abroad. In order to support his thesis he has used the arguments of Stanley G. Payne, who has claimed that the Fascist totalitarian project failed only at the institutional level.⁷ However, even Payne’s arguments can be questioned since he has seemed to assume that the regime enjoyed a remarkably high degree of consensus. Gentile has admitted that Italian totalitarianism was “imperfect”, but he has also claimed that it was not more “imperfect” than Nazi or Soviet totalitarianism, and this is yet another extremely controversial claim.⁸ As MacGregor Knox has pointed out, the Italian Fascist regime managed to unleash mass fanaticism to a much lesser extent than the Nazi dictatorship (although, according to Knox, Fascism’s revolutionary traits – despite its limited success in changing the Italian social structure – can potentially lead to it being considered a totalitarian dictatorship).⁹

Alberto De Bernardi, Patrizia Dogliani, and Romano Bracalini are three of those many Italian historians who have defended the “metanarrative of totalitarianism” despite often presenting evidence that seems to point in an opposite direction. De Bernardi, in the first

⁴ Renzo De Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 60-66.

⁵ Emilio Gentile, ‘Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation’, in Roger Griffin (ed) *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 33

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-4.

⁷ Emilio Gentile, *La Via Italiana al Totalitarismo – Il Partito e lo Stato nel Regime Fascista*, 3rd edition (Roma: Carocci, 2008), p. 311.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁹ MacGregor Knox, *To the Threshold of Power, 1922/33 Origins and Dynamics of the Fascist and National Socialist Dictatorships*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 11-2, 401.

place, has talked about a successful totalitarian project despite also describing what he has called an “authoritarian compromise” between the Fascist State and the conservative institutions of the country.¹⁰ Whilst the idea of an “authoritarian compromise” appears sensible, it is also a manifestation of the social power enjoyed – through the Fascist era – by organizations that, despite not being openly anti-fascist, were fully independent from the regime. De Bernardi has also argued that the Fascist propaganda machine was capable of creating a strong consensus, but, at the same time, that Fascist totalitarianism did not manage to establish a stable and homogeneous ruling elite (something that seems to be reasonable to expect of a totalitarian state with a mighty propaganda machine).¹¹ In De Bernardi’s work, the term totalitarianism appears to be an extremely volatile one: at points the Italian totalitarian project is well-established and moving forward, at others it is limited and unstable.¹² Moreover, De Bernardi, like most contemporary Italian historians, has not entered the debate on the totalitarian nature of the regime, but he has simply used the term, apparently oblivious of its implications and of the wider historiographical debate. Dogliani has also talked about a totalitarian dictatorship despite openly acknowledging a long list of problems and limits of Fascist state-control: she has mentioned the Catholic Church and the House of Savoy as institutions that contrasted Fascist totalitarianism, and she has also stressed the limits of censorship as well as the lack of foresight that the regime displayed by overlooking the importance of radio and cinema for more than a decade.¹³ Bracalini has defended the concept of an Italian totalitarianism, but he has also highlighted how the monarchy remained a strong symbol throughout the Fascist period (for example through the public celebration of the birthdays of the royal family and the preservation of the Royal March as one of the two official

¹⁰ Alberto De Bernardi, *Una Dittatura Moderna – Il Fascismo come Problema Storico*, 2nd ed. (Milano: Mondadori, 2006), pp. 165-173.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 173.

¹² *Ibid.*, 58, 135-7.

¹³ Patrizia Dogliani, *Il Fascismo degli Italiani – Una Storia Sociale*, (Torino: UTET, 2008), pp. 42, 46, 222, 225.

Italian national anthems) and how intellectuals and artists often enjoyed a high degree of freedom of expression.¹⁴

Real challenges to Gentile's position on totalitarianism have chiefly come from abroad. Juan J. Linz has been among the first and fiercest critics of Gentile. He has coined the term "arrested totalitarianism" to describe the situation in Fascist Italy, where the regime had its totalitarian aspirations curtailed by a number of pre-existing conservative institutions (the House of Savoy, the army, and the Catholic Church).¹⁵ R.J.B. Bosworth has also contributed to the debate by arguing that, throughout the Fascist period, the lives of the Italians were shaped more by family relations, age-groups, and regional backgrounds than by the regime.¹⁶ Michael Mann has highlighted how, in particular in the early years of the regime, it was 'a story of thousands, not millions – the paramilitary striking force of thousands of fascists and the betrayal of thousands among Italy's varied elites'.¹⁷ Paul Corner has done remarkable work of analyzing popular loyalty to the regime in the provinces. He has argued that Italian Fascism lost contact with the people it was meant to control in the provinces because of their apathy and because of the gap between the declared objectives of the dictatorship and their actual realization.¹⁸ Moreover, Corner has also looked at the way in which many Italians managed to preserve their privacy by only formally paying tribute to the regime (his study on the behaviour of the population during the *Adunate Oceaniche* and on the *Giornata della Fede*, the day in

¹⁴ Romano Bracalini, *Otto Milioni di Biciclette – La Vita degli Italiani nel Ventennio*, (Milano: Mondadori, 2007), pp. 14, 211, 261.

¹⁵ Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes* (London: Boudler, 2000), p. 7.

¹⁶ RJB Bosworth, 'Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 14, No.1 (2005), pp. 37-8, the strength of loyalty, identities and patterns of behaviour is also highlighted by Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: a History of Italy since 1796*, (New York: Allen Lane, 2007), p. 458.

¹⁷ Michael Mann, *Fascists*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 137.

¹⁸ Paul Corner, 'Fascist Italy in the 1930s: Popular Opinion in the Provinces', in Paul Corner (ed.), *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes: Fascism, Nazism, Communism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 134, 140.

1935 when Italian married couples were asked to donate their golden wedding rings to the motherland in exchange for a Fascist iron one, is particularly worthy of attention).¹⁹

A study on Turinese life and on Piedmontese identities under the dictatorship (just like virtually any other research on Fascist state-control, on individual loyalties during the regime, or on the organization of consensus) needs to show an awareness of the historiographical debate surrounding the totalitarian aspirations of the regime. Moreover, such a study can even make some important contributions to this ongoing debate by finally producing a satisfactory case-study of that regionalism that Bosworth has mentioned and that Corner (although focusing chiefly on Veneto and Emilia Romagna) has begun to look into.

A second issue that is essential to acknowledge before starting a discussion of Fascist social power is that of anti-fascism and its nature. The very meaning of anti-fascism is a concept that has troubled historians ever since the regime's collapse. It is vital to determine what actually meant to be an anti-fascist in order to assess the strength of popular support for the regime (in Piedmont just like in any other Italian region). Initially, historians tended to focus solely on active anti-fascism, whether armed or unarmed. The traditional interpretation, profoundly influenced by the memoir literature published after 1945 and by the Italian political climate of the 1960s, came to consider active anti-fascism as a very strong movement already before 1943 and as a mass-movement during the Resistance war.²⁰ A revision of this thesis came, again, with the works of De Felice, whose arguments were later summarized in his *Rosso e Nero*. De Felice challenged the traditional view according to which anti-fascism had evolved into a real mass-movement during the Resistance war: he did so by looking at the actual numbers of people directly involved in the fighting, and the figures he produced were clear indicators of a small movement that was not particularly strong.²¹

¹⁹ Paul Corner, 'Italian Fascism: Organization, Enthusiasm, Opinion', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 15, Issue 3, (2010), p. 379-381, 386.

²⁰ Guido Quazza, *Resistenza e Storia d'Italia*, (Milano: ISEDI, 1976), p. 70.

²¹ Renzo De Felice, *Rosso e Nero*, (Milano: Baldini & Castoldi, 1995).

Thanks also to the contribution of foreign scholars, the debate on the nature of anti-fascism has widened since the 1970s. Luisa Passerini clearly indicated that the lack of an active political opposition should not have been confused with an established consensus for the regime, thus introducing the idea of “a-fascism” as something that served as an indirect way of weakening the hold on power of the Fascist regime.²² Whilst foreign historians, like Edward R. Tannenbaum and Doug Thompson, from the 1970s onwards looked at the practical limitations of state-control in Fascist Italy, Italian historians used their arguments and evidence to identify a number of different strands within Italian anti-fascism.²³ Guido Quazza has divided anti-fascist trends in a chronological way, arguing that these all joined together only after 1943: he identified a first anti-fascism which was active and political, that had been operating underground and outside of the Italian borders throughout the dictatorship, a second anti-fascism, younger and not organized, that had developed out of the popular discontent caused by the regime’s inability to maintain its promises, and a third anti-fascism, born only in 1943, of those conservatives who stopped defending Fascism when they saw the regime approaching its end.²⁴ Marco Revelli, on the other hand, has divided anti-fascism in thematic currents: the intellectual anti-fascism that constituted the backbone of the entire anti-fascist movement, the social anti-fascism that inspired wider sections of the population to oppose the regime, and, lastly, the ethical anti-fascism upon which the Italian Republic was later based.²⁵ Works on anti-fascism in other European countries have also been crucial in widening the scope of the debate on anti-fascism in Italy. One of the most influential foreign authors has been, in this case, Harry R. Kedward, who, with his works on Vichy France, established that ‘being a resister was often living an ordinary life and working in a conventional job, but doing both in such a

²² Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: the Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 65.

²³ Edward R. Tannenbaum, *The Fascist Experience: Italian Society and Culture, 1922-1945*, (New York: Basic Books, 1972), Doug Thompson, *State-control in Fascist Italy: Culture and Conformity, 1925-1943* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).

²⁴ Quazza, *Resistenza*, p. 116.

²⁵ Giovanni De Luna and Marco Revelli, *Fascismo-Antifascismo – Le Idee, le Interpretazioni*, (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1995), pp. 38-48.

way as to favour the cause of Resistance and disadvantage the cause of Vichy and the Germans'.²⁶

With the exception of Luisa Passerini's books on the working-class in Turin, however, works on anti-fascism in Piedmont still focus mostly on active political anti-fascism. The absence of a broader and detailed analysis of a-fascism (which could incorporate or overlap with manifestations of loyalty towards the Catholic Church and the House of Savoy) and of more indirect forms of anti-fascism, which for example operated through independent Catholic organizations, the – not always effectively censored – press, or the preservation of independent working-class or intellectual networks, is another gap in local historiography that desperately needs to be filled and which this thesis will address for Turin.

"Piemontesismo"

Obviously, another issue that will be central to this thesis will be that of a Piedmontese identity (or identities) and its relation to Italian identity. References to *piemontesismo* or *piemontesità* have continuously been made in the main works on the local history of the region and of the city of Turin. Yet, local historians have generally failed to analyze the implications of these feelings in terms of the popularity and strength of the Fascist regime in Turin. For many years Valerio Castronovo has been the main point of reference for the general historiography on Piedmont. His two most relevant works in this area are *Il Piemonte* and *Torino*.²⁷ In 1987 Umberto Levra and Nicola Tranfaglia made an important contribution to the available historiography on the history of Turin at the dawn of Fascism with their edited

²⁶ Harry Roderick Kedward, *Occupied France – Collaboration and Resistance 1940-1944*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), p. 55.

²⁷ Valerio Castronovo, *Il Piemonte* (Torino: Einaudi, 1977), Valerio Castronovo, *Torino*, (Bari: Laterza, 1987).

collection of essays *Torino fra Liberalismo e Fascismo*.²⁸ The books Castronovo published in the 1970s and 1980s, however, remained unparalleled until 1998, when the multi-volume *Storia di Torino*, again edited by Nicola Tranfaglia, was published by Einaudi.²⁹

The principal feature that is common to both the works of Castronovo and the essays edited by Tranfaglia is the emphasis on a sense of *piemontesità* developed by the region's population ever since the Risorgimento. Castronovo often discusses the limited horizons of many people in Piedmont, mainly worried about local problems.³⁰ He raises important points about the nature of the press in the region, in particular when he draws a comparison between the *Corriere della Sera* in Milan – illustrating how it was inspired by the wide coverage of national and international events in *The Times* – and *La Stampa* in Turin – and how this daily looked for inspiration at the provincial German newspapers.³¹ Moreover, Castronovo also focuses on the conservative/monarchical allegiances of the bulk of the right-wing in the region.³² In Tranfaglia's edited collection, Valeria Sgambati's essay 'Il Regime Fascista a Torino' highlights the slowness and incompleteness of the process of total fascistization of a local system in which anti-fascist values remained strongly rooted, even during the period that came to be considered as the "years of consensus" for the dictatorship.³³ Bruno Mantelli's 'L'Antifascismo a Torino' and Angelo D'Orsi's 'La Vita Culturale e i Gruppi Intellettuali' both look at the relationship that the intellectual elites of the city had with the Fascist regime. Their essays focus on the underground publication of newspapers and pamphlets during the dictatorship, on the growth of a tightly-knit circle of anti-fascist friends, their contacts with the

²⁸ Umberto Levrà and Nicola Tranfaglia (eds.), *Torino fra Liberalismo e Fascismo*, (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1987).

²⁹ Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1998).

³⁰ Castronovo, *Piemonte*, pp. 49-50.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 365.

³³ Valeria Sgambati, 'Il Regime Fascista a Torino', in Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino – vol. VIII – Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1915-1945)*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), pp. 181, 201, 208.

community of exiled anti-fascists (in particular in Paris), and their intellectual curiosity for the latest developments on the European scene.³⁴

It is clear that both Castronovo and Tranfaglia paint the picture of a particular region that had developed in large measure independently from the other Italian areas. After all Piedmont had been the driving force behind Italian unification, but also behind the process of industrialization of the country. The comments on the frequent manifestations of *piemontesismo*, however, open the ground to other questions that are not always answered by these key works of the historiography on Piedmont. The reader is left wondering whether acts of *piemontesismo* directly obstructed the development of an Italian civic culture in Piedmont and whether in the first half of the 20th century the Italian identity and the Piedmontese one were mutually exclusive. The impression is that both Castronovo and Tranfaglia believe that, by the advent of Fascism, not much had changed in the region since D'Azeglio affirmed, shortly after the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy, that Italy had been made but not yet Italians. However, questions on the degree of identification that the Piedmontese people felt with Rome and the Italian institutions during the Fascist era are very rarely openly addressed in these books, arguably in part due to the fact that this is still a particularly sensitive topic in contemporary Italian politics.

Another issue raised by these works that deserves more attention is that of the mental maps of the Piedmontese people. Castronovo focuses on the limited and local interests of a sizeable part of the population, but in the essays edited by Tranfaglia the reader comes across a discussion of the intellectual population of the region's deep awareness of European cultural and political trends. The chief issue here is how this contraposition came about. Was it the logical consequence of the criticisms expressed by the local intellectuals regarding the rest of the population of the region – that they were guilty of worrying only about those matters that

³⁴ Brunello Mantelli, 'L'Antifascismo a Torino', in Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino – vol. VIII – Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1915-1945)*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), pp. 263-311, Angelo D'Orsi, 'La Vita Culturale e i Gruppi Intellettuali', in Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino – VIII – Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1915-1945)* (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), pp. 499-622.

were affecting their lives directly and on a daily basis? Were Turinese intellectuals curious about European developments mainly because France and Germany were a much closer reality, both geographically and culturally, than Campania and Sicily? Arguably, these two sets of mental maps – limited local ones for the majority of the population, European interconnected ones for the intellectuals – were two sides of the same coin. Both can in fact be seen as manifestations of *piemontesismo*, with the majority of the population feeling a sense of detachment from the rest of the country, whilst the intellectuals believed, much like Cavour during the Risorgimento, that in order to prosper Piedmont had to look for help and inspiration beyond the Alps.

The theme of Piedmontese identity is touched upon by virtually all historians of the region, however an adequate analysis of it has not yet been produced (Passerini is the one historian who comes closest to doing so, but she only focuses on a small section of the working-class). A study on Piedmontese identity during the Fascist period could help answer many questions regarding the degree of success of state-control, the very nature of anti-fascism in the region (and to what extent Piedmont became one of the cradles of Italian anti-fascism because of regionalist feelings and loyalties), and the degree of identification that people in the region felt with the Italian state in the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, the contrast between Piedmontese values and Fascism can also raise issues regarding the passive reinforcement of a local identity, whereby a local identity gains strength because of its opposition to a national one. Adrian Lyttelton's essay 'History: the Construction of Regional Identities' (in Carl Levy's edited collection *Italian Regionalism: History, Identity and Politics*) rightfully places the birth of regionalism as a political force in most Italian regions in the post-1945 period and argues that until 1945 the city remained the main focus of political loyalty.³⁵ This thesis, however, will argue that Piedmontese regionalism (although of a social kind rather than the political one that Levy's edited collection focuses primarily upon) had

³⁵ Adrian Lyttelton, 'History: the Construction of Regional Identities', in Carl Levy (ed.) *Italian Regionalism: History, Identity and Politics*, (Oxford: Berg, 1996), p. 33.

begun to emerge before the end of the Second World War.³⁶ Just as, according to Lyttleton, nationalism grew after the Risorgimento as a consequence of the resentment that small cities felt towards the larger ones that had overpowered them until the early 19th century, it can be said that during the Fascist era Piedmontese regionalism grew as a consequence of the region's bitterness for its loss of prestige on a national level (and for the loss of importance of the House of Savoy, the institution that most represented the region). In the case of Turin during the Fascist era, therefore, the focuses of socio-political loyalty appeared to be the city and the region more than the nation.

Methodology

This thesis will consist of five interlinked chapters, each describing and analyzing a different piece of the Turinese social jigsaw. The chapters will be devoted to different parts of local society, to their actions, and to the complexities of their respective relations with the Fascist regime from the March on Rome until 1943. Since many of the issues discussed in these chapters have often been either ignored or overlooked by historians, inspiration has been frequently drawn from studies that relate to other countries or regions. Nevertheless, each chapter will present a discussion of the key available literature in its introduction. This thesis aims at painting a clear and nuanced picture of Turinese society during the Fascist era. The social groups described in the chapters can be seen as generally sharing a similar set of "Piedmontese values" – determination, hard-work, seriousness, independence – as well as many of the pitfalls often associated with those regional values – what can appear as an exaggerated yearning for solitude, over-confidence, the longing for a glorious past that had vanished by the Fascist period, and an occasionally excessive stubbornness. Yet, in spite of a

³⁶ Carl Levy, 'Introduction', in Carl Levy (ed.) *Italian Regionalism: History, Identity and Politics*, (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 1-30.

number of similarities, the various Turinese social groups fundamentally maintained and defended their own differences, as it will be highlighted throughout the thesis. The result of all this was the preservation of a local society that – despite being based on shared core values – was also highly fragmented, and this fragmentation was in itself another obstacle to the Fascist attempts to infiltrate and control the Turinese population.

The first chapter of this thesis will be dedicated to the local press, to its process of fascistization (whether complete or not), and to the individual agendas of the various newspapers. This chapter will also be a way to introduce – via their newspapers and journals – some of the social groups that will be analyzed later in the thesis. The chapter will look at openly anti-fascist newspapers like those of local intellectuals Piero Gobetti and Antonio Gramsci and at the effect of their closures in the early years of the regime; at *La Stampa*, the Turinese newspaper *par excellence*, and its complex (and ultimately incomplete) process of fascistization; at Christian newspapers (whether Catholic or Waldensian) and their veiled (or not so veiled) moral critiques of the regime; and lastly at the local Gioventù Universitaria Fascista (GUF) and the calls in its own pro-regime newspaper *Vent'Anni* for local party hierarchs to truly Fascistize the city without reaching compromises with pre-fascist elites and conservative groups. This chapter will show how the Fascist regime successfully managed to crush small newspapers but had to come to terms with larger ones (like *La Stampa*). Moreover, it will look at the limited success that the regime encountered in winning over those publications that were considered to be a-fascist and its ultimate failure to reduce the number of newspapers and journals in the city (something that would have allowed the dictatorship to censor the local press much more efficiently).

After the first chapter, the focus will shift onto the conservative and traditional forces in local society. The second chapter will look at the glorification of one of the most important institutions in the city (yet, also, one of the least studied): the House of Savoy. The bulk of the sources used for this chapter came either from the Archivio Centrale di Stato in Rome

(Ministero dell'Interno, Archivi Fascisti, and Real Casa) or from the Archivio di Stato di Torino (Prefettura). The chapter will not present a traditional political account of the history of the monarchy in Turin throughout the Fascist era (an extremely arduous task considering the fact that most of the private documents of the members of the House of Savoy remain unavailable), but rather it will offer an analysis of popular manifestations of monarchism and of the social power enjoyed by the ruling family in the city (factors clearly crucial when assessing the extent to which the Fascist regime fulfilled its totalitarian goals at the local level). The chapter will highlight the constant presence of members of the House of Savoy in Turin, in sharp opposition to the extremely rare visits of Mussolini, and it will look at public recognitions of monarchic power coming both from above (from Fascist hierarchs, with their own attempts at fascistizing the House of Savoy and the history of the Risorgimento) and from below (from the Turinese population), and at some of those actions that helped preserve the heritage of the ruling family in the city throughout the Fascist era. The chapter will show how, in Turin, the House of Savoy came to be glorified and sacralized almost in religious terms (something that Gentile has argued only happened for the Fascist regime).³⁷ All this will be essential in order to reach a better understanding of the interlinked local myths of the House of Savoy and of the glorious past of the region. An assessment of both the message and the strength of these myths will be crucial in an analysis of the ambitions of social control of the Fascist dictatorship and of whether these were satisfied or not.

The third chapter will then look at the Catholic Church and its strong social power over the Turinese population during the Fascist era, in particular in reference to its capacity to organize and mobilize local society. This chapter has relied extensively on the sources of the Archivio Storico Diocesano di Torino (Carte Varie, Fondo Luigi Gamba, and Fondo Maurilio Fossati) as well as on church bulletins and pamphlets of the period. The chapter will analyze the complex relationship between the Turinese Catholic Church and the Fascist regime, as well as the extent to which both high prelates and parish priests managed to keep themselves from

³⁷ Emilio Gentile, *Il Culto del Littorio*, (Roma: Laterza, 1993), pp. 147, 287, 301-6.

entering political debate (whether to support or to challenge the regime). The most crucial sections of the chapter, however, will be those that present a discussion of the Catholic attempts to mobilize local society for religious purposes and of the popular response to the policies of the Turinese Catholic Church. The success of Catholic organizations – in particular the ones aimed at the local youth, with subdivisions that closely resembled those of their Fascist counterparts – represented a serious blow for a dictatorship whose ambitions of total social control were essentially based on the regimentation of the Italian population and on constant displays of popular support. Moreover, this chapter will also contribute to raising important questions about the applicability of a number of claims made by Gentile in his *// Culto del Littorio* about the decline of traditional religion and about the creation of a mystical aura for the regime. It is however important to remember that, on a national level, both the Catholic Church and the House of Savoy contributed – either with apparent signs of support for the regime or with their tacit consensus – to strengthening the Fascist hold on power. On the other hand, at the local level – at least in the case of Turin – they often acted against the regime, or not in accordance with it, in order to preserve their independence and their local bases of support.

The fourth chapter will then conclude the section of the thesis dedicated to the forces of traditionalism in Piedmont by offering a case-study of two events that brought the House of Savoy and the Catholic Church particularly close: the two expositions of the Holy Shroud of 1931 and 1933. The expositions were the first of the century and led to the mobilization of millions of people on both occasions (either as organizers of the events or as pilgrims). This chapter will analyze the symbolic significance of the relic for its owner (the House of Savoy), for the Catholic Church and for the Turinese population before moving on to a discussion of the waves of mysticism and spiritualism that hit the city during these events and of the ways in which the ruling family sought its own public sacralization thanks to the linen. Most of all, this chapter will present a comparison between the two expositions of the Shroud and the three visits to Turin made by Mussolini, highlighting the clashes between the process of mobilization

for a relic (something that linked back to Catholic medieval traditions) and Fascist reactionary modernism.³⁸ This comparison will go beyond the simple and rather dry (not to mention easy to tamper with) figures of the number of people involved in the events as it will present a qualitative discussion of the way in which the events impacted upon the local population and it will, once again, raise questions about the applicability – at least at the local level – of some of the claims made by Gentile in his *Il Culto del Littorio*. The chapters dedicated to the forces of Piedmontese traditionalism will highlight how, in the words of Bosworth, ‘Italian homes may have contained images of the Duce but portraits of the Popes, Mary, Christ and the holy saints, the King, the other royals and a slew of not reliably Fascist lay saints, of whom Garibaldi was the most loved and widespread, could also be found on apartment walls’.³⁹

The final chapter of the thesis will then shift away from the traditionalist forces operating within Turinese society and move on to an analysis of the role (and the preservation of) independent networks which often openly contested the regime’s values: the local intellectuals and the Turinese working class. This fifth chapter of the thesis will highlight how the dictatorship tried to break these resisting networks in similar ways: firstly by trying to fully control their process of cultural formation and growth (through school reforms aimed at regimenting the learning process of young intellectuals and through Fascist organizations aimed at giving the dictatorship increased control over workers’ free-time), secondly by attempting to foster loyalty by bureaucratic means (either public displays of loyalty such as compulsory oaths for academics or by imposing party membership), and thirdly by sharpening its repressive tools once the first two approaches appeared to have encountered only limited success by the mid-1930s. This chapter will also present a discussion of the ways in which the regime managed to enter into the private lives – and into the households – of resisting intellectuals and workers alike, coupled with an analysis of the way in which these networks’

³⁸ For a definition of reactionary modernism see Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

³⁹ R.J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy – Life Under the Dictatorship – 1915-1945*, (London: Allen Lane, 2005), p. 327.

links with France helped them resist the attempted fascistization of local society. For its sections dedicated to the local intelligentsia, this chapter has benefitted greatly from the vast array of published primary sources available and from the personal papers of many prominent intellectuals that are kept at the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi, the Centro Studi Piero Gobetti, and the Istituto Piemontese per la Storia della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea. The bulk of the archival material related to the working-class, on the other hand, has come either from the Archivio Centrale di Stato in Rome (Ministero dell'Interno – Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza) or from the Archivio di Stato di Torino (Prefettura).

Each chapter, therefore, will analyze a piece of the complex Turinese social jigsaw during the Fascist period. The picture that will be drawn by all these chapters will be that of a city with a highly fragmented society and with a number of social groups that presented different challenges to the dictatorship. The first chapter will highlight the problems that the regime encountered in silencing and controlling local media (one of the pillars of totalitarianism identified by Friedrich and Brzezinski). The section of the thesis devoted to the traditional institutions in Turin will then start by looking at the way in which manifestations of public loyalty towards the House of Savoy weakened the social power of the regime, at how the local myth of the ruling family and of the glorious past of the region hampered the legitimacy of the palingenetic metanarrative of the regime, and, overall, at how all this contributed to the preservation of a lay cult that rivaled the Fascist *Culto del Littorio*, as identified by Emilio Gentile. The third chapter will analyze the way in which the success of the Catholic organizations directly affected that of the Fascist ones, and it will highlight how the Catholic Church presented a spiritual and transcendental threat that the dictatorship, with its secular power, was not fully equipped to face. The chapter on the expositions of the Holy Shroud, then, will present the House of Savoy and the Catholic Church as institutions working towards a common goal independently of the Fascist regime, but it will also provide a discussion of the way in which the House of Savoy achieved its sacralization. The section of the thesis dedicated to the anti-fascist networks in Turin will then highlight the many difficulties

encountered by the Fascist regime in entering and changing local society. The chapter will show the ineffectiveness of the dictatorial policies for the control of culture and it will also highlight the many different ways in which the local population could resist Fascism and, therefore, partially deprive the regime of that consensus that was essential for the dictatorship in order to reach its aims of total social control.

Obviously, however, there will be factors that will need to be left out of this thesis. This thesis will only indirectly touch upon the age-old question of which class constituted the backbone of the Fascist regime, as its aim is that of identifying those social groups that actually prevented the dictatorship from achieving its totalitarian ambitions. Moreover, this thesis will also not enter into the debate on the revolutionary or conservative nature of Fascism (although, at times, it will be necessary to highlight the fact that in certain cases a high degree of continuity with the pre-Fascist period was in itself a demonstration of the limits of the regime's ability to infiltrate and change local society since, as Drath highlighted, totalitarianism is 'decisively revolutionary').⁴⁰ Another factor that will be largely overlooked is Fascist paramilitary violence in the city, except in some of those cases in which this violence caused an adverse reaction in the population that can be interpreted as a display of the limits of the consensus for the regime. Lastly, this thesis will not look at the historiographical debate surrounding three of those problematic dualisms that characterized the Fascist dictatorship: the dualism between Fascist State and Fascist party and the debate on which institution was ultimately responsible for the fascistization of Italian society, the dualism between *prefetti* and *federali* and the debate on which figure truly represented the highest form of power at the provincial level, and, lastly, the dualism between Mussolini and the Fascist State and the debate regarding which of the two actually commanded the loyalty of the Italians, as these

⁴⁰ Reported in Knox, *Threshold of Power*, p. 12.

tend to be more of a reflection of the chaotic way in which the regime pursued its aims rather than a reflection of the way in which the local population responded to Fascist policies.⁴¹

⁴¹ The most detailed study of these dualisms, together with an analysis of the available historiography, is Marco Palla (ed.), *Lo Stato Fascista*, (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 2001).

1. Censoring Turin: The Press and Fascist State Control

As Maurizio Cesari has pointed out, soon after the seizure of power the Fascist regime identified the three key steps for asserting the power of the Fascist State over the Italian press. In the first place, obviously, anti-fascist newspapers had to be forcefully silenced. Aligning a-fascist newspapers with the government's line of action was the second task that needed to be completed. The third and last step was to reduce the overall number of newspapers and journals in order to ensure a stricter governmental control of the press.⁴² The regime claimed to have taken all these steps, thus ultimately successfully abolishing freedom of the press, between 1924 and 1926 – as testified by most newspapers of the time.⁴³

The case of the press in Turin, however, deserves special attention. The most ferocious anti-fascist newspapers of Piero Gobetti and Antonio Gramsci – *La Rivoluzione Liberale* and *L'Ordine Nuovo* – ceased to be published in 1925, but Gobetti's *Il Baretto* (a journal that endorsed a more subtly "cultural" anti-fascism rather than a directly "political" one) was allowed to survive until 1928.⁴⁴ *La Stampa*, moreover, despite its strong criticisms of the regime until 1925, could not be defeated with a single blow: its life throughout the dictatorship turned out to be a 20-year long and ever-changing compromise between the interests of the government, those of one of the most powerful Italian industrialists (Giovanni Agnelli, founder of FIAT), and the professionalism and dedication of a small number of nearly incorruptible journalists.⁴⁵ A-fascist Turinese newspapers were not easy to control either: a number of these – most notably *La Voce dell'Operaio* and *Il Momento* – were organs of the Catholic Church, and, despite not directly attacking the regime from 1926 onwards, they remained organs of an

⁴² Maurizio Cesari, *La Censura nel Periodo Fascista*, (Napoli: Liguori, 1978), p. 16

⁴³ For the reactions in Turin, see in particular: *La Stampa*, July 9, 1924, p. 1, and *Rivoluzione Liberale*, July 22, 1924

⁴⁴ The local historian who has best analyzed the works and ideals of Gramsci and Gobetti has been Paolo Spriano. On the topic, see in particular: Paolo Spriano, *Gramsci e Gobetti*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1977).

⁴⁵ Despite the fact that no official history of *La Stampa* has been published, an analysis of the process of fascistization of the newspaper is available in: Giancarlo Tartaglia, *Un Secolo di Giornalismo Italiano: Storia della Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana*, (Milano: Mondadori, 2008).

institution whose ambitions of social control often clashed with Fascist ones.⁴⁶ Lastly, the press in Turin was more lively than anywhere else in Italy, partly because of the cultural climate of the city, and partly because, by the 1920s and 1930s, Piedmont had been the most highly literate Italian region for decades.⁴⁷ Reducing the number of local publications, therefore, proved to be an extremely complex task for the regime. The newspaper that best reported and analyzed many of the problems related to the process of fascistization of the Turinese press was a Fascist journal – *Vent'Anni* – the organ of the local GUF (Gioventù Universitaria Fascista).⁴⁸ This chapter will analyze the case of *Vent'Anni*, rather than that of the other fully Fascist Turinese newspaper *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, because the weekly of the local GUF provided insightful critiques of the regime, whilst *La Gazzetta del Popolo* appeared to be just a mouthpiece of the dictatorship.

This chapter will look at the degree of success of the regime's steps – as identified by Cesari – to fascistize the Turinese press and thus use it to mould public opinion. Firstly it will focus on those anti-fascist newspapers that were effectively silenced during the first years of the dictatorship. It will then look at the complex evolution of *La Stampa* before turning its attention to local a-fascist newspapers. The chapter will then end with an analysis of *Vent'Anni* and the implications of the dissatisfaction often expressed on its pages by local young Fascists. The case of academic journals, and their high degree of freedom throughout the dictatorship, will be discussed in the chapter dedicated to the anti-fascist intellectual networks in Turin because of the limited circulation of these publications.

⁴⁶ No study of *Il Momento* has been published, and the only available study of *La Voce dell'Operaio* has been published only locally: Giovenale Dotta, *La Voce dell'Operaio – Un Giornale Torinese tra Chiesa e Mondo del Lavoro (1876-1933)*, (Effatà: Torino, 2006).

⁴⁷ Piero Gobetti, *La Rivoluzione Liberale - Saggio sulla Lotta Politica in Italia*, Gaspare De Caro (ed) (Torino: Einaudi, 1966), also in Piero Gobetti, *Opere Complete di Piero Gobetti – Volume Primo, Scritti Politici*, Paolo Spriano (ed.) (Torino: Einaudi, 1969), 'Libro Primo – L'Eredità del Risorgimento', p. 925.

⁴⁸ Despite being an extremely useful source in order to assess the success of the fascistization of the Italian press, *Vent'Anni* only receives occasional mentions even in local studies. In the available literature published in English the newspaper's contents are briefly discussed in: Doug Thompson, *State Control in Fascist Italy: Culture and Conformity, 1925-1943* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 114-6.

The number of newspapers listed in this introduction already suggests a couple of factors that should be kept in mind whilst reading this chapter. Firstly, the proliferation of local newspapers and journals throughout the Fascist period was a clear reflection of the – relatively – high degree of literacy in the city and of its vibrant cultural climate. Fully censoring and controlling the Turinese press, therefore, would appear as an extremely arduous task for the Fascist regime, despite the general assumption that dictatorships have more well-oiled censorship systems than democratic governments. Secondly, the fact that the newspapers analyzed in this chapter covered the entire socio-political spectrum is evidence of a fragmented local society, a society characterized by a series of groups with a well-defined identity that pre-dated the Fascist regime. Successfully infiltrating a fragmented society is not an easy task for any government, let alone one with totalitarian aspirations.

The Anti-Fascist Newspapers of Piero Gobetti and Antonio Gramsci

In 1925, thanks to the power given to him by the Fascist government, the Prefetto Agostino D'Adamo stopped the publication of both *La Rivoluzione Liberale* and *L'Ordine Nuovo*.⁴⁹ In 1926, following the premature end of their newspapers, Gobetti went into self-exile in France (where he would die soon afterwards) and Gramsci was arrested.⁵⁰ Despite the fact that the journalistic activity of Gobetti and Gramsci was cut short by the Fascist regime, their experiences are still worthy of attention for a variety of reasons: firstly, their approach to the regime reflected that of a conspicuous portion of local intellectuals and the wide array of anti-fascist journals and pamphlets that circulated in Turin throughout the 1920s and 1930s always paid homage to *La Rivoluzione Liberale* and *L'Ordine Nuovo*; secondly, Gramsci's fascination

⁴⁹ Suspension of *L'Ordine Nuovo* Reported on *La Stampa*, March 19, 1925, p. 6, Suspension of *La Rivoluzione Liberale* Reported on *La Stampa*, November 11, 1925, p. 6.

⁵⁰ For the last letter written by Gobetti before his self-exile: Piero Gobetti, 'L'Ultima Visione di Torino', in Pianciola, Cesare, and Polito, Pietro (eds.), *Perchè Gobetti – Giornata di Studio su Piero Gobetti (Torino, 16 Aprile 1991)* (Roma: Piero Lacaita, 1993), p.164

with the industrial workers and his attempts at reaching out to the working-class remained unparalleled by any Fascist publication in Piedmont under the regime; lastly, the intransigence of Gobetti's own anti-fascism was often linked back by him to a kind of "Piedmontese identity".

As Lino Pertile has argued, 'it was around Gramsci and Gobetti and the journals they founded and edited in Turin – *L'Ordine Nuovo*, *Il Baretto*, *La Rivoluzione Liberale* – that the most progressive elements of the younger Italian intelligentsia were to be found'.⁵¹ Gramsci and Gobetti often collaborated, united by their anti-fascism, despite their different political allegiances.⁵² The regime was quick in identifying their newspapers as extremely dangerous enemies of the Fascist State: in 1923, in a telegram sent to the Prefetto Enrico Palmieri, Mussolini defined *La Rivoluzione Liberale* as 'uno dei più perfidi nemici del presente Governo'.⁵³ Because of the threat that their newspapers represented for the stabilization of Fascism in Piedmont, Gobetti's and Gramsci's journalistic activity was short-lived. Many members of the editorial boards of *La Rivoluzione Liberale* and *L'Ordine Nuovo*, however, kept on organizing meetings throughout the Fascist era: they illegally published pamphlets and journals and also spread anti-fascist publications – in particular the *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* of the early 1930s – that were coming in from France.⁵⁴

As Emiliana P. Noether has noted, however the Fascist regime tried to establish consensus, 'men could not be stopped from thinking'.⁵⁵ This was particularly true in the case of the journalists who had worked for Gobetti and Gramsci: the vast majority of them kept their mentors' ideals alive, either legally (important collaborators, like Barbara Allason, wrote for *La*

⁵¹ Lino Pertile, 'Fascism and Literature', in David Forgacs (ed.), *Rethinking Italian Fascism: Capitalism, Populism, and Culture* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986), p. 167.

⁵² Examples of this collaboration can be found in: Antonio Gramsci, *Scritti 1915-1921*, Sergio Caprioglio (ed.) (Milano: Il corpo, 1968).

⁵³ Telegram n. 3122, sent on March 8, 1923, 8 p.m., by Mussolini to the Prefetto of Turin Enrico Palmieri, in 'Piero Gobetti in Alcuni Documenti di Mussolini', in Renzo De Felice (ed.), *Intellettuali di Fronte al Fascismo – Saggi e Note Documentarie* (Roma: Bonacci, 1985), p. 253, translated as 'one of the most perfidious enemies of the present Government'.

⁵⁴ Barbara Allason, *Memorie di una Antifascista, 1919-1940* (Milano: Avanti!, 1961), p. 163.

⁵⁵ Emiliana P. Noether, 'Italian Intellectuals under Fascism', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Dec., 1971), p. 630.

Stampa until the 1930s, and, as it has already been noted, Gobetti's *Il Baretto* was published until 1928) or underground (with the publication of pamphlets like *Voci d'Officina* and *Il Goliardo Rosso*).⁵⁶ Gobetti and Gramsci's newspapers did not last long under Fascism, but they inspired their readership to take matters in its own hands and to constantly analyze what was being said and what was being omitted by the press under the regime: the Italian population was supposed to defend those ideas that it had elaborated 'con la meditazione e con lo studio', the two newspapers were open 'inviti al sovversivismo' as an article on *La Rivoluzione Liberale* was titled, and, as Gobetti had already declared in 1924, 'In regime di stampa imbavagliata il vero articolista è il lettore: egli deve leggere tra le righe'.⁵⁷ The message that the Turinese readership was meant to read between the newspapers' lines left its mark in the city, and it was remembered even after the closure of Gobetti and Gramsci's newspapers. As an anonymous Turinese wrote to the director of *La Stampa*: 'So bene che non può essere libero, so bene che deve scrivere non ciò che pensa, ma ciò che si impone'.⁵⁸ This pursuit of active anti-fascism was diametrically opposite to the "passive Fascism" endorsed by the short-lived *Il Piemonte* (a philo-fascist newspaper published in Turin in the early 1920s): *La Rivoluzione Liberale* openly attacked *Il Piemonte*, whose editor rhetorically wondered in October 1923 whether a reader 'ha proprio bisogno di occuparsi di politica? Non può dedicare invece i suoi ritagli di tempo al giuoco delle bocce? O a quello non meno ricreativo del tresette? Non gli basta che altri vi pensi per lei?'.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Voci D'Officina* was published in 1931 thanks to the efforts of Aldo Garosci and Mario Andreis, former collaborators of *Il Baretto*, *Il Goliardo Rosso* was published by Velio Spano in 1931; one of the most meaningful articles published by Barbara Allason on *La Stampa* is: Barbara Allason, 'Lessing, il Buon Poeta del "Nathan"', *La Stampa*, September 28, 1928

⁵⁷ Giuseppe Prezzolini, 'Azione Politica', *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, May 4, 1922, translated as 'with reflection and study', Augusto Monti, 'Inviti al Sovversivismo', *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, June 17, 1924, translated as 'Intitations to Subversion', Header on *Rivoluzione Liberale*, July 22, 1924, p.1, translated as 'Under a regime that gags the press, the reader is the true journalist: he has to read between the lines'.

⁵⁸ ACS, Ministero dell'interno – Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza – 1940 – Busta 18 – Anonymous letter to the director of *La Stampa*, translated as 'I know well that you cannot be free and that you cannot write what you think, but rather what is imposed on you'.

⁵⁹ 'I Segreti del Regime', *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, September 25, 1923, translated as 'actually needs to worry about politics? Can he not dedicate his free time to the game of *bocce*? Or to the equally entertaining *tresette* [a popular card game]? Is it not enough that others think about that [politics] on his behalf?'

Whilst the regime saw the highly politicized working-class of Turin almost as a lost cause, *L'Ordine Nuovo* was not only inspired by the local industrial workers, but it even tried to bridge the gap between intellectuals and proletarians. In the years between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Turin had been described by the anti-fascist writer Carlo Levi as being 'fra le città italiane, il solo ambiente favorevole al sorgere di uno spirito compiutamente moderno, l'unico centro industriale dove esistessero alcuni imprenditori coraggiosi, capitani di industrie sane, e una classe operaia che si trasformava da plebe in proletariato'.⁶⁰ Gramsci had been analyzing the situation of the local working-class ever since 1916, when he had begun to write his columns (titled *Sotto la Mole*) for the socialist newspaper *L'Avanti!*.⁶¹ By 1922, *L'Ordine Nuovo* had been defined as 'la sola iniziativa di popolo alimentata dal marxismo' and as 'il solo documento di giornalismo rivoluzionario e marxista che sia sorto in Italia con qualche serietà ideale'.⁶² Gramsci hoped that factory workers would meet up to read and analyze together the columns of *L'Ordine Nuovo*, an attempt at reaching out to the working-class that found no equals in the Fascist press.⁶³ Gramsci wanted to lead the Turinese working-class because of the very reasons he highlighted in his notes on *The Intellectuals and the Organization of Culture*: 'La borghesia non riesce a educare i suoi giovani (lotta di generazione): i giovani si lasciano attrarre culturalmente dagli operai e addirittura se ne fanno o cercano di farsene i capi'.⁶⁴ This desire to bridge the gap between intellectuals and workers would remain one of the most noticeable characteristics of

⁶⁰ Reported in Valerio Castronovo, *Torino*, (Bari: Laterza, 1987), p. 229, translated as 'The only favourable environment in Italy for the dawning of a truly modern spirit, the only industrial centre where courageous entrepreneurs, industrialists that were running healthy factories, and workers that were transforming themselves from plebeians into proletariat all cohabited'

⁶¹ Piero Gobetti, *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, De Caro (ed.) also in Piero Gobetti, *Opere Complete Scritti Politici*, Spriano (ed.) 'Libro Secondo – La lotta politica in Italia', p. 1004.

⁶² Gobetti, *Scritti Politici*, p. 985, translated as 'the sole popular initiative fueled by Marxism', and p. 1005, translated as 'the sole document of revolutionary and Marxist journalism with a serious ideological base'. Also in Piero Gobetti, 'Storia dei Comunisti Torinesi Scritta da un Liberale', *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, April 2, 1922.

⁶³ Piero Gobetti, 'Le Letture del Popolo', *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, February 12, 1922.

⁶⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Gli Intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1971), pp. 59-60, English version in Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Joseph A. Buttigieg (ed.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), vol. II, pp. 114-5, translated as 'The bourgeoisie is unable to educate its youth (generational struggle); the young allow themselves to be culturally attracted by the workers, and they even become [or try to become] their leaders'.

the underground Communist Party in Turin throughout the Fascist period: as late as 1944 illegal pamphlets were still appealing 'A tutti i comunisti! A tutti i lavoratori e a tutti gli intellettuali!'.⁶⁵

Despite the regime's desire to abolish any form of regionalism from the Italian press ever since the March on Rome, *La Rivoluzione Liberale* was a strong defender of the idea of a "Piedmontese identity" in contraposition to the Fascist "Cult of Romanità". This line was clear already by 1922, when Natalino Sapegno wrote that 'continueremo a credere (...) che soltanto dal Piemonte, che ha fatto l'Italia, possano derivare i germi d'uno stato futuro più solido e più potente'.⁶⁶ Throughout its life, *La Rivoluzione Liberale* praised the activities of a number of typically Turinese institutions: the FIAT group ('una vera industria moderna'), *La Stampa*, (with its ideals that were 'democratici, antifascisti, antimussoliniani'), and even the House of Savoy (and its 'particolare carattere di monarchia liberale-democratica, che ne rappresenta la gloria di ieri e la missione di oggi').⁶⁷ This attention to manifestations of what was considered *Piemontesism* does not mean, however, that Gobetti's newspaper was oblivious of, or uninterested in, the problems of the other Italian regions. The "Southern Question" was a particular pressing matter for *La Rivoluzione Liberale*: Giovanni Ansaldo argued that Fascism had to change its approach to the "Southern Question" if it was to infiltrate local society 'o tutta la sua azione per il Mezzogiorno si limiterà alle adunate commemorative e inaugurative',

⁶⁵ "Il Grido di Spartaco" – Organo di Battaglia dei Comunisti piemontesi, Torino, September 6, 1944.

⁶⁶ Natalino Sapegno, 'Il Piemonte e le Province', *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, November 30, 1922, translated as: 'we will keep believing (...) that the seeds of a stronger and more powerful state lie in Piedmont, the region that has made Italy'.

⁶⁷ FIAT as a modern company in Piero Gobetti, 'Storia dei Comunisti Torinesi Scritta da un Liberale', *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, April 2, 1922; *La Stampa* as democratic, anti-fascist and anti-mussolinian in Natalino Sapegno, 'Del Giornalismo in Italia: Torino e *La Stampa*', *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, August 28, 1923; Comments on the House of Savoy in Marcello Soleri, 'Inchiesta sulla Monarchia – II', *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, January 11, 1925, translated as 'particular character as a liberal-democratic monarchy, that represents yesterday's glory and today's mission'.

and in 1925 Pietro Mignosi wrote an article on the existence of two states in the Italian South (a legal-Fascist state, and an illegal-clientelistic one influenced by the local mafias).⁶⁸

Gobetti and Gramsci's newspapers acted as two of the regime's limiting agents in Piedmont not so much because of their openly anti-fascist stand (for strong though their opposition to the Fascist government was they were soon quashed), but because of the inspiration they offered to local intellectuals and journalists, and because they reflected that suspicious attitude towards Fascism that was common to considerable sections of the Piedmontese population. The inspiration given to local intellectuals by characters like Gramsci and Gobetti has been touchingly described by Barbara Allason, who mourned Gobetti's death as that of 'un capitano che avesse apparecchiato un esercito, lo avesse portato alle prime battaglie, poi fosse sparito come quegli eroi mitici che erano partiti e non tornati più e nessuno li aveva visti morire'.⁶⁹ As an anonymous journalist who called himself "Un Liberale" and contributed to both the monthly *La Critica Politica*, published in Rome, and the Turinese weekly *Tempi Nuovi*, a newspaper profoundly influenced by local industrialist Camillo Olivetti, wrote in 1923: 'A Torino il movimento fascista ha trovato il terreno meno propizio alla sua affermazione, per ragioni di indole psicologica (riluttanza dei piemontesi alle manifestazioni coreografiche e rumorose, senso dei limiti, indifferenza verso le posizioni retoriche) e di indole economico-politica'.⁷⁰ The next section of this chapter will focus on the case of the Turinese daily *La Stampa*, also because, as the unidentified journalist argued,

I fatti di sangue contro i comunisti avvenuti dopo la marcia su Roma erano imposti dalla necessità per i fascisti torinesi di dimostrare in qualche modo la loro materiale esistenza, e hanno sempre più allontanato da loro l'animo della cittadinanza oggi in

⁶⁸ Giovanni Ansaldo, 'Fascismo e Mezzogiorno', *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, November 23, 1922, translated as 'or all of its action for the South will be limited to commemorative and inaugural gatherings', Pietro Mignosi, 'La Mafia', *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, October 25, 1925.

⁶⁹ Barbara Allason, 'Ricordo di Piero Gobetti', in Franco Antonicelli (ed.), *Trent'Anni di Storia Italiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1961), p. 134, translated as 'a captain who got his army ready, led it in the first battles, then disappeared like those mythological heroes who left not to return, whose death was not witnessed by anyone'.

⁷⁰ Un Liberale, 'Il Fascismo a Torino', *Tempi Nuovi*, May 5, 1923, p. 2, translated as 'In Turin the fascist movement has encountered the least fertile soil for its affirmation, because of psychological reasons (Piedmontese reluctance in front of choreographic and noisy manifestations, sense of limits, indifference towards rhetorical positions) and because of economic-political reasons'.

*sostanza indifferente verso l'esperimento del governo centrale. L'atteggiamento dei torinesi in proposito è rappresentato e riassunto in modo inconcusso dagli articoli e dalla cronaca della "Stampa"*⁷¹

The Problematic Process of Fascistization of La Stampa

Until 1925 *La Stampa* had been one of the most ferocious enemies of the Fascist government. The day after the March on Rome, the newspaper's co-director Luigi Salvatorelli laconically wrote on the first page 'Noi manteniamo intatta ed alta la nostra fede liberale e legalitaria, e deploriamo l'offesa, anche se temporanea, fatta alla libertà e alla legge'.⁷² The first battles fought by *La Stampa* were those for the defence of intellectual freedom and the freedom of the press. In 1923 *La Stampa* openly talked about a crisis of the school system at every level after Giovanni Gentile's reform (the "riforma fascistissima" according to Mussolini), it carefully described the student protests in Turin (the most significant ones on a national scale), and it came to consider the reform overall as a practically inapplicable creator of social inequality (since it would have prevented underprivileged youth from pursuing higher education).⁷³ Right after the kidnapping of the Socialist MP Giacomo Matteotti, the newspaper labelled the event a political crime and reported the moving words of the MP's widow, who did not seek revenge, but justice.⁷⁴ After Mussolini won a confidence vote on June 26, 1924, Cesare Sobrero and Gino Pestelli wrote on the first page of *La Stampa* that the people were with Matteotti, and

⁷¹ Ibid., translated as 'the crimes against the communists that happened after the march on Rome were imposed by the need for the Turinese fascists to prove their own existence, and have pushed away even more the citizenship that is today substantially indifferent towards the experiments of the central government. The attitude of the Turinese in this regard is represented and summarized in an incorruptible way by the articles of "Stampa"'.
⁷² Luigi Salvatorelli 'Una Pagina di Storia Italiana', *La Stampa*, November 1, 1922, p.1, Reported by the same Luigi Salvatorelli, in 'Seconda Lezione: L'ultima Battaglia per la Libertà di Stampa', in Various Authors, *Lezioni sull'Antifascismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1960), p. 41, and in Alessandro Galante Garrone, *I Miei Maggiori* (Milano: Garzanti, 1984), p. 98, translated as 'We maintain our liberal and legalitarian faith untouched, and we deplore the offense, albeit temporary, to our liberty and law'.

⁷³ 'La Crisi Scolastica', *La Stampa*, September 21, 1923, p. 5, 'L'Agitazione degli Studenti dell'Università e del Politecnico', *La Stampa*, December 7, 1923, p. 4., 'L'Agitazione Studentesca Nelle Fasi delle Trattative?', *La Stampa*, December 8th 1923, p. 4, 'Filosofia e Realtà', *La Stampa*, November 7, 1923, p. 1.

⁷⁴ 'Sul Movente del Delitto', *La Stampa*, June 14, 1924, p. 2, 'L'Orrendo Bagaglio degli Assassini e la Fede di Matteotti nel Martirio', *La Stampa*, June 18, 1924, p.1.

that Mussolini would not be able to regain the loyalty of the Italians.⁷⁵ The newspaper's position after Matteotti's murder affected the way the regime saw *La Stampa* throughout the dictatorship (by 1934 it was in fact still considered by an anonymous informer of Party Secretary Achille Starace as 'il vecchio giornale giolittiano ... pur camuffandosi da fascista, rimane sempre, per il Piemonte, il giornale quartarellista').⁷⁶ The newspaper also alternated attacks on Fascist censorship with accounts of parliamentary discussions on the issue. A particularly touching set of minutes was published in 1925, summarising the speech in defence of the freedom of the press given by Senator Francesco Ruffini, professor of Ecclesiastical Law at the University of Turin.⁷⁷

Even in the case of *La Stampa*, it was in the period between 1924 and 1926 that Fascist pressure became stronger. In 1925 the regime found a number of pretexts to withdraw issues of the newspaper since its openly anti-fascist stand would not wither away. By the end of the year Alfredo Frassati, *La Stampa's* staunchly anti-fascist co-director and owner, was forced to leave the directorship before finally having to sell his shares – predictably not at market value – to Senator Giovanni Agnelli, founder of FIAT who thus became the owner of the newspaper.⁷⁸ As Frassati would later write to the columnist Attilio Cabiati: 'In trent'anni di giornalismo spero di aver sempre fatto il mio dovere verso il Paese, con passione'.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Cesare Sobrero, 'Il Voto Senatoriale a Mussolini: Il Pensiero del Popolo a Matteotti', *La Stampa*, June 27, 1924, p.1 (title to be attributed to Gino Pestelli).

⁷⁶ ACS, Archivi Fascisti - PNF - Direttorio Nazionale - Segreteria Politica - Situazione Politica Nelle Province – Busta 25 – Torino – Note for Achille Starace, July 21, 1934, translated as 'the old giolittian newspaper ... despite camouflaging itself as fascist, it still remains, for Piedmont, the "quarterellista" newspaper!' (whereby "quarterellista" was an adjective used in order to identify those who condemned the murder of Matteotti).

⁷⁷ 'La Censura', *La Stampa*, September 11, 1924, p.1, 'Il Nuovo Regime di Stampa', *La Stampa*, December 16, 1925, p.1.

⁷⁸ Paolo Murialdi, 'La Stampa Quotidiana del Regime Fascista', in Valerio Castronovo and Nicola Tranfaglia (eds.), *La Stampa Italiana Nell'Età Fascista*, (Bari: Laterza, 1980), pp. 67-8, Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices – an Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy*, (London: Bodley Head, 2012), p. 148.

⁷⁹ Fondazione Luigi Einaudi, Torino, Fondo Attilio Cabiati, Carteggio Alfredo Frassati, translated as 'In thirty years of journalism I hope to have always done my duty towards the country, with passion'.

Until 1926 *La Stampa* was selling around two hundred thousand copies a day, the second most widely read Italian daily after the *Corriere della Sera*.⁸⁰ Closing the newspaper down would have been impossible, and fascistizing it completely in a short time would have been an extremely risky move (even Arnaldo Mussolini, director of *Il Popolo d'Italia* and brother of Benito, claimed that it would have been absurd to fully fascistize *La Stampa*).⁸¹ The readership of *La Stampa* decreased in the years immediately following 1926 (before rising again in the early 1930s, coincidentally with the newspapers' attacks on Fascist economic policies), a fact that shows the interest and support of the local population for the initial anti-fascist stand of *La Stampa*.⁸² Moreover, in the late 1920s, *La Stampa* also lost out to the other main Turinese newspaper, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, not so much because of the latter's philo-Fascism, but rather because of *La Gazzetta del Popolo's* coverage of more mundane events (something that the more sober *La Stampa* did not cover until the launch, in 1930, of its evening edition, *La Stampa della Sera*).⁸³ The fact that *La Stampa* had lost its former open anti-fascism, however, does not mean that the newspaper became a mouthpiece of the regime. Having been a journalist himself, Benito Mussolini was fully aware of the importance of the press in that process that Bernhard Fulda has termed the "mass production of public opinion", but fascistizing *La Stampa* proved to be a slow and complex (and ultimately incomplete) procedure.⁸⁴

The first problem of the process was the ownership of the newspaper from 1926 onwards: Giovanni Agnelli's interests as an industrialist were often in contrast with Fascist policies, and the Senator's lack of support for the Fascist cause irritated the party's hardliners. Moreover, Agnelli's ownership of *La Stampa* – clearly – both symbolized and increased the industrialist's power in the city. A second major problem was the regime's inability to fully

⁸⁰ Paolo Murialdi, *Storia del Giornalismo Italiano*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000), p. 121.

⁸¹ Giancarlo Tartaglia, *Secolo di Giornalismo*, p. 374.

⁸² Murialdi, 'Stampa Quotidiana', p. 96.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁸⁴ Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 203, James A. Gregor, *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 228.

control the top of the newspaper's hierarchy: whilst it is true that the directors, from 1926 onwards, had to be suggested by the regime, these often were not exemplary Fascists. Moreover, the editorial board of *La Stampa* – and some of its key administrators – remained mostly unchanged even after Frassati was forced to sell. Lastly, the fascistization of the newspaper was made ever harder by some general problems inherent to the Fascist state-system and structure.

Despite having been named senator by Mussolini, Giovanni Agnelli was never a true Fascist.⁸⁵ This, clearly, proved to be a major problem for the process of fascistization of *La Stampa*. Notwithstanding the opposition of the party's hardliners, Mussolini could not afford to challenge the power of Agnelli in Turin – a city that he almost perceived as Agnelli's own fiefdom at times – and he believed that the change of ownership would be useful in bringing the newspaper under Fascist influence without a sudden and abrupt change from the Frassati era.⁸⁶ Predictably, however, Agnelli quickly grew dissatisfied with the regime's economic policies, and his feelings were reflected by the line adopted by his newspaper: the Fascist push for autarchy was seen as a counterproductive move for the fortunes of FIAT, and the revaluation of the Italian Lira had Agnelli worried about the competitiveness of his company on the international market.⁸⁷ What was more surprising, however, was the way in which Agnelli defended the freedom of his own columnists, using the loopholes in the Fascist state apparatus to pursue his own ends, in particular in 1927 (an issue that will be further explored later in this section).⁸⁸

The fascistization of the upper echelons of *La Stampa* was incomplete. It is true that the regime had finally managed to get rid of Frassati by 1926, but the following three directors could hardly be identified as exemplary Fascists: Andrea Torre had been a minister in

⁸⁵ Valerio Castronovo, *Giovanni Agnelli*, 5th ed. (Torino: UTET, 2003), p. 399.

⁸⁶ Murialdi, 'Stampa Quotidiana', p. 67.

⁸⁷ Castronovo, *Torino*, pp. 309-16; for examples of *La Stampa's* criticisms of the regime's economic policies see: 'I Riflessi Nazionali e Mondiali della Lira Oro', *La Stampa*, December 23, 1927, p. 1, and 'La Ragionevole Autarchia', *La Stampa*, February 17, 1934, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Tartaglia, *Secolo di Giornalismo*, p. 406.

Francesco Saverio Nitti's government, Curzio Malaparte, despite being an outstanding writer, was considered to be an excessively wild character with almost anarchic tendencies (he would later be removed from the post and be confined to the island of Lipari, and in a secret note drafted in 1944 his ambiguous relation with the regime – that manifested itself in the continuous praise of Mussolini and the simultaneous loathing of his entourage – was described in harsh terms: 'su tutti i giornali minori sui quali era riuscito a collaborare scriveva articoli ferventemente mussoliniani valendosi della esaltazione di Mussolini per lanciare frecciate ai personaggi minori che attorniavano il dittatore'⁸⁹), whilst Augusto Turati was given the directorship of the newspaper only in 1931, when he had already fallen out of favour with the Fascist hierarchy.⁹⁰ Alfredo Signoretti, director from 1932 until 1943, was the most committed Fascist among the directors of *La Stampa* under the regime, but he wanted to create an almost balanced and impartial newspaper (so much so that *La Stampa* came to be openly attacked by the totally fascistized Turinese newspaper *La Gazzetta del Popolo* and by the already mentioned *Vent'Anni*).⁹¹ Even the administration of *La Stampa* never came under complete regime control: the head administrator since the Frassati era, Giuseppe Colli – famous for his 'persistente, tenace, decisa ostilità al Regime' – managed to hold on to his place, with the help of Giovanni Agnelli, until 1931, and even the person who replaced Colli, Cesare Fanti, was a man loyal to Giovanni Agnelli and one who had been a socialist before the March on Rome.⁹²

The state apparatus for the control of the press also presented a number of general problems. As Paolo Murialdi has argued, the Fascist attitude towards the world of journalism

⁸⁹ ACS, Ministero della Cultura Popolare - Fascicoli di Personalità e Testate Giornalistiche – Busta 8 – Curzio Malaparte – G. Spi, Nota Segreta su Curzio Malaparte, September 16, 1944, translated as 'He wrote committed mussolinian articles on all the minor newspapers with which he managed to collaborate, using his praise for Mussolini to attack the minor figures that surrounded the dictator'.

⁹⁰ Castronovo, *Torino*, p. 308, Murialdi, 'Stampa Quotidiana', pp. 101-102, for an analysis of the figure of Malaparte: Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919-1929* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 372.

⁹¹ Alfredo Signoretti, *La Stampa in Camicia Nera, 1932-1943*, (Roma: Volpe, 1968).

⁹² Gastone Gorrieri, 'Chiarificazione', *Il Torchio*, June 24, 1928, p. 1, translated as 'persistent, tenacious, strong hostility towards the Regime', Valerio Castronovo, *FIAT, 1899-1999 – Un Secolo di Storia*, (Milano: Rizzoli, 1999), p. 437.

was an authoritarian one, but not necessarily a totalitarian one.⁹³ The regime established a syndicate of Fascist journalists in 1927, but membership of the syndicate was not a prerequisite for journalists (they were supposed to be enrolled in another professional organization, the *Albo*, a bureaucratic institution established by the dictatorship in 1925 but without the strong Fascist connotations of the syndicate).⁹⁴ In 1927, *La Stampa* came, yet again, under attack for employing columnists unwelcome to the regime and not in the *Albo* like Gino Pestelli, Arrigo Cajumi, Giuseppe Cassone, and Fulvio Rossi.⁹⁵ In this situation, however, Giovanni Agnelli reminded Augusto Turati (at the time secretary of the PNF) that the four had been approved by Mussolini when Agnelli had bought the newspaper at the end of 1925.⁹⁶ Pestelli, who refused to bow down to the regime, was the only one of the four to be discouraged from continuing to write on *La Stampa* (he went on to become the press officer for FIAT, another demonstration of Agnelli's independence and power over local matters), whilst, for the other three, it was enough to provide lip service to the regime to have their careers saved.⁹⁷

Agnelli's determination to challenge the regime and defend his own journalists and their independence remained strong even in the late 1930s. In 1938, for instance, he defended the Jewish members of the newspaper's staff, an act for which he was also criticized by the director of *La Gazzetta del Popolo* Ermanno Amicucci, who wrote to the Minculpop (Ministero della Cultura Popolare) complaining that 'i redattori di razza ebraica non sono stati ancora allontanati: non solo non sono stati licenziati, ma nemmeno sospesi'.⁹⁸ When the Minculpop conducted a survey amongst Turinese journalists in 1940, it appeared that even then, despite the party's increasing pressure, 20 % of the local journalists (including Gino Pestelli) was still

⁹³ Murialdi, 'Stampa Quotidiana', p. 79.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

⁹⁵ Tartaglia, *Secolo di Giornalismo*, p. 406.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 406.

⁹⁷ Murialdi, 'Stampa Quotidiana', p. 86.

⁹⁸ ACS, MinCulPop - FPTG – Busta 5 – La Gazzetta del Popolo – Letter from Ermanno Amicucci to Luciano Celso, October 20, 1938, translated as 'Jewish columnists have not yet been dismissed: not only they have not been fired, they have not even been suspended'.

not even a member of the PNF, whilst the majority of those who were party members had joined after 1930 (many, therefore, can be seen as having joined the party not because of political beliefs but rather to preserve their jobs in a period of increasing regime pressure).⁹⁹

Even the censorship machine functioned far from perfectly. Until 1926 there was still no preventive censorship, and even once the dictatorship started to directly impose its views on the Italian newspapers it principally dictated the line that the press had to follow for reports on political events (the cultural pages of the newspapers, therefore, remained relatively free).¹⁰⁰ This allowed articles to bypass Fascist directives by being published on *La Stampa's* cultural pages: throughout the Fascist period articles praised the League of Nations, gave positive reviews of Trotsky's memoirs, criticized the new Fascist urban plan for Turin, or praised the cosmopolitanism and the willingness of a group of Turinese painters (the *Sei di Torino*) to challenge Fascist artistic canons.¹⁰¹

The fascistized *La Stampa* usually talked about a Turin that was 'Sabauda e Fascista', as also reportedly did Fascist authorities giving official speeches in the city.¹⁰² This description is crucial for a discussion of Piedmontese identity in the period: it highlights how the *signified* of the two concepts remained etymologically different and irreconcilable, and the fact that the term "Sabaudian" was generally used before "Fascist" can be seen as both a manifestation and a reiteration of the social power of the House of Savoy over the city.¹⁰³ The regime also acknowledged the problem of regionalism, and stopped the publication of articles in the

⁹⁹ ACS, MinCulPop - Direzione Generale Propaganda - NU.P.I.E. - 1932-1943 - Sezione I - Busta 13 - Torino - February 3, 1940, Regia Prefettura di Torino - Elenco Nominativo Componente il Nucleo dei Non Iscritti al PNF Divisi per Professione.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-30.

¹⁰¹ Barbara Allason, 'Lessing, il Buon Poeta del "Nathan"', *La Stampa*, September 28, 1928, p. 3, 'Trotsky Storico della Rivoluzione', *La Stampa*, November 7, 1931, p. 3, Mar. Ber. 'Abbattere il Teatro Carignano?', *La Stampa*, November 19, 1932, p. 8, Mar. Ber., 'Pittori Giovani', *La Stampa*, January 14, 1929, p. 3.

¹⁰² Examples can be: 'Il Podestà Esprime al Duce la Riconoscenza di Torino', *La Stampa*, May 18, 1939, p. 4, 'Storia di un Monumento', *La Stampa*, December 26, 1932, p. 6.

¹⁰³ For a brief overview of the way in which social relations and power are structured through language: Kevin Passmore 'Post-Structuralism and History', in Stefan Berger, Heiko Feldner, and Kevin Passmore, *Writing History - Theory and Practice*, (Arnold: London, 2003), p. 129.

various Italian dialects.¹⁰⁴ However, Piedmontese regionalism went beyond the local dialect and manifested itself particularly strongly in the popular loyalty towards the monarchy and in the glorification of the region's role in the process of Italian unification, two topics always highlighted on the pages of *La Stampa* that could not have been objected to by the regime.¹⁰⁵

Subtly anti-fascist articles often escaped the censors, and only in 1934 did Galeazzo Ciano, inspired by Goebbels' example, appoint a press officer to each of the country's biggest cities (this was the most noticeable move to ensure the physical presence of Fascist censorship in the peripheral areas).¹⁰⁶ With Ciano as head of the Fascist Press Office from late 1933, preventive censorship was finally established, but the system was lumbering, with responsibilities divided between the local *Prefettura*, the central Press Office, and the *Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza*.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, the various institutions were often uncertain over the nature of their duties.¹⁰⁸ This imperfect system of censorship meant that, on the one hand, the political articles of *La Stampa* seemed to blindly follow the regime's directives (the *Veline*), but, on the other hand, many of the other events covered on the newspaper could still present indirect attacks upon the regime and upon the kind of society that the dictatorship was aiming to create.¹⁰⁹ Even the Turinese working-class seemed aware of the fact that *La Stampa* was not fully under regime control, as the Segretario Federale Piero Gazzotti wrote to Achille Starace: 'Gli operai della Fiat boicottano i giornali del regime ad

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁰⁵ For examples of this throughout the Fascist period: 'Il Principe di Piemonte ha Inaugurato il Convalescenziario "Regina Margherita"', *La Stampa*, July 5, 1927, p. 5, 'Gli Impianti Elettrici dell'Orco Inaugurati alla Presenza del Principe di Piemonte', *La Stampa*, August 3, 1931, p. 2, 'Il Congresso Nazionale della Pesca Inaugurato dal Principe di Piemonte', *La Stampa*, June 9, 1931, p. 2. For an example of the king's visits: 'La Giornata del Re a Torino', *La Stampa*, October 18, 1924, p. 6, 'La Vibrante Accoglienza di Torino ai Sovrani', *La Stampa*, April 30, 1928, p. 1, 'Il Re Ha Inaugurato Ieri a Torino il Monumento al Carabiniere', *La Stampa*, October 23, 1933, 'La Giornata Torinese di sua Maestà il Re', *La Stampa*, November 9, 1935, p. 4, p. 1, 'La Trionfale Giornata Torinese del Re', *La Stampa*, June 12, 1939, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Murialdi, 'Stampa Quotidiana', p. 150.

¹⁰⁷ Cesari, *Censura*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ Murialdi, *Storia del Giornalismo*, pp. 141, 152, Tartaglia, *Secolo di Giornalismo*, p. 374.

eccezione del giornale “La Stampa” perché ritengono ch’esso solo rispetti ancora le idee e le tendenze del passato’.¹¹⁰ Or, as an anonymous reader wrote in 1940 to Alfredo Signoretti:

Sono un assiduo e come tale ho seguito sempre il suo giornale. So bene che non può essere libero, so bene che deve scrivere non ciò che pensa, ma ciò che si impone. Vidi anche sovente lo sforzo con cui erano redatti certi articoli e mi congratulavo con Lei (scusi ma anche in fatto di voi e di Lei preferisco stare coi sommi nostri e non con chi non sapendo cosa fare diede l'ostracismo alle parole) che sapeva tenere un tono abbastanza nobile.¹¹¹

The institutional history of *La Stampa*, therefore, shows the limits of Fascist power over one of those strong institutions that dared to challenge it as well as the clear problems faced by the Fascist censorship apparatus on a daily basis. The regime could only partially impose its views on the newspaper, and it often had to come to a compromise with Senator Giovanni Agnelli. It is therefore hard to imagine that the Fascist regime could successfully count on *La Stampa* to assert the consensus for the dictatorship in Piedmont: the Fascists had not even been able to completely stop the dissenting voices inside the newspaper in the first place. The situation was probably best described by the directorship of the rival newspaper *La Gazzetta del Popolo*: *La Stampa* was in fact a newspaper ‘con quell’aria sorniona che le conosciamo dai tempi del perfido disfattismo e che tutte le molteplici riverniciature non sono riuscite a cancellare’.¹¹² The case of *La Stampa*, however, is not only a manifestation of the problems that the regime encountered in trying to infiltrate one of the most important Italian newspapers: its pages are also a reflection of daily life in Turin (and in Piedmont overall), of

¹¹⁰ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino – Note from Piero Gazzotti, March 1936, translated as ‘Fiat workers are boycotting the regime’s newspapers except for “La Stampa” since they believe this is the sole newspaper to still respect the ideas and the tendencies of the past’.

¹¹¹ ACS, MI – DGPS – 1940 – Busta 18 – Anonymous letter to the director of *La Stampa*, translated as ‘I am an assiduous reader and, as such, I have always followed your newspaper. I know well that you cannot be free and that you cannot write what you think, but rather what is imposed on you. I have often seen the effort with which some articles were written and I congratulated *Lei* (I am sorry, but even in terms of voi and Lei I prefer to stay on the side of our greatest [poets and writers] and not with those who, not knowing what to do, ostracized words) for knowing how to keep a relatively noble tone’. The reference to “*voi*” and “*Lei*” refers to the regime’s attempts to eradicate the Italian habit to use the pronoun “*Lei*” (third-person feminine singular) with the gender-neutral “*Voi*” (second-person plural).

¹¹² ACS, MinCulPop - FPTG – Busta 5 – *La Gazzetta del Popolo* – Appunto sulla “Stampa”: Ottimismo Imbecille o Ipocrisia Bottegaia, translated as ‘with that sly appearance that we have known since the times of its defeatism, that has not been canceled despite all the attempts to paint it over’

how the local population remained loyal to other institutions that were not under the dictatorship's direct control (chiefly the Catholic Church and the House of Savoy), and of how the Piedmontese people were often more interested in regional developments of a social and economic kind than in national ones of a political kind (as also argued by R.J.B. Bosworth in his article 'Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy').¹¹³

Christian Newspapers and A-Fascism

Finding pretexts to forcefully fascistize (or to close down) a-fascist Christian newspapers was not as immediately pressing for the regime as suspending the publication of Gramsci and Gobetti's newspapers.¹¹⁴ Throughout the 1920s Christian newspapers often attacked the regime's actions from a religious and moral point of view and, because of the freedom granted to Catholic newspapers for most of the Fascist era, the regime could not openly attack the mouthpieces of the Catholic Church (it even took until 1927 for the Fascist government to finally get rid of *Conscientia*, the weekly of the local Waldensian community). This section will first look at how a number of Turinese Christian newspapers (three Roman Catholic orientated; one Waldensian) were initially strongly opposed to the regime from a moral standpoint before moving its focus to specifically examine the three Catholic newspapers' praise for the activities of Catholic syndicalist/corporative institutions. The section will then end by pointing out how, even in the theoretically fully fascistized Turinese Catholic newspapers of the late 1920s and 1930s, the regime's activities usually were allocated less space and praise than (predictably) those of the Catholic Church and (less predictably) those of the House of Savoy. The section

¹¹³ RJB Bosworth, 'Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 14, No.1 (2005), pp.37-8.

¹¹⁴ The case of four newspapers will be discussed in this section: the Catholic *La Voce dell'Operaio*, *Il Momento*, and *Il Lavoratore*, and the Waldensian *Conscientia*. When they are referred to as a group, they have to be considered "Christian" newspapers because of the Protestant nature of *Conscientia*, but when only *La Voce dell'Operaio*, *Il Momento*, or *Il Lavoratore* are concerned, they have to be defined as "Catholic" newspapers.

will look at the Waldensian *Conscientia*, published between 1922 and 1927, and at the Catholic *La Voce dell'Operaio/La Voce del Popolo* (the weekly of the Archdiocese of Turin), *Il Momento* (a Catholic daily whose funds ran out in 1929), and the short lived *Il Lavoratore* (a Catholic monthly published in 1926 that had the local working-class as its main target and whose proletarian stand received the cold shoulder from the local and national senior clergy).¹¹⁵ It should be noted that there was no collaboration between Catholic newspapers and *Conscientia* (the Catholic newspapers did not refer to the local Waldensian community in their pages, whilst *Conscientia* displayed its open animosity towards the Catholic Church and its organs by constantly attacking their inconsistencies).¹¹⁶ Curiously, however, *Conscientia* often welcomed the collaboration of Piero Gobetti.¹¹⁷

A moral condemnation of the regime's actions was evident in most Christian newspapers published in Turin in the 1920s. In two cases, that of the Waldensian *Conscientia*, and that of the Catholic *La Voce dell'Operaio*, this condemnation started with the newspapers' sub-headers: below *Conscientia's* masthead was the caption 'è diretto a tutti coloro che ritengono l'avvenire d'Italia strettamente connesso colla sua rinascita spirituale' (and the Waldensian spiritual rebirth was diametrically opposite to that advocated by the Fascist regime), whilst *La Voce dell'Operaio* (from 1933 onwards titled *La Voce del Popolo*) always presented short extracts taken from papal encyclicals on its first page, often with an anti-fascist message.¹¹⁸ Both *Conscientia* and *La Voce dell'Operaio* condemned Fascist violence on Christian grounds, arguing that 'La vita umana, la persona, è cosa sacra in tutti' and that 'La

¹¹⁵ For a very brief discussion of the experience of *Il Lavoratore*: Mariangiola Reineri, *Cattolici e Fascismo a Torino, 1925-1943*, (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1978), pp. 63-73.

¹¹⁶ The only work on *Conscientia* that has been published is Anna Strumia and Davide Dalmas (ed.), *Una Resistenza Spirituale : Conscientia, 1922-1927*, (Torino: Claudiana, 2000).

¹¹⁷ One of the most interesting articles by Piero Gobetti was published by *Conscientia* shortly before Gobetti's death. The article focused on the liberal atmosphere and history of the University of Turin: Piero Gobetti, *Opere Complete di Piero Gobetti – Volume Primo, Scritti Politici*, Paolo Spriano (ed.) (Torino: Einaudi, 1969), 'Le Università e la Cultura. Torino', pp. 908-12, already in *Conscientia*, January 23, 1926.

¹¹⁸ Sub-header on *Conscientia* translated as 'aimed at all those who believe Italy's future to be connected to its spiritual rebirth'; examples of papal encyclicals with an anti-fascist message include most notably Non Abbiamo Bisogno, 1931, and Charitate Christi Complusi, 1932.

violenza ha pigliato il posto della ragione, la forza e l'audacia stanno sopra il diritto'.¹¹⁹ These newspapers also opposed the Fascist disregard for freedom of conscience ('Non è infatti nel programma di chi sostiene la libertà di coscienza, coartare l'altrui coscienza'), and at times even dared to criticize the regime's political and economic decisions, as in the case of Gentile's reform of the school system (guilty – these papers argued – of contributing to the creation of an even more unequal society), or in the case of the regime's attempts to revalue the Lira.¹²⁰ Until 1925, the two newspapers allowed themselves to attack the regime from what they perceived to be an unchallengeable position (putting Christian values ahead of Fascist dogma *La Voce dell'Operaio* argued that only the Catholic Church had the 'capacità ed il diritto di giudicare quando un determinato gruppo politico, od una determinata forma organizzativa è in contrasto assoluto all'Azione Cattolica ed è impossibile appartenere ad entrambe').¹²¹ As Fascist pressure on religious newspapers increased from 1925 onwards, the moral attacks of the Turinese Christian newspapers became softer, and *Conscientia*, the organ of the small Waldensian community, ceased to appear. However, the Catholic newspapers' defence of Catholic syndicalist/corporative institutions remained strong, as did the importance given by Catholic organs to local events involving the Catholic Church and the House of Savoy.

Whilst Fascist intimidation successfully silenced the Christian newspapers' most direct moral criticisms of the regime by the late 1920s, there was little that the government could do to stop the ambitions of social control held by the Catholic Church and the Turinese Catholic newspapers' praise of the various lay Catholic institutions. *Il Momento* – true to the Popular political background of many of its editors, including Lorenzo Fiorio – opposed the corporative

¹¹⁹ Giuseppe Gangale, 'Parole Cristiane nella Bufera', *Conscientia*, September 27, 1924, translated as 'Human life, the person, is a sacred thing for everyone'; 'La Crisi Morale del Nostro Tempo', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, March 8, 1925, translated as 'Violence has taken the place of reason, strength and recklessness stand above the law'.

¹²⁰ 'Noi e le Elezioni', *Conscientia*, March 1, 1924, translated as 'To coerce someone else's conscience is not in the plans of those who support freedom of conscience'; Leo, 'La Crisi della Scuola', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, March 8, 1925, p. 1; 'Il Risparmio e la Rivalutazione della Lira', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, June 14, 1925, p. 1.

¹²¹ 'Azione Cattolica e Azione Politica', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, March 15, 1925, translated as 'The right and the capacity to judge when a political group, or any given organization, is in absolute contrast to the Catholic Action and it is impossible to belong to both'

state because 'tanti diritti civili potrebbero essere compromessi e perduta tanta influenza del Clero nella vita pubblica'.¹²² The independence of the *Azione Cattolica Italiana* (ACI), the most important Catholic organization in Italy, was continuously defended in both *La Voce dell'Operaio* and *Il Momento*: the newspapers condemned the forceful closure of some of the ACI's local sections whilst highlighting the crucial role that Piedmont had played in the growth of the organization.¹²³ The interpretation of the short-lived *Il Lavoratore* of the rivalry between the ACI and Fascist associations was even more outspoken: in its issue published in February 1926, the newspaper argued that 'Il dilemma [to resist Fascist pressure or to become part of the Fascist state-system] ci trova concordi. Noi siamo per la resistenza'.¹²⁴ Throughout the Fascist period, the ACI emerged as the strongest Catholic lay organization – with nearly totalitarian aspirations of control and indoctrination of youth that constituted an extremely dangerous threat for Fascist ambitions.¹²⁵ On the other hand, the Catholic trade union (the Confederazione Italiana dei Lavoratori) with its ability to bring together, as argued by *Il Lavoratore*, clergymen and lay men and women of all ages, was dismantled by the regime in 1926.¹²⁶

After the supposed completion of the process of fascistization of the Italian press, the anti-fascist stand of Catholic newspapers in Turin became less and less strong. This, however, does not mean that Catholic Turinese newspapers from the late 1920s onwards became mouthpieces of the regime, but rather that they limited themselves to praising the religious and social activities of the Catholic Church (and often of the House of Savoy) without attacking the dictatorship. *La Voce dell'Operaio* maintained its traditional format throughout the Fascist

¹²² 'Il Clero e lo Stato Corporativo', *Il Momento*, February 1, 1927, translated as 'many civil rights could be compromised and much of the influence of the clergy in the public life could be lost', reference to the Popular background of many of its editors in Archivio di Stato di Torino, Prefettura di Torino – Gabinetto – Primo Versamento – Busta 507, Autorità Ecclesiastiche Locali, Clero, Azione Cattolica, 1926-1946, letter from the Questura to the Prefetto, February 20, 1930.

¹²³ 'Una Lettera Papale sull'Opera dei Balilla', *Il Momento*, January 25, 1927, 'Azione Cattolica e Azione Politica', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, March 15, 1925, 'L'Azione Cattolica e il Piemonte', *Il Momento*, March 29, 1929.

¹²⁴ 'Commenti Giornalistici e Deliberazioni dell'ACI', *Il Lavoratore*, February 1926, translated as 'the dilemma sees us all on the same page. We are for [the ACI's] resistance'.

¹²⁵ Reineri, *Cattolici e Fascismo*, p. 29.

¹²⁶ 'Vivere Dobbiamo! Vivere Vogliamo!', *Il Lavoratore*, February 1926.

period: a page was dedicated to the Catholic world, one to current affairs (both national and international), and the last two covered every activity that was being promoted by the parishes of the dioceses of Turin. It is true that the newspaper's former anti-fascist columns had been replaced by articles dominated by standard Fascist rhetoric, but the weekly's character remained strongly Catholic. *La Voce dell'Operaio's* line seemed to suggest that the editorial board decided to support the regime's actions when these defended Catholic interests and values (this was noticeable in articles on family values, on the role of the Italian women, and on the Spanish Civil War), but the newspaper did not completely bow down to the regime: it preserved its Catholic ambitions of social control; on more than one occasion it published extracts from the anti-fascist encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, and it openly condemned German nationalism.¹²⁷ *Il Momento* seemed to follow the same line as *La Voce dell'Operaio*, and its standpoint could be summarized by its declaration that, in 1929, the Concordat had 'restituito Dio all'Italia e l'Italia a Dio', a line that acknowledged the regime's efforts at mediating with the Catholic Church, but that also highlighted the independence of the Catholic Church from the Fascist State.¹²⁸ From the late 1920s, therefore, the Catholic Turinese newspapers – like the Vatican – seemed to accept the regime's intrusion and influence on their fascistized political pages, whilst carving out a sphere of autonomy on their a-fascist social and religious pages.

A last characteristic of the Catholic Turinese newspapers that deserves to be analyzed is the support which they showed for the monarchy. The link between the Turinese Catholics and the House of Savoy had always been extremely strong, in particular because the ruling house owned the Holy Shroud, one of the most important relics in the Catholic world and whose importance will be analyzed in the fourth chapter of this thesis. The displays of the

¹²⁷ Reineri, *Cattolici e Fascismo*, p. 49, 'All'Estero', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, May 3, 1925, p. 1; and L.R. 'Chi è Hitler?', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, April 17, 1932, pp. 1-2, Catholic ambitions of social control were particularly evident in the last two pages of the newspaper, in which the activities of dozens of parishes were reported on each issue.

¹²⁸ 'Cattolici e Italiani Tributiamo Oggi il Nostro Plauso al Regime che Ha Restituito Dio all'Italia e l'Italia a Dio', *Il Momento*, March 24, 1929, p. 1, translated as 'given God back to Italy, and Italy to God'.

Shroud in the Cathedral of Turin in 1931 and 1933 (the first since 1898) took over the pages of *La Voce dell'Operaio*: ceremonies were described as being parades of bishops and princes (with no mention of Fascist authorities), the visitor count was said in both occasions to have exceeded the highest estimates, and the monarchy was sacralized in a way that the Fascist authorities in Turin had never experienced.¹²⁹ Manifestations of loyalty towards the monarchy, however, were a characteristic of the Turinese Catholic newspapers independently of the exhibitions of the Holy Shroud: in 1925 *La Voce dell'Operaio* described every detail of the ceremonies for the move to the Sabaudian Turin of Umberto II, the Prince of Piedmont, with a particular emphasis on the traditional *Te Deum* that was sung again in the cathedral as had been done for centuries to celebrate the return to Turin of members of the House of Savoy.¹³⁰ *La Voce dell'Operaio* also identified Umberto's father, Vittorio Emanuele III, as the 'depositario dell'autorità civile e militare per la grandezza della patria e la felicità degli italiani'.¹³¹

Christian newspapers overall – thus including the Waldensian *Conscienza* – initially showed a strong moral opposition to the authoritarian character of the Fascist regime. Just as in the case of *La Stampa*, however, their importance as limiting agents of the power of the dictatorship lies not so much in their strong anti-fascism before 1926, but in their capacity, even during those years that were considered to be the “years of consensus”, to pursue an agenda that maintained a certain degree of independence from the regime despite no longer being openly anti-fascist (as it has already been explained, the political columns of the Catholic Turinese newspapers were actually taken over by Fascist rhetoric in the late 1920s). As the next section of this chapter will show, the problem represented by a-fascist newspapers throughout the 1920s and 1930s was clear to many young Turinese Fascists, and the weekly *Vent'Anni* – published by the local Gioventù Universitaria Fascista between 1932 and 1940 –

¹²⁹ The articles on the topic are those published during the period from March to May 1931 and from September to October 1933.

¹³⁰ 'L'Insediamento del Principe Ereditario a Torino', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, November 15, 1925, p. 1; 'Giubileo di Sua Maestà il Re', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, June 7, 1925, p. 1.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1, translated as 'depository of the civil and military authority for the greatness of the motherland and the happiness of the Italians'.

constantly campaigned against the limited success of Fascist censorship and against those supposedly “fascitized” newspapers whose fascistization appeared incomplete.

Fascist Problems with the Press as Identified by a Fascist Newspaper: the case of Vent'Anni

As it has already been mentioned in this chapter, young Turinese Fascists were not unaware of the lack of loyalty towards the Fascist State of many Turinese newspapers. *Vent'Anni*, the weekly of the Gioventù Universitaria Fascista (GUF) of Turin, constantly addressed this issue. This newspaper, however, deserves to be analyzed not only because of its attacks on the anti-fascism and a-fascism of the Turinese press, but also because of the questions it raised regarding the future of Fascist Italy and the inherent contradictions of the regime.

Vent'Anni condemned the lack of loyalty towards the Fascist State of both national and local newspapers, often claiming to unmask those journalists who had joined the Fascist Party only to protect their careers and pursue their own ends (whether these ends were subversive, Masonic, or simply a-fascist). In 1938, the organ of the Turinese GUF denounced the journal *Critica Fascista* for having claimed that Turin was a bilingual city (an unforgivable insult for youngsters that believed in the rigid Fascist conception of Italian identity), in the same year the newspaper also commented harshly on the ‘tono dimesso da parlatorio di convento’ of the Italian press, guilty of not praising sufficiently the great advances of the Fascist regime in every field.¹³² The harshest critiques of the Italian newspapers were made by *Vent'Anni* in 1939, when, instead of celebrating the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Partito Nazionale Fascista, all the Italian dailies focused on the state of affairs in Czechoslovakia and on the new

¹³² ‘Torino Città Bilingue’, *Vent'Anni*, November 1, 1938, p. 5, ‘Pantofoli, Pantofolà’, *Vent'Anni*, November 18, 1939, p. 1, translated as ‘modest tone, like that of a parlour in a nunnery’.

bishops who were going to be appointed that year.¹³³ Already from these few articles it is possible to gauge the uncompromising nature of the Turinese weekly and to appreciate how those who portrayed themselves as “true Fascists” did not welcome the compromises reached by the regime (on a local, a national, and an international level), and to see how the newspaper condemned the lack of loyalty towards Fascist ideology of an impressive number of Italian institutions and individuals. The editorial board of *Vent’Anni* considered Fascist state-control, and with it the loyalty of the Italians and the Piedmontese people to the regime, to be challenged by other institutions, and openly condemned this trend throughout the newspaper’s life.

Vent’Anni’s critiques of the Turinese newspapers were just as harsh – if not often harsher – as those directed at other Italian dailies and journals. *La Stampa* was constantly picked upon, either for having had for years a director (Augusto Frassati) who did not know ‘come diavolo comportarsi, onde rendersi maggiormente prezioso ai bolscevichi’, or for being seen as absolutely aloof from the problems of the regime, or again for being the organ of that Turinese middle-class that did not want to get involved with Fascism (*La Stampa* was – in the editors’ minds – ironically called “sedere”, a word that translates as both the verb “to sit” and as the noun “buttocks”).¹³⁴ Other Turinese publications were also criticized, as in the case of the fashion newspaper *L’Alfiere*, guilty of both publicizing the latest foreign trends, and of being the umpteenth local newspaper giving frivolous information that was of no use to the Fascist cause.¹³⁵ One of the most significant condemnations of the theoretically fascistized newspapers of Turin came with a cartoon published in 1935, at the time of the war in Ethiopia: the cartoon depicted an editor of *Vent’Anni* leaving his empty office, (*Vent’Anni*’s journalists were supposedly all trying to get conscripted for the conflict), and the editorial offices of ‘some

¹³³ ‘La Stampa Italiana Ignora la Rivoluzione’, *Vent’Anni*, March 15, 1939, p. 15.

¹³⁴ ‘1919 – Il Senator Frassati e gli Arditi’, *Vent’Anni*, March 15, 1939, p. 14, translated as ‘how the hell to behave in order to be more useful for the bolsheviks’, ‘Guido Pallotta ai Commilitoni di “Vent’anni”’, *Vent’Anni*, November 18, 1939, p. 1.

¹³⁵ ‘Pubblicità Gratuita’, *Vent’Anni*, March 16, 1940, p. 9.

“dynamic” fascistized newspapers’, busy as usual with spreading culture and information without paying attention to the war.¹³⁶

Vent’Anni’s polemic verve also inspired the newspaper to address many of the most pressing problems that the regime had to face and to criticize the government’s action. The two issues that the newspaper focused upon the most were the insufficient influence of Fascism in the everyday life of the Italians and of the Piedmontese people, and the spectre of intellectual unemployment (a particularly daunting problem for a group of students like the editors of *Vent’Anni*).¹³⁷ The Turinese weekly launched attacks against supposed anti-fascist messages that were being subtly sent by Italian movies, it denounced the lack of commitment to Fascist ideals that was being displayed by local party members who were missing meetings with appalling frequency, and, most of all, it criticized all those who were supposed to be Fascists but had ‘più di una fede nel cuore e più di una tessera nel portafogli’.¹³⁸ On the subject of the last quote it is particularly interesting to look at what *Vent’Anni* said of the stereotypically successful people in Fascist Italy (people who enjoyed their success in a system that the editorial board of *Vent’Anni*, unlike the Fascist government, wanted to change without coming to a compromise with any institution): a successful man was ‘quell’individuo che sa mantenersi a galla in qualsiasi acque ... Durante il dopoguerra, trovò modo di non guastarsi la digestione, non immischiandosi in alcun partito, ma simpatizzando per i rossi: è iscritto al P.N.F. dal 1933, è ricco, fuma sigarette estere, veste come un nababbo, ha una strabiliante divisa di orbace ed è soddisfattissimo di sé’.¹³⁹ All the characteristics of this successful man were those of the stereotypical Turinese bourgeois, one of the most despicable

¹³⁶ Ring, ‘Redazioni’, *Vent’Anni*, March 1, 1935, p. 7. Cartoon in appendix (1).

¹³⁷ For an overview of the problems experienced by that generation of “Fascist intellectuals”: Bruno Wanrooij, ‘Italian Fascism as a ‘Generational’ Phenomenon’, in Aristotle A. Kallis (ed.), *The Fascism Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 381-390.

¹³⁸ ‘Evviva Oxford!’, *Vent’Anni*, December 15-30, 1935, p. 5, Renato Molinari, ‘Assenze Giustificate’, *Vent’Anni*, April 20, 1940, p. 9, ‘Risposta a “La Tribuna”’, *Vent’Anni*, December 15-30, 1935, p. 11, translated as ‘more than a faith in the heart, and more than a membership card in the wallet’.

¹³⁹ ‘Il Troglodita Ingenuo, Domande di un Troglodita’, *Vent’Anni*, May 1, 1938, p. 9, translated as ‘that individual who knows how to keep himself afloat in any kind of troubled waters ... After the war he did not trouble himself by getting involved in any party, but he had a liking for the reds: he has been a member of the P.N.F. since 1933, he is rich, he smokes foreign cigarettes, dresses like a nabob, has a stunning wool uniform and is very proud of himself’.

figures in the contemporary world according to *Vent'Anni*: this man was leaning moderately towards the left but had later become a member of the Fascist Party to avoid problems, he was wealthy, and he even had cosmopolitan ambitions (like the foreign cigarettes he smoked).

Intellectual unemployment became one of the main focuses of the newspaper only in its latter years (in particular from 1938 onwards). In April 1938 *Vent'Anni* criticized the regime's inability to persuade the Italian youth to enroll in the Fascist military academies, thus leading to the overcrowding of the Italian universities, in particular in the humanities and social sciences.¹⁴⁰ As early as 1923, the Riforma Gentile was supposed to tackle the problem of excessive university enrollment: Giovanni Gentile was aware of the fact that the Fascist State would have been capable of finding employment for most graduating scientists but not for many graduating humanities students, yet the number of students in the humanities and social sciences kept on increasing throughout the Fascist period (in itself a sign of the limitations of the social power of the regime).¹⁴¹ In July of 1938 *Vent'Anni* called for 'meno laureati, più operai specializzati', and hoped that the regime would stop the devaluation of the Italian university degrees, now accessible to too many people, but, incongruently, in January 1939 *Vent'Anni* argued that university graduates needed to enjoy special privileges if they were to enlist in the army.¹⁴² One of the articles that best highlighted the dissatisfaction of Turinese graduates with their potential prospective career paths was written in November 1938, when the author of the piece laconically wrote 'Perché questi ragazzi non trovano un posto, il "loro" posto nel mondo? Ma perché non c'è!'.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Guelfo La Manna, 'La Disoccupazione Intellettuale', *Vent'Anni*, April 1, 1938, pp. 2, 10.

¹⁴¹ For a discussion of intellectual unemployment: Marzio Barbagli, *Disoccupazione Intellettuale e Sistema Scolastico in Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1974), for a chart detailing university enrollment: George Talbot, *Censorship in Fascist Italy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 71.

¹⁴² Gianni Guizzardi, 'Meno Laureati e Più Operai Specialisti', July 15, 1938, p. 8 (titled translated as 'Less Graduates, More Skilled Workers'), 'Perché i Laureati Rivedibili Devono Fare il Soldato Semplice', *Vent'Anni*, January 1, 1939, p. 9.

¹⁴³ Renato Biondi, 'Giovane Volenteroso Occuperebbersi', *Vent'Anni*, November 1, 1938, p. 4, translated as 'Why do not these youngsters find a place, "their" place, in the world? Because such place does not exist!'

Despite the fact that *Vent'Anni's* Fascist rhetoric called for purity of ideals and action, the newspaper often presented its own inconsistencies. Guido Pallotta, the newspaper's director, was himself a true portrayal of this inconsistency: he was an aristocrat yet he condemned class differences in Fascist Italy, and his animosity towards *La Stampa* was said to have derived from the fact that the Turinese newspaper refused to hire some journalists Pallotta had recommended.¹⁴⁴ On April 1, 1934 the newspaper dedicated its first two pages to the activities of Don Giovanni Bosco, the 'santo della giovinezza', founder of the Salesians, one of the most popular Catholic organizations for the education of the Italian youth and a direct rival of the regime for the control of young Italians.¹⁴⁵ On the topic of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, *Vent'Anni* argued that all those who were Fascists in the heart and in the mind were free to express themselves, yet the regime seemed unable to correctly identify the "true" Fascists and for years the newspaper had been battling against those who claimed to be Fascists in the heart and in the mind only to have access to prominent positions in the Fascist State.¹⁴⁶ One of the most inconsistent articles published in *Vent'Anni* was written right after the beginning of the Second World War: the article praised the calmness with which Turin had received the news of the beginning of the conflict, but it can be easily read as a reference to the aloofness of the Turinese population towards the Fascist cause. Massimo Escard, the author of the article, wrote:

*Torino ha offerto, in questi giorni, uno spettacolo ammirevole di calma, serenità, coesione morale, disciplina, compostezza, quale si addice ad un popolo di alte tradizioni civili e militari. La città non ha avuto un attimo di turbamento, non ha rallentato il suo ritmo di lavoro. Nessun titolare di ufficio, nessun negoziante, in presenza degli avvenimenti, ha giudicato opportuno chiudere e prendere il largo. Si è lavorato come al solito.*¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ ACS, MinCulPop - DGP - NU.P.I.E. - 1932-1943 – Sezione I - Busta 13 – Torino – Schedario di Pubblicisti Scrittori ed Oratori-Conferenzieri, October 7, 1936, ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino – Note from 1934.

¹⁴⁵ 'Il Santo della Giovinezza', *Vent'Anni*, April 1-15, 1934, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴⁶ Michele Gandin, 'Libertà di Stampa', *Vent'Anni*, April 15, 1938, p.1.

¹⁴⁷ Massimo Escard, 'Torino Guerriera', *Vent'Anni*, September 15, 1939, p. 5, translated as 'Torino has offered in these days an admirable display of calmness, serenity, moral cohesion, discipline, and composure that fits well with a population with strong civilian and military traditions. The city has not had a moment of perturbation, its work rhythm has not slowed down. No firm owner, no shopkeeper, in light of the recent events, has decided to close and to flee. Turin worked as usual'.

Vent'Anni, therefore, can be seen as a peculiar Fascist newspaper. Far from being a mouthpiece of the regime, it condemned the dictatorship's shortcomings in multiple fields: from the inconsistencies of its organizations for social control to its limited capacity to infiltrate the local and national media, from the Fascist inability to solve the problem of intellectual unemployment to the readiness with which the regime reached compromises with strong institutions. *Vent'Anni* is a clear indication of how the Fascist regime struggled to appear and act as a monolithic bloc: considering the dictatorship's failure to censor and control official Fascist publications, therefore, it does not come as much of a surprise that the regime did not manage to fully censor the anti-fascist and, even more, a-fascist press. *Vent'Anni*, however, presented many of those same Fascist inconsistencies it was denouncing, from praising Catholic organizations for the education of youth to highlighting the serious and hardworking (and not particularly Fascist) attitude of the Turinese people during the 1930s. The preciousness of *Vent'Anni* for a study like this lies not so much in its pompous rhetoric or in its sense of humour at times highly vulgar and at times goliardic, but rather in the newspaper's keenness to point out both the limitations of the process of fascistization of the media and of the power and influence of Fascism on the Piedmontese population.

Conclusion

At this point it is possible to go back to Cesari's three key steps for the assertion of Fascist power over the Italian press and to assess to what extent the Fascist regime was able to successfully establish its control over Piedmontese dailies and periodicals.

The first step was to eradicate anti-Fascist newspapers. The regime can be said to have been very successful in stopping the publication of relatively small anti-fascist newspapers like *L'Ordine Nuovo*, *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, the Waldensian *Conscientia*, or the short-lived

Catholic *Il Lavoratore*. However, there were three main problems with the eradication of anti-fascism from the Piedmontese press overall. Firstly and most importantly, the regime only managed to partially curtail the anti-fascist stance of the more popular and more protected *La Stampa*: the daily's most vehemently and politically anti-fascist articles disappeared after Agnelli bought *La Stampa* in 1925-6, and in the same period the political pages of the newspaper started to be dominated by pompous Fascist rhetoric, but *La Stampa* criticized the regime's economic and social policies throughout the late 1920s and 1930s. Secondly, despite the death of Piero Gobetti and the imprisonment of Antonio Gramsci, many local anti-fascist journalists who had collaborated with the two editors kept on writing their articles throughout the Fascist era, either legally (in *Il Baretto* until its closure in 1928 and in *La Stampa*), or illegally (in pamphlets and underground cyclostyled journals). Thirdly, and in close relation to the previous point, Fascist authorities could not stop the publication and distribution of illegal anti-fascist materials, although it has to be remembered that these publications (like *Il Goliardo Rosso* or *Voci D'Officina*) circulated chiefly among intellectuals and factory workers.

The second step was to push a-fascist newspapers to follow and support the Fascist government's line of action. The most important a-fascist newspapers in Turin were the Catholic *Il Momento* and *La Voce dell'Operaio*. In both cases the regime was extremely successful in fascistizing completely the political pages of the two newspapers, in much the same way as it had done with *La Stampa*. The political articles of *Il Momento* and *La Voce dell'Operaio* seemed to blindly follow the regime's directives (the already mentioned *Veline*) and their tone and content appeared identical to those of the Fascist newspapers. Both newspapers, however, kept true to their religious character in their remaining pages, thus asserting the independence of the Catholic Church from the regime and contributing to its establishment as one of the most important limiting agents for Fascist social control.

The third step was to reduce the overall number of newspapers and journals that were being published in order to ensure a stricter regime control of the press. The Fascist regime

can be said to have generally failed in this aspect in Turin, as was also highlighted by *Vent'Anni*. As can already be gauged by the amount of newspapers that this chapter has discussed, or even just named, throughout the Fascist period the number of Turinese publications remained extremely high for an Italian city of little more than half a million people. These publications were not just political, but covered all aspects of Turinese social and economic life, and only *La Gazzetta del Popolo* thoroughly acted as the regime's mouthpiece throughout the Fascist period.

Overall, therefore, the Fascist government was able to impose its line on the political pages of the Turinese newspapers, but the local, economic, religious, and cultural pages of the Turinese publications remained virtually untouched. This implied that Fascist control over the Piedmontese newspapers, those key elements for the "mass production of public opinion", was not fully established. Moreover, the fact that local newspapers throughout the 1930s were still pursuing their – relatively – independent agendas on their local, economic, religious, and cultural pages shows that, although Fascist rhetoric called for the creation of a new and unified society, the Piedmontese one remained fragmented. As was often argued by *Vent'Anni*, the fact that the Turinese newspapers had been "fascitized" ever since the mid-1920s did not mean that they were truly "Fascist", but rather that they accepted the regime's influence on their political pages whilst continuing to pursue their own agendas. By comparison, Jean-Jacques Becker, following the argument of Georges Weill, has argued that French censorship during the First World War was not only meant 'merely to prevent the propagation of news harmful to the army', but that it also wanted to 'propagate ideas and sentiments likely to contribute to final victory'.¹⁴⁸ It is easy to find parallels with the aims of the Fascist government's approach to the press: the dictatorship not only wanted to stop the propagation of anti-fascism, but it needed the press to propagate ideas and sentiments likely to contribute to the Fascist revolution. The Fascist regime in Piedmont, however, can be said to have

¹⁴⁸ Jean-Jacques Becker, *The Great War and the French People*, (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1985), p. 57.

succeeded in almost fully extirpating anti-fascism from the local press, but it did not manage to turn local newspapers into governmental mouthpieces contributing to the Fascist cause.

This chapter, therefore, supports many of the general claims made by George Talbot, author of *Censorship in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943*, the only detailed study on Fascist censorship published in English. As Talbot has argued, the history of Italian journalism under the Fascist regime had less to do with loyalty to the dictatorship than it had to do with money (as in the case of *La Stampa*) or rivalries (as in the case of the Catholic newspapers since these, despite no longer being openly anti-fascist from the late 1920s onwards, were organs of an institution that rivaled the regime for social control).¹⁴⁹ Moreover Talbot has held that, as the Fascist regime constantly reached compromises with strong national or local institutions, few Italian journalists lost (or gave up) their posts compared to the exodus of subversive anti-Nazi journalists in Germany.¹⁵⁰ This conception is supported in this chapter by the analysis of *La Stampa*, with the high degree of continuity of its editorial board throughout the Fascist period. This chapter has also shown how justified was the fear of many Fascist hierarchs that the regime's message could be lost, or even worse distorted or only partially presented, by the Turinese press: the local pages of Piedmontese newspapers, in fact, often portrayed a society that was fragmented in a number of groups with a strong identity within which Fascism had not been able to penetrate thoroughly.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Talbot, *Censorship*, p. 77.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159

2. The Preservation of a Cult: Monarchy and Monarchism in Turin in the Fascist Period

SAR il Principe di Piemonte ha mostrato di seguire con entusiasmo quanto andavo dicendo, sottolineando anche con segni di approvazione gli accenni da me fatti sull'opera di rigenerazione patriottica svolta dal Fascismo negli anni del dopoguerra e di valorizzazione della Monarchia.¹⁵²

At the beginning of the 20th century the House of Savoy was, predictably, the most powerful traditional institution in Turin alongside the Catholic Church. Its symbols were a permanent feature of the daily lives of Piedmontese and Turinese people alike: the region's flag and coat of arms – just like the Italian flag – showed the crest of the ruling house, the Turinese landscape was marked by monarchic buildings (Palazzo Reale, but also Palazzo Madama and Palazzo Carignano only to name a few), royal residences were scattered throughout the countryside to allow kings and princes to hunt freely during their holidays (which they usually spent in Piedmont even after Rome was made capital), and the House of Savoy had even left its mark on the highest mountains surrounding the region (either by building functional mountain huts or by opening new paths to connect these to small alpine hamlets).

Despite their importance, however, the role of the House of Savoy and the nature of its power in Turin have been largely overlooked by historians. Clearly, this is in large part due to the fact that open access to the family archives has not yet been granted by the heirs of the monarchs.¹⁵³ The impossibility of consulting the sources in the possession of the House of

¹⁵² ACS, Archivi Fascisti - PNF - Direttorio Nazionale - Segreteria Politica - Situazione Politica Nelle Provincie - Busta 25 – Torino, Letter from the Segretario Federale Andrea Gastaldi to the Fascist Party Secretary Giovanni Giuriati, August 25, 1931, translated as: 'His Royal Highness the Prince of Piedmont followed with great enthusiasm what I told him, also nodding to my mentions of the Fascist works of patriotic regeneration in the post-war period and of the regime's works of valorization of the Monarchy'.

¹⁵³ A limited portion of the family's archives is accessible either at the Archivio Centrale di Stato in Rome or at the Archivio di Stato in Turin. However, the few available sources are either of a purely administrative fashion or are relative to the period before the unification of Italy. For a contemporary commentary on the issue: Giovanni Belardelli, 'L'Archivio Fantasma di Casa Savoia', *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 30, 1999, p. 35.

Savoy, therefore, makes it almost impossible to write a traditional political history of the Italian monarchy. What is possible however – and this will be the aim of this chapter – is to analyze the power that the House of Savoy held over the local population during the Fascist period: for such a task there is in fact no essential need to access the papers of the House of Savoy, and an analysis of the social power of the monarchy will prove crucial in assessing the success of the Fascist totalitarian project in the city. This chapter, therefore, will focus on the role of the popular glorification of the House of Savoy, which manifested itself in almost religious terms. This contrasts with the concept expressed by Emilio Gentile in his *Il Culto del Littorio* that Fascism was the first and only political entity in Italy to be sacralised. Moreover, the chapter will also deal with the centrality of both the monarchy and the Risorgimento in the development and preservation of a Piedmontese identity (in sharp contrast with the Fascist desire to portray the two as a simple passage in the regime’s great metanarrative that linked imperial Rome to Mussolini).¹⁵⁴

On a national level, the Fascist regime had to come to terms with the monarchy – and vice versa. Whilst, as Enzo Fimiani has pointed out, it is impossible to talk about the two elements of the “diarchy” as fully supportive of each other, it is undeniable that, on the Italian stage, monarchic acquiescence emboldened the Fascist regime and strengthened its political power.¹⁵⁵ Initially, Victor Emmanuel III did not approve of Fascist violence but supported the Fascists’ claim to be good patriots.¹⁵⁶ By 1930, the king had nearly disappeared from the national spotlight, and, as Denis Mack Smith pointed out ‘gave little sign of being displeased’.¹⁵⁷ Yet, the fact that the regime had to come to terms with the House of Savoy and formally – if not practically – acknowledge its superiority meant that, as Paolo Colombo wrote: ‘La rivoluzione Fascista si fermò davanti a un trono’.¹⁵⁸ In legal terms Victor Emmanuel III had,

¹⁵⁴ Emilio Gentile, *Il Culto del Littorio*, (Roma: Laterza, 1993), pp. 147, 287, 301-6.

¹⁵⁵ Enzo Fimiani, ‘Fascismo e Regime tra Meccanismi Statuari e “Costituzione Materiale”’, in Marco Palla (ed.) *Lo Stato Fascista*, (Milano: La Nuova Italia, 2001), p. 133.

¹⁵⁶ Denis Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 245.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹⁵⁸ Paolo Colombo, *La Monarchia Fascista – 1922-1940*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), p. 17.

until 1943, the right to bring about the end of the Fascist government (although it is debatable whether this right could have actually been used after the Matteotti crisis).¹⁵⁹ The king, also, kept on referring to Mussolini as “president” (a role supposedly subordinated to that of the monarch) rather than “Duce”.¹⁶⁰ The House of Savoy was practically – although not formally – overshadowed by the regime on a national level, (despite the fact that Fascism had to rhetorically prove its monarchic allegiances). Yet, in Turin – where the House of Savoy had played a much greater symbolic role in the life of the population than elsewhere in the country – the social power enjoyed by the royal family meant that Fascism encountered a fierce competitor for the hearts and minds of the local conservatives.¹⁶¹

Unfortunately, the limited available literature on the House of Savoy is of relatively little help for this chapter. The most important work on the topic still remains Denis Mack Smith’s unsurpassed *Italy and Its Monarchy*.¹⁶² Whilst the aim of this chapter is to go beyond the traditional political history produced by Mack Smith, his comments on the nature of the Italian diarchy during the Fascist period have been crucial for the development of this piece.¹⁶³ The closest thing to Mack Smith’s work from an Italian author is Aldo Mola’s *Storia della Monarchia in Italia*.¹⁶⁴ However, Mola’s work is seriously marred by his own position as a staunch monarchist and he often seems to resort more to rhetoric than to evidence (with his own verbosity leading him into a series of contradictions, like his depiction of an Italy firmly united around its monarch yet one also characterized by what he incongruously describes as a ‘guerra civile strisciante’ ever since unification).¹⁶⁵ Over the past few years, Paolo Colombo has also published books and articles on the Italian monarchy.¹⁶⁶ However, whilst these constitute

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁶¹ For an overview of the relatively poor symbolic role played by the House of Savoy on a national level: Christopher Duggan, ‘Francesco Crispi, the Problem of the Monarchy, and the Origins of Italian Nationalism’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 15, Issue 3, (2010), p. 351.

¹⁶² Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 273.

¹⁶⁴ Aldo Alessandro Mola, *Storia della Monarchia in Italia*, (Milano: Bompiani, 2002).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 754, translated as ‘creeping civil war’.

¹⁶⁶ Colombo, *La Monarchia Fascista*, Paolo Colombo, ‘Una Corona per una Nazione: Considerazioni sul Ruolo della Monarchia Costituzionale nella Costruzione dell’Identità Italiana’, in Marina Tesoro (ed.),

a clear step in the right direction compared to Mola's work, they often seem to paint the picture of an almost guiltless king who was too weak to counter the Fascist regime (a conception this chapter will challenge by presenting the House of Savoy as a still powerful institution – at least on a local level – that was trying to find a balance between preserving its autonomy and collaborating with the regime).¹⁶⁷

Given the limitations of the available literature on the social power and the myth of the House of Savoy during the Fascist period, this chapter has needed to draw inspiration from works of cultural history related to other countries. Of these works, Anna-Maria von der Goltz's *Hindenburg: Power, Myth, and the Rise of the Nazis* has arguably been the most inspiring for the drafting of this chapter.¹⁶⁸ In her book, von der Goltz has gone beyond the traditional political and military accounts on Hindenburg and concentrated on the way in which Hindenburg evolved into 'not at all a sharply delineated person with clear character traits, but a mythical slogan, a fetish'.¹⁶⁹ Just like in the work of von der Goltz, this chapter does not interpret the word "myth" as a synonym of falsification or lie, but rather as something that simplifies 'reality for the purpose of increasing affective mass unity'.¹⁷⁰

Von der Goltz was also one of the key contributors to the 2009 special edition of the *European History Quarterly* dedicated to hero cults and leadership myths. In that issue, Stefan Berger looked at the role of myths and collective memory in shaping national identities, a crucial factor for the relations between the House of Savoy and a Piedmontese population that often drew inspiration from the royal family when defining its core values.¹⁷¹ Issues of values and the myths that upheld those have then been further explored by von der Goltz and Robert

Monarchia, Tradizione, Identità Nazionale: Germania, Giappone e Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento, (Milano: Mondadori, 2004), pp. 21-34, Paolo Colombo, *La Monarchia Fascista – 1922-1940*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 152.

¹⁶⁸ Anna-Maria von der Goltz, *Hindenburg: Power, Myth, and the Rise of the Nazis*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁷¹ Stefan Berger, 'On the Role of Myths and History in the Construction of National Identity in Modern Europe', *European History Quarterly*, 39, 3 (2009), pp. 490-502.

Gildea in their joint article on the myths of Hindenburg and Pétain.¹⁷² Arguably the most important article for the development of this chapter, however, has been that of Robert Gerwarth and Lucy Riall dedicated to the myths of Bismarck and Garibaldi (whose cult had already been analyzed by Riall in her 2007 book *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero*).¹⁷³ In particular, the reflections on the myth of Garibaldi and the way in which it was used and interpreted – or even manipulated – in the first half of the 20th century have been of great inspiration for this chapter, particularly for the sections dedicated to the preservation of the myth of the House of Savoy and of its role in the Risorgimento.

Another work that has been of great help for the development of this chapter has been *The Invention of Tradition*, an edited collection by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. In his introduction to the book, Hobsbawm made a number of points that will be crucial for this chapter, highlighting how traditions could have threefold aims: to establish or symbolize social cohesion, to define relations of authority, and to inculcate beliefs and value systems.¹⁷⁴ In the case of the House of Savoy in Turin, it is possible to see how mobilization for traditional monarchic events (like the expositions of the Holy Shroud that will be analyzed in the fourth chapter of this thesis) both inspired and symbolized local social cohesion. On top of that, the presence of Fascist authorities at royal ceremonies (or other examples of Fascist recognition of monarchic power), as well as the clear predilection of the Catholic Church for the monarchy over the regime, contributed to paint a picture of the royal family as an entity completely independent from – and, at least in the Turinese case, often superior to – the regime. Lastly, the sobriety and Catholic piety of many events involving the monarchy in Turin contributed to defining local values. In his chapter in the same Hobsbawm and Ranger edited collection, David Cannadine highlighted how traditional monarchic displays in the United Kingdom ‘in a period

¹⁷² Anna von der Goltz and Robert Gildea, ‘Flawed Saviours: the Myths of Hindenburg and Pétain’, Stefan Berger, *European History Quarterly*, 39, 3 (2009), pp. 439-464.

¹⁷³ Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), Robert Gerwarth and Lucy Riall, ‘Fathers of the Nations? Bismarck, Garibaldi and the Cult of Memory in Germany and Italy’, *European History Quarterly*, 39, 3 (2009), pp. 388-413.

¹⁷⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 9.

of change, conflict or crisis' were used to 'give an impression of continuity, community and comfort, despite overwhelming contextual evidence of the contrary'.¹⁷⁵ This, clearly, has been a crucial issue for the development of this chapter, as the House of Savoy in Turin constantly looked at its role in the past of the city in order to legitimize its social power over it in spite of the emergence of the Fascist regime.

In order to assess the power held by the House of Savoy in Turin during the Fascist period and the strength of the myth of the royal family, this chapter will start by looking at monarchic presence – either physical or symbolic – in the city. This presence manifested itself in a variety of ways: the king and the princes were in fact very often required to take part in public ceremonies (not just royal ones, but also religious and state ones as well as sports events). Moreover, the fact that the royal family travelled extensively around Piedmont – in particular during the holiday periods – dramatically increased their visibility, and, lastly, royal presence was also strongly felt by the local population because of the charity work of the House of Savoy. After this discussion, it will then be possible to turn to manifestations of acknowledgment of the power of the royal family. This kind of recognition occurred at two different levels: on the one hand, local Fascist authorities often referred – either explicitly or implicitly – to their need for monarchic backing, whilst, on the other hand, many locals recognized the power of the ruling family by sending to its members hundreds of letters every month (either to plead for something or to simply congratulate the royals for the most disparate reasons). The key section of this chapter will then look at the preservation of the memory of the House of Savoy (in particular through the creation of the Museo del Risorgimento) and at the creation and defence of the myths surrounding the royal family (and at the role that contemporary media played in that process) throughout the Fascist period in general (but giving particular importance to the supposed “years of consensus” for the Fascist regime in the 1930s).

¹⁷⁵ David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820-1977', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 105.

The Presence of the House of Savoy in Turin

Whilst Mussolini only visited Turin three times throughout the Fascist period, the king and his sons made countless visits and appearances in Turin and in Piedmont between the 1920s and the 1940s. Two children of King Victor Emmanuel (Princess Iolanda and Umberto, the Prince of Piedmont) even lived in the city for long periods of time during the Fascist era. The most visible member of the royal family in Turin was surely Umberto, who moved to Turin in 1925 and was later joined by his wife Maria José of Belgium, whom he married in Rome. The engagement of Umberto and the Belgian princess had profoundly hit the city, which felt its 'orgoglio farsi più alto e più puro, mutarsi tutto in tenerezza e amore'.¹⁷⁶ Whilst the Turinese population immediately warmed to her, Maria José, with her short hairstyle, was seen by the most patriarchal Fascists as unjustifiably encouraging female liberation.¹⁷⁷ Whilst the wedding ceremony was held in the capital, the greatest event organized to celebrate the union took place in Turin in 1931, when Victor Emmanuel decided to commemorate the wedding of the heir to the throne by ordering the first exposition of the Holy Shroud of the 20th century. The visibility of members of the House of Savoy in the city, just like the evident architectural symbols of monarchic glory, were simultaneously a constant reminder of the social power of the ruling family in Turin and a way to strengthen and reassert this power. In this section of the chapter, attention will be paid to a number of different ways in which the strong presence of the royal family manifested itself at the local level. The first part of the section will be dedicated to the role of the king or of members of his family in local ceremonies of various kinds, with an analysis of royal, state, and religious ceremonies, but also of sports events. The second part of the section will then move on to a brief discussion of the Piedmontese holidays of the monarchs and of how these vacation periods increased the visibility of the family in and

¹⁷⁶ 'Il Giubileo di Torino', *La Stampa*, October 24, 1929, p. 2, translated as 'pride growing higher and purer, fully turning in tenderness and love'.

¹⁷⁷ R.J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy – Life Under the Dictatorship – 1915-1945*, (London: Allen Lane, 2005), p. 322.

around Turin by reasserting the strong links between the House of Savoy and a region that was very much perceived to be the family's own. The third and last part of this section will then look at charity works launched and supported by the royal family and how these contributed to maintaining a high level of popularity for the House of Savoy at the grassroots level.

The presence of the House of Savoy in the city was officially celebrated by a variety of different social groups. Between 1927 and 1928, for example, the University of Turin – probably with the support of the group of aristocratic and traditionally conservative intellectuals of the *Accademia delle Scienze* – awarded degrees “honoris causa” to Victor Emmanuel III, to the Duke of Aosta, and to the Duke of the Abruzzi.¹⁷⁸ The ceremonies were public displays of loyalty towards the royal family, and they were held in the presence of Umberto, the Prince of Piedmont.¹⁷⁹ At the same time, even these ceremonies served as a reminder of the glory of the Piedmontese past, of the role of the royal family in fostering local culture and unifying Italy, and of the way in which Piedmontese values were intended to ideally be identified with Italian ones.¹⁸⁰ 1928, obviously, also marked the tenth anniversary of the Italian mutilated victory in the First World War. Yet, the “Committee for Celebrations and Exhibitions” set up by the municipality, deemed it necessary to spend the year celebrating, first and foremost, the 400th anniversary of the birth of Emmanuel Philibert, the Duke of Savoy and the ruler who had seized control of the city of Turin for the House of Savoy.¹⁸¹ The celebration of the presence of the House of Savoy in the city, just like the joy at happy events in the life of the family, was not a peculiarity of the local aristocrats and of the ruling elites, but was a characteristic of all the Turinese social classes. For example, on occasion of the birth of the heir to the throne in 1937 (again a Victor Emmanuel), letters flooded to the Prince of

¹⁷⁸ ‘Il Conferimento della laurea “honoris causa” al Duca d’Aosta ed al Duca degli Abruzzi’, *La Stampa*, July 9, 1928, p. 3.

¹⁷⁹ AST, Prefettura di Torino – Gabinetto – Primo Versamento – Busta 3 – Famiglia Reale poi Presidenza della Repubblica - 1925-1940, Cartella Duca D’Aosta, letter from the Questura to the Prefetto, July 6, 1928.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Il Conferimento della laurea “honoris causa” al Duca d’Aosta ed al Duca degli Abruzzi’, *La Stampa*, July 9, 1928, p. 3.

¹⁸¹ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 1 – FRPR – 1905-1930.

Piedmont from everywhere. The royal family received messages from the Waldensian towns outside Turin – celebrating the fact that the House of Savoy had been the first monarchy in modern Western Europe to grant religious liberties for protestant groups – or from the archivists of the Archivio di Stato di Torino – who portrayed themselves as ‘gelosi custodi dei documenti di un millennio di storia sabauda’ and praised the ‘gloriosa Dinastia’.¹⁸² History, therefore, was used to put the monarchy at the centre of regional life and identity, in open contrast to the Fascist attempts to reduce the symbolic importance of the monarchy to that of a passing institution in the historical process that linked imperial Rome to Mussolini’s regime.

Predictably, the one institution that most celebrated the presence of the House of Savoy in the city was the Catholic Church (and the links between the local Church and the royal family will be a recurring theme throughout the first half of this thesis). The two Cardinals (Giuseppe Gamba and later Maurilio Fossati) who were appointed to lead the Turinese diocese during the Fascist period often required the presence of a member of the royal family in order to add further importance to Catholic ceremonies. The clearest manifestations of the joint efforts of monarchy and Catholics were the two expositions of the Holy Shroud in 1931 and 1933. Countless other ceremonies, however, saw local senior prelates and members of the royal family side by side, solidifying the almost religious power of the monarchy in the region.

Ceremonies that saw the collaboration of the Catholic Church and the House of Savoy could be public, like visits to Catholic schools, hospitals, and nursing homes (and in those cases the two institutions could be seen as mobilizing together for charity, thus increasing their popularity at the grassroots level).¹⁸³ On top of that, when residing in Turin, Prince Umberto often accepted Cardinal Gamba’s invitations to inspect the renovation works that were taking

¹⁸² AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 3 – FRPR – 1925-1940, letter from the Podestà of Villar Pellice to the Prefetto, February 14, 1937, letter from the superintendent of the Archivio di Stato di Stato di Torino, 1937, translated as ‘jealous keepers of the documents of a millennium of Sabaudian history’ and ‘glorious Dynasty’.

¹⁸³ ASD, 14.1 – Fondo Gamba – Carte Personali, letter from the Primo Aiutante di Campo to Cardinal Gamba, October 2, 1926, AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV- Busta 213 – Scioglimento Circoli e Associazioni – 1925-1948, letter from the Primo Aiutante di Campo to the Prefetto, May 5, 1927, letter from the Primo Aiutante di Campo to the Prefetto, May 29, 1926, letter from the Primo Aiutante di Campo to the Prefetto, May 25, 1929.

place in many Turinese churches (and in particular in the Cathedral).¹⁸⁴ Of course, many of the ceremonies involving both Catholic Church and House of Savoy were actually solemn masses, and in these cases the members of the royal family – seated in the royal tribunes of the various churches of the city – could be admired by the faithful community sitting or standing either behind or below them.¹⁸⁵ During those ceremonies, local aristocrats also fought amongst themselves in order to have the privilege of sitting next to a member of the royal family or of helping a prince or the king in some way (like holding their baldachin), in itself a display of an entrenched aristocratic elite that even during the Fascist period was still striving to prove its allegiance to the traditional Italian institutions.¹⁸⁶

Other times, the ceremonies could be of a much more private nature – demonstrating the awareness on both sides of the need to maintain a very solid diplomatic link – as happened for instance with the annual invitations made by Cardinal Gamba to the king and to his sons for meetings at the beginning of each new year.¹⁸⁷ Or the visits of the royals to Catholic hospitals and nursing homes could be private, allowing the patients to almost experience a feeling of intimacy with the royals unaccompanied by other state authorities. This happened for instance in the case of a visit to the Cottolengo 1929 – the most famous of the Turinese nursing homes of the time – when Umberto's visit 'assumerà pertanto carattere privato, senza intervento ufficiale delle Autorità'.¹⁸⁸ Moreover, these private visits also allowed the visiting royals to interact with the hospitals' directors and other members of staff (who usually belonged to a religious order), thus cementing the links between the House of Savoy and the Turinese Catholic Church. Given the bonds between the monarchy and the Catholic Church, therefore, it is not at all surprising to see that local Catholic organizations like the Salesian Family (founded

¹⁸⁴ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP.

¹⁸⁵ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP, letter from the Primo Aiutante di Campo to Cardinal Gamba, October 2, 1926, ACS, Ministero dell'Interno – Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza – 1933 – Busta 56 – Ordine Pubblico Torino, telegram from the Prefettura to the Ministry of Interior, November 16, 1933.

¹⁸⁶ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP, letter from the Commissario Straordinario to Cardinal Gamba, November 7, 1925.

¹⁸⁷ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP, various letters from the Primo Aiutante di Campo to Cardinal Gamba.

¹⁸⁸ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV- Busta 213 – SCA – letter from the Primo Aiutante di Campo to the Prefetto, May 25, 1929.

in Turin in order to help poor children and underprivileged families) would start their official conventions by formally sending thanks to both the king and the pope at the same time.¹⁸⁹

The presence of members of the royal family at sports events also contributed to increase the visibility of the House of Savoy in Turin. Even for events organized by Fascist associations, the king and the prince of Piedmont were asked to offer personalized memorabilia for the winners of the various competitions (cups, trophies, and plates, but also autographed pictures were used in these cases).¹⁹⁰ According to reports, the presence of a member of the House of Savoy in one of the Turinese sports arenas would cause the crowd to cheerfully erupt.¹⁹¹ What is particularly fascinating is that, whilst it seems as if the regime was asking for royal support for the organization of Fascist summer sports events, the monarchy was quite clearly the one institution that dominated all winter sports competitions. For instance, the most strenuous ski-touring races in Italy (and at the time – arguably – in the world) were often sponsored by the royal family.¹⁹² The regime was the protagonist of the summer *Littoriali dello Sport* (a sporting event that saw the various sections of the Gioventù Universitaria Fascista – GUF – compete with each other), but the monarchy always stole the scene for the winter versions of the games (competitions that were particularly felt in Turin). The most coveted prize at the winter *Littoriali* – the one given to the winner of the downhill skiing race – was the “king’s golden ski” and not the golden Mussolinian “M” like in the summer version of these competitions.¹⁹³ The emotional link between the monarchy and what were essentially depicted as the House of Savoy’s very own mountains was also reflected by the name of the team of the Turinese GUF for the winter *Littoriali* (*Principe di Piemonte*) and by the presence of Prince Umberto at other skiing competitions held near Turin and involving

¹⁸⁹ ACS, Minister dell’Interno – DGPS – 1926 – Busta 92 – Ordine Pubblico Torino – Letter from Agostino D’Adamo to the Ministry of Interior, May 27, 1926.

¹⁹⁰ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 569 – Cultura, Turismo, e Attività Sportive – 1924-1940, letter from the Primo Aiutante di Campo to the Prefetto, April 24, 1937.

¹⁹¹ ACS, MI – DGPS – 1933 – Sezione II – Busta 56 – Ordine Pubblico Torino, Telegram from the Prefetto Umberto Ricci to the Ministry of Interior, September 7, 1933.

¹⁹² AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 569 – CTAS – 1924-1940, Letter from the Questura to the Prefetto, June 8, 1937.

¹⁹³ ‘Rivista Allo Schieramento di Bardonecchia’, *La Stampa*, January 20, 1933, p. 4.

the local GUF.¹⁹⁴ Precisely because of the sports events it got involved in, the House of Savoy remained the national institution most closely associated with the Piedmontese mountains. These mountains were a permanent feature of local life and the harsh reality of life on the Alps was perceived as having contributed greatly to the creation and the definition of a Piedmontese identity.

The visibility of the House of Savoy in and around Turin was then increased by the long holiday periods that family members would spend in the region throughout the Fascist era. Every summer, in fact, the king and his family would visit Turin before moving to one of the family's palaces around the region. One very frequent destination was the mountain village of Valdieri – where in the 19th century the royal family had built its own hunting resort and from which it had created new trails known locally as “the King's highway” to allow the royals to hunt freely around the valley.¹⁹⁵ Another popular destination was the family's castle in the town of Racconigi (30 kilometres away from Turin): this place in fact was often used by the king to escape from the political arena in Rome, and Victor Emmanuel decided to donate the castle to Umberto after he got married and moved to Piedmont in 1930.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, Racconigi was also the place where Victor Emmanuel's daughter, Princess Mafalda, was married in 1925, when the entire local population tried to get a glimpse of the ceremony (held in the castle) from the town's main square: ‘gente di ogni specie e condizione, su tutti i mezzi di trasporto, su carri rustici, su automobile di lusso, su carretti e carrozze’.¹⁹⁷ Local women were particularly attracted by this monarchic ritual, in sharp contrast with the relative inability of the early Fascist regime to mobilize Italian women: as *La Stampa* reported ‘Anche se vedranno poco, anche se non vedranno niente [...] potranno dire che vicino a loro, poco distante, nella cappella di un regale castello, un cuore che ama realizza il suo bel sogno di

¹⁹⁴ ‘L’Inaugurazione dei Littoriali della Neve’, *La Stampa*, January 24, 1933, p. 1, ‘Il Principe Umberto Premia le “Maglie Nere” Vittoriose’, *La Stampa*, December 30, 1933, p. 4.

¹⁹⁵ ACS, Real Casa – Viaggi Reali.

¹⁹⁶ Mola, *Storia della Monarchia*.

¹⁹⁷ ‘La Festa di Nozze a Racconigi – Mafalda di Savoia Sposa a Filippo d’Assia’, *La Stampa*, September 24, 1925, p. 1, translated as ‘people of every kind and class, on all means of transport, on rustic chariots, luxury cars, carts and carriages’.

amore. E per loro ciò basterà'.¹⁹⁸ Events like the wedding of Mafalda, therefore, were unique occasions in which the royal family could rejoice with individual families and the local family, and vice versa.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, similar events contributed to endear the House of Savoy to many Piedmontese people as this was seen as it sharing some of its most intimate moments with the local population.

Here, it is interesting to look briefly at the role of Turin and of the royal estates in Piedmont in relation to Rome. The royal family kept on going back to Piedmont even after the unification of Italy (so much so that even Victor Emmanuel II spent relatively little time in Florence and Rome and always went back to Turin at every opportunity).²⁰⁰ The Piedmontese retreats of Victor Emmanuel III were thus a perfect example of the king's desire to distance himself as often as possible from issues of party politics.²⁰¹ The frequent visits of members of the House of Savoy allowed the dynasty to maintain a strong degree of social power in the region throughout the Fascist period (and actually beyond that as well). For instance, both Valdieri and Racconigi – the royals' favourite places for the holidays – were in the province of Cuneo (bordering to the South with Turin). Out of all the Piedmontese provinces, that of Cuneo, as shown by the 1946 referendum, was the one that remained most loyal to the House of Savoy even after the end of the Second World War (whilst the results in Turin corresponded to the average in the region).²⁰² The constant presence of members of the House of Savoy either in Turin or in the many royal palaces scattered around Piedmont thus ensured a high degree of visibility for the royal family and contributed to maintaining its social power at a high level and to the association of many Turinese and Piedmontese people with the monarchy

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., translated as 'Even if they will only see a little bit, even if they will not see anything [...] they will be able to say that very near, in the chapel of a royal castle, a loving heart is realizing its dream of love. And that will be enough for them'.

¹⁹⁹ For a similar reflection applied to the case of British royals: Cannadine 'British Monarchy', p. 140.

²⁰⁰ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, p. 63.

²⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 149, 217.

²⁰² Table produced by the Istituto per la Storia della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea in Provincia di Alessandria "Carlo Gilardenghi" in the appendix (2). Also available on-line at [http://www.isral.it/web/web/risorsedocumenti/2%20giugno referendum tabelle%20riassuntive.htm](http://www.isral.it/web/web/risorsedocumenti/2%20giugno%20referendum%20tabelle%20riassuntive.htm) (accessed on January 7, 2013)

(something that was much harder for Fascism and for Mussolini himself given his reluctance to visit the city).

Another factor that showed the presence of the House of Savoy in the city whilst also increasing its popularity at the grassroots level was the family's charity work. The royal family was particularly active in its support for the poorer people of the city and in the creation and maintenance of hospitals and hospices.²⁰³ At every happy event for the royal family, a number of local institutions mobilized themselves in order to raise money to be donated to a charity picked by members of the House of Savoy. These institutions that mobilized themselves were of various different kinds: banks (Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, and Istituto San Paolo), factories (the car-producing FIAT, and the wire-producing CEAT), state institutions (the National Financial Institute, and the Royal Superintendence for Higher Education), and a number of committees and clubs for noblemen and noblewomen.²⁰⁴ In addition – and highlighting a certain communality of interests between the royal family and the local industrial elite – a number of events organized to raise funds for orphans and boys and girls from challenging backgrounds saw the House of Savoy cooperating closely with the charitable foundations created and led by Virginia Agnelli, daughter-in-law of FIAT founder and owner Giovanni Agnelli (yet another instance of entrenched Turinese elites cooperating independently from the Fascist regime).²⁰⁵

The regime was acutely aware of the popularity of the charitable works of the House of Savoy at the local level and of the capacity of members of the royal family to mobilize local society upon similar occasions, and it is thus not a surprise that in Turin the Fascist authorities relied on Princess Iolanda to deliver the keynote speech on the day of *Oro alla Patria* in 1935 (a manifestation in which Italian couples were strongly invited to donate their golden wedding

²⁰³ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 1 – FRPR – 1905-1930, AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 3 – FRPR – 1925-1940.

²⁰⁴ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 5 – FRPR – 1927-1942, note from the Opera Nazionale per la Protezione della Maternità e dell'Infanzia, February 2, 1939.

²⁰⁵ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 570 – CTAS – 1925-1943, letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, January 16, 1940.

rings to the motherland in exchange for an iron ring produced by the regime).²⁰⁶ On that day, thus, it appeared as if the regime needed the help of a number of traditional institutions as well as of some deeply emotionally charged images in order to fully mobilize the local population. The speech that was read by Iolanda had been written by her mother, Queen Elena.²⁰⁷ Moreover, despite the fact that the event had no religious connotation, it was held in the church of the Gran Madre di Dio (a church that had been built in honour of Victor Emmanuel I), and in particular in the ossuary of the martyrs of the First World War.²⁰⁸ The regime, therefore, tried to mobilize the Turinese women thanks to the example of virtuous and noble ladies (Princess Iolanda and Queen Elena) and also by appealing to their Catholic piety and their feelings as both devout – and at times mourning – wives and mothers.

The presence of the House of Savoy, therefore, was felt by the local population in a number of different ways. Members of the royal family were seen and celebrated not only during royal ceremonies, but also during religious rituals and sports events, something that enabled them to maintain their popularity with various sectors of local society (a popularity that could push people to spend hours in front of the royal palace to get a glimpse of Umberto and Maria José after their wedding in 1930 or that could even attract a hundred thousand people to Piazza Castello on the occasion of one of the royals' many visits to the city in 1928).²⁰⁹ In addition, the frequent travels to and around the region by the royal family allowed its members to be often seen by the local population even in more private and informal settings, thus arguably increasing the popular respect for a family that – in what was perceived as typically Piedmontese fashion – decided to spend as much as time as possible away from the spotlight. Popular respect for the family was then maintained at a high level thanks to the many charitable initiatives by the House of Savoy in Turin (and also thanks to the family's

²⁰⁶ 'La Superba e Commovente Offerta delle Donne Torinesi', *La Stampa*, December 18, 1935, p. 1.

²⁰⁷ 'Oggi di fronte all'Ara dei Gloriosi Caduti le Spose Troveranno una Nuova Altissima Consacrazione', *La Stampa*, December 18, 1935, p. 4.

²⁰⁸ 'La Superba e Commovente Offerta delle Donne Torinesi', *La Stampa*, December 18, 1935, p. 1.

²⁰⁹ 'Convegni a Corte e Dimostrazioni di Popolo per i Principi Sposi', February 5, 1930, p. 6, 'La Vibrante Accoglienza di Torino ai Sovrani', *La Stampa*, April 30, 1928, p. 1.

ability to mobilize other institutions in its efforts). The frequent – if not constant – presence of the royal family and the respect it still commanded in the region were the basis of the social power of the monarchy in Turin, a kind of power that was praised both from above (by Fascist authorities) and from below (by countless Turinese people).

The Power of the House of Savoy: the Fascist Need for Support and the Requests of the Piedmontese Population

The constant presence and popularity of the House of Savoy in Turin meant that the power of the royal family in the city – even during the Fascist period – remained strong. As Mack Smith wrote ‘Twenty years [...] was not long enough a period for a change in the mentality of a whole people. In form if not substance, Italy was governed by a ‘diarchy’ in which loyalties were sometimes divided’.²¹⁰ This section of the chapter will look at the ways in which this monarchic power was acknowledged and perceived both from above and from below. The first part of the section will look at displays of loyalty towards the monarchy coming from Fascist hierarchs and at some of the many occasions in which the regime and its organizations seemed to rely on monarchic support – or at least consent – in order to legitimize their own position in Turin. The second part of the section will then look at the other side of the coin and analyze some letters sent from the local population to members of the House of Savoy either to ask for royal help or to celebrate some kind of monarchic event (unfortunately – however – only a handful of letters were available for this part as most of the evidence in this case is still held in the personal archives of members of the family).

Often, Fascist hierarchs demonstrated their support for the monarchy and for monarchic values both in public and in private. In Piedmont, Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon – having been one of the *quadrumviri* of the March on Rome – was considered by

²¹⁰ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, p. 273.

many as the most prominent Fascist hierarch, yet his loyalty was divided between the regime, the monarchy, and the Catholic Church (he was the first Italian ambassador to the Holy See).²¹¹ His personal allegiances inspired De Vecchi to glorify royal figures by giving them a religious aura (Prince Umberto, for instance, had the gift of enhancing the solemnity of state rituals ‘cola augusta presenza’²¹²) and – in the period immediately following the March on Rome – he even mentioned to Mussolini that he would turn against the *Duce* if the latter was to revert to his initial republican ideals.²¹³ Local Fascist hierarchs – like the Segretario Federale Andrea Gastaldi – never ceased to highlight the great steps taken by Fascism not only in the reconstruction of the country after the First World War, but also in the strengthening of the power of the House of Savoy and in fostering the popular support for the ruling family.²¹⁴ With typical Fascist rhetoric, Gastaldi reportedly praised the ‘opera di rigenerazione patriottica svolta dal Fascismo negli anni del dopoguerra e di valorizzazione della Monarchia’.²¹⁵ Whether the latter part can be considered true or not, it is crucial to see how the regime (in particular at the local level) still had to present itself as the defender of the monarchy and of monarchic values, in itself a demonstration of the social – if not political – power still enjoyed by the ruling family. Moreover, Fascist authorities visiting from Rome like party secretary Augusto Turati or the *Duce* himself, also had to acknowledge the power of the House of Savoy in Turin. Both, in fact, had to pay visits to (or – as the Prefetti reported – were given a private hearing by) either the king in Racconigi, or the prince in Turin.²¹⁶

²¹¹ Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon, *Tra Papa, Duce e Re*, Sandro Setta (ed.) (Roma: Jouvence, 1998).

²¹² ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP – Telegram from Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon to Cardinal Gamba, March 5, 1928, translated as ‘with his august presence’.

²¹³ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, p. 245.

²¹⁴ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Letter from the Segretario Federale Andrea Gastaldi to the Fascist Party Secretary Giovanni Giuriati, August 25 1931.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, translated as: ‘works of patriotic regeneration in the post-war period and of the regime’s works of valorization of the Monarchy’.

²¹⁶ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 486 – Presidente del Consiglio – 1926-1933, telegram from the Prefetto to Alessandro Chiavolini (*segretario particolare del Duce*), October 15, 1932; ACS, MI – DGPS – 1928 – Busta 177 – Ordine Pubblico Torino – telegram from the Prefetto Raffaele De Vita to the Ministry of Interior, June 2, 1928.

Just like Fascist hierarchs, Fascist organizations also had to acknowledge, support, and often even bow down to the power of the House of Savoy in Turin. This was done in a variety of different ways, from declaring the city firstly “Sabaudian” and only secondly “Fascist” in public speeches (also indirectly reasserting the independence of the House of Savoy from the Fascist state) to mobilizing civil servants for monarchic events (a mobilization that could entail simple acts like raising flags and lighting state buildings for royal birthdays or that could mean parading in front of the royal palace for weddings and other extraordinary events), and these efforts were then repaid by the ruling family with its presence and help at Fascist events.²¹⁷ For instance, right after the signing of the Concordat in 1929, the local delegate of the Ministry of Education, Umberto Renda, sent a circular letter to all the headmasters and teachers in the city highlighting how the *Questione Romana* (the problematic issue of Rome as both Italian capital and Holy See) was resolved by Mussolini who was leading Italy ‘per Volontà del RE e per paterno amore del Pontefice Pio XI’²¹⁸ – thus displaying a clear awareness of the way in which Fascism was to be presented to the local population – and how the ‘Piemonte Sabaudo e Cattolico’²¹⁹ was supposed to rejoice at this political and diplomatic success. Even the various sections of the armed forces (supposedly loyal to the regime, but, according to Juan J. Linz, highly independent) displayed their loyalty to the House of Savoy at all the military reviews organized in honour of the ruling family.²²⁰

Even events relating to a more private sphere – like the birth of a new member of the royal family – were publicly celebrated by Fascist authorities. For instance, on the occasion of the birth of Umberto’s first daughter – Maria Pia di Savoia – in 1934, every single section of the Fascist party in the province of Turin, with the only exception being the small (and in rather

²¹⁷ For examples, see ‘Il Podestà Esprime al Duce la Riconoscenza di Torino’, *La Stampa*, May 18, 1939, p. 4, ‘Storia di un Monumento’, *La Stampa*, December 26, 1932, p. 6, AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 3 – FRPR – 1925-1940, fonogram from the Prefetto Giovanni Oriolo to the Prefettura, February 12, 1937.

²¹⁸ ASD, 14.3 – FG – CP – Circular Letter from Provveditore Umberto Renda, February 14, 1929, translated as ‘for the desire of the KING and the fatherly love of Pope Pius XI’.

²¹⁹ Ibid., translated as ‘Sabaudian and Catholic Piedmont’.

²²⁰ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 628 – Cerimoniale – 1927-1948, note from the Command of the Military Division of Turin, May 30, 1928, Linz, Juan J., *Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes* (London: Boudler, 2000), p. 7.

precarious economic conditions) section of Giaglione, made a public donation to a charity picked by the royal family.²²¹ Or again, in 1937, after the birth of Umberto's first son and future heir to the throne, government buildings as well as those of Fascist organizations were decorated to celebrate the event.²²² Moreover, all the personnel working in those buildings were granted a full day of paid holiday, surely increasing the popularity of the ruling family at the local level.²²³ All these efforts by the regime were then repaid by the House of Savoy. As already hinted at above, members of the family (and in particular the women) helped the regime when it needed to mobilize the population for a "worthy cause" (in Turin as in Rome): Iolanda for example helped collecting wedding rings during the day of *Oro alla Patria* in Turin in 1935, whilst at Christmas time in 1931 the queen herself distributed gifts to the children of families belonging to Fascist organizations in Rome.²²⁴ The male members of the family, on the other hand, were often required to be present at celebrations of Fascist military might, like in 1931 when Umberto was the guest of honour at the anniversary celebration of the foundation of the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento in Turin (a ceremony during which he received a special medal with a *fascio littorio* on one side and his face and effigies on the other).²²⁵

The public reverence that the Fascist regime showed for the House of Savoy in Turin was a direct result of the social power enjoyed by the ruling family in the city. The dictatorship, in fact, could not afford to alienate a dynasty that still commanded the respect of many Italians and of very large sections of the Turinese population. On the occasion of all those monarchic events, anniversaries, and birthdays that saw the regime mobilize its own forces in support of the House of Savoy, members of the royal family received hundreds of congratulatory letters

²²¹ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 3 – FRPR – 1925-1940, Letter from the Podestà di Gaglione to the Fiduciaria Provinciale dei Fasci Femminili, October 15, 1934.

²²² AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 3 – FRPR – 1925-1940, Fonogram from the Prefetto Giovanni Oriolo to all State Institutions in Turin, February 12, 1937.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ 'La Superba e Commovente Offerta delle Donne Torinesi', *La Stampa*, December 18, 1935, p. 1, 'S.M. la Regina partecipa a Roma alla distribuzione dei doni ai bimbi nelle sedi dei Gruppi rionali', *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, January 19, 1939, p. 2.

²²⁵ 'La Celebrazione alla Presenza dei Principi', *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, March 22, 1931, p. 6.

from the Piedmontese population.²²⁶ Those letters then received a reply after the family secretaries obtained from both the Turinese *Prefettura* and *Questura* the confirmation that the people who had sent the congratulatory messages were – at least according to Fascist standards – ‘di regolare condotta morale e politica’.²²⁷ Many times those letters were absolutely disinterested displays of loyalty and faith in the monarchy, but at other times they could contain more or less subtle pleas for help. This was the case, for instance, of Anna Berti, who wrote to Princess Iolanda to thank her for a baby-outfit that the princess had sent her and also seized the opportunity to attach to the letter her own *tessera di povertà* (a card that was given to indigent people to allow them to obtain goods at discounted prices).²²⁸

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the messages that members of the House of Savoy received from the Piedmontese population remains unavailable. One message that slipped through the cracks and that is rather revealing is a telegram sent to Queen Elena from Adele Carrera in 1938. In her telegram, this old teacher reflected upon a number of issues already discussed – like the constant presence of the House of Savoy at the local level or the sacralization of the House of Savoy. As Adele Carrera wrote: ‘Come visione celeste appariste nel 1898 ad una collegiale orfana ora insegnante anziana. La visione rimase nel cuore. Vi seguì silenziosa nella Vostra Augusta santa vita piena di carità. AmmirandoVi ardisco talvolta come oggi nel giorno Vostro Augusto Nome dare segno mio ricordo devoto et inviare alla santa Regina i miei voti ardenti di felicità. Dio e popolo vi benedicono’.²²⁹ Whilst, with the accessible primary sources, it is impossible to comment on the quality of the messages sent to members of the royal family, it is essential to remember that, according to the letters sent from family

²²⁶ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 1 to 6 – FRPR.

²²⁷ Ibid., translated as ‘of regular political and moral conduct’.

²²⁸ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 5 – FRPR – 1927-1942, Letter from the Court Gentleman of the Queen to the Prefetto, August 30, 1927.

²²⁹ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 5 – FRPR – 1927-1942, Telegram for Queen Elena from Adele Carrera, September 1938, translated as ‘As a celestial sight you appeared in 1898 to an orphan still in school who is now an old teacher. The sight remained in my heart. I silently followed you in Your August holy life full of charity. Looking up to You, at times, like today on the day of Your August Name [The Queen’s name-day had just passed], I dare to express my devotion and to send to the saint Queen my warmest wishes. God and the people bless you’.

secretaries to the Turinese prefecture, the royals received hundreds of messages for every extraordinary event.²³⁰

The power of the House of Savoy in Turin, therefore, was acknowledged and respected by the regime (both in the form of its hierarchs and its organizations) and defended and upheld by the local population. Royal anniversaries and celebrations saw the Turinese population rejoice together with the ruling family, whilst Fascist institutions also mobilized their forces on those occasions. Crucially, moreover, royal presence and monarchic power were essential contributing factors in the creation of the mythical metanarrative that surrounded the House of Savoy, issues of Piedmontese identity, and the conspicuous inheritance of the Risorgimento. In mutual fashion, the power of the monarchy at the local level contributed to reaffirm the myth of the House of Savoy and of the glorious past of the region, whilst in return it was strengthened by the same metanarrative that it had contributed to create.

The House of Savoy: Myth and Memory

The constant presence of the House of Savoy on the territory, coupled with the power it still exerted at the local level, corroborated the myth of the ruling family. This myth was inextricably linked to the glorification of the Piedmontese past and, by the early 20th century, it had come to be one of the defining features of local identity and values. Since the Fascist regime, with its *Culto della Romanità*, threatened the very essence of the power of this local myth of an authentically Piedmontese ruling dynasty, the Turinese people often looked back at the history of the mighty monarchy and at its inseparable links to the history of the city in

²³⁰ References to these letters can be found in the Archivio di Stato di Torino, Prefettura di Torino, section 'Famiglia Reale poi Presidente della Repubblica'.

order to find reassurance and the confirmation of the rightfulness of Piedmontese values.²³¹ Even the Fascist regime tried to rely upon history in order to legitimize its position, but, as Paolo Colombo argued, even on a national scale it was far less successful in this than the House of Savoy.²³²

By focusing on the use of history to justify one's beliefs, this latter half of the chapter will deal with issues of collective memory. In doing so, it is essential to keep in mind that the concept of collective memory is completely distinct from that of individual memory for, as Stefan Berger wrote, 'Collective memory, by contrast, includes many elements or events which individuals did not directly experience. Nevertheless, they have internalized a memory which is presented to them through a mixture of public and private narratives'.²³³ The entire second half of this chapter will be devoted to the monarchic myth and its preservation: this section will analyze the role of history and collective memory in fostering the myth, the next one will look at the role of local media in presenting the myth to the population, and the final section of the chapter will look at the many efforts made to preserve this myth even during the Fascist era.

The monarchic myth was based – first of all – on the perceived historical contributions made by the ruling family to the development of the city and of the country. The historical importance of the ruling family for the Waldensian communities has already been mentioned earlier in this chapter, but that represented just the tip of the iceberg. The family was in fact appreciated by the entire local community for its leading role in the unification of Italy, and also for the impetus that the House of Savoy had given to the process of democratization of the country (something also acknowledged by the liberal Piero Gobetti), starting with the Albertine Statute of 1848 (the constitution of the Kingdom of Piedmont and Sardinia, and, later, of the Kingdom of Italy). Paolo Colombo in his essay 'Una Corona per una Nazione:

²³¹ Romke Visser, 'Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romanità', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 27, No. 1., Jan. 1992, pp. 5-22.

²³² Colombo, *Monarchia Fascista*, p. 66.

²³³ Berger, 'On the Role of Myths', p. 492.

Considerazioni sul Ruolo della Monarchia Costituzionale nella Costruzione dell'Identità Italiana' has highlighted how the Statute became the cornerstone of the unification of the country in what Colombo has defined a 'chiave piemontese e filosoabauda'.²³⁴ Despite the fact that the advent of the Fascist regime rendered the Statute practically useless, it is important to notice how the dictatorship – fully aware of the social power still enjoyed by the monarchy – decided not just to preserve the national "Statute Holiday" on the first Sunday of the month of June, but it actually intensified its celebration.²³⁵ The regime in fact could not afford to cancel the national "Statute Holiday" since this was not simply a memorial celebration of the Albertine Statute, but was also a day dedicated to the recognition of the role of the House of Savoy in the process of Italian unification.

In the early 20th century, the myth of the ruling family was then strengthened considerably by the experience of the First World War. Abiding by the militaristic virtues that were so dear to the male members of the family, all the princes of the House of Savoy served in the Italian armed forces, and the constant presence of the king on the front – and his decision to leave many of his royal responsibilities to the Duke of Genoa in order to focus on his military role during the conflict – fostered the popular myth of the "re soldato".²³⁶ This myth was based on the constant visits made by the monarch to the soldiers on the frontline as well as on his role in the replacement of General Luigi Cadorna with General Armando Diaz following the defeat of Caporetto. A key element in the propagation of the myth was the press, in particular *L'Illustrazione Italiana* and *La Domenica del Corriere*, with their weekly reportages full of pictures and everyday stories from the front.²³⁷ The king's actions in the First World War had a double effect: on the one hand they fostered the myth of the "re soldato",

²³⁴ Colombo, 'Una Corona per Una Nazione', p. 21, translated as 'Piedmontese and philo-Sabaudian key'.

²³⁵ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 628 – Cerimoniale – 1927-1948, Busta Festa dello Statuto, R.J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, p. 201, Catherine Brice 'Riti della Corona, Riti del Fascio', in Emilio Gentile (ed.), *Modernità Totalitaria: il Fascismo Italiano*, (Roma: Laterza, 2008), p. 180.

²³⁶ Elisa Signori, 'La Grande Guerra e la Monarchia Italiana: il Mito del "Re Soldato"', in Marina Tesoro (ed.), *Monarchia, Tradizione, Identità Nazionale: Germania, Giappone e Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento*, (Milano: Mondadori, 2004), pp. 183-214.

²³⁷ Signori, 'La Grande Guerra', pp. 188-191.

but on the other hand they demonstrated his readiness to distance himself from party politics (as evidenced by his decision to leave the Duke of Genoa in charge in Rome).²³⁸ Simultaneously, many women of the family, once again following what was interpreted as their traditional altruistic thrust, directed emergency hospitals for injured soldiers.²³⁹ The myth of the role of the House of Savoy in the First World War then remained very much alive throughout the Fascist period, and constituted one of the cornerstones of monarchic social power in Piedmont.²⁴⁰ The glorification of the past – both recent and distant – was the basis of the local myth of the House of Savoy: it in fact allowed the myth to grow in the first place, but it also allowed the local population to find a historical justification for the glorification of the ruling family.

In a region where the power of the Catholic Church was still very much felt by the local population – as will be discussed over the next two chapters – another essential element to the monarchic myth was the sacralization of the ruling family. The expositions of the Holy Shroud were the clearest examples of this process of sacralization and will be discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis, but it is important to remember that there were many other occasions in which the House of Savoy surrounded itself (or was portrayed as surrounded by) an aura of mysticism. For instance, after the death of Princess Laetitia at the age of 40 in 1926, even working-class Turinese associations wrote to the family to demonstrate ‘il più vivo rimpianto per la inaspettata morte di SAI e R la Principessa Laetitia, che fu un angelo di carità e profuse tutta la nobiltà del Suo grande Cuore, in mirabili, generose e benefiche iniziative a favore degli umili e degli Istituti popolari.’²⁴¹ Local workers depicted the princess as a charitable “angel” and also referred to the princess as “Imperial Highness” (by using the

²³⁸ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, p. 217.

²³⁹ Mola, *Storia della Monarchia*, p. 687.

²⁴⁰ Signori, ‘La Grande Guerra’, p. 210.

²⁴¹ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 6 – FRPR – 1927-1948, letter from the Associazione Generale degli Operai d’Ambo i Sessi, October 26, 1926, translated as ‘the most sincere condolences for the unexpected death of Her Royal and Imperial Highness Princess Laetitia, who had been a charitable angel and displayed all the kindness of Her great Heart, in admirable, generous and beneficial initiatives for the humble people and popular Institutions’.

acronym “SAI” in the Italian quote) at a time at which the empire had not yet been proclaimed. *La Stampa* painted Laetitia as the most exquisitely Turinese of the members of the House of Savoy, with an article that described her as an excellent representative of the city’s late 19th century style: elegant, classy, and, most of all, still at the centre of national attention.²⁴² The sacralization of Laetitia was taken one step further by the municipality of Moncalieri – the city on the outskirts of Turin where the princess died. The council in fact, before the private funeral, covered the walls of the city with posters highlighting how ‘Come la nostra Principessa in vita, così, da ora e per sempre, il Suo spirito, congiunto con quello materno della “Santa di Moncalieri”, ci sarà guida luminosa ed esempio fulgente per le opere di domani’.²⁴³ In Moncalieri, therefore, the image of Laetitia was directly compared to that of the local patron saint who, curiously, was her mother Maria Clotilde di Savoia, another member of the royal family and one who was named a “saint” by the local population despite the fact that her process of beatification would not start until later in the Fascist period.²⁴⁴ Both mother and daughter, therefore, came to be praised by the local population in ways that neither the government (having not yet proclaimed the empire) nor the Catholic Church (having not started the process of beatification for Maria Clotilde) had explicitly allowed.

The House of Savoy continued to be sacralized even during the 1930s, as aristocratic families highlighted the *spiritual* heritage of the family with letters asking the Prefettura for a *material* commemoration of some of their feats. The quote below is an extract from a letter by Aldo di Aichelburg, an aristocrat who asked both State and Party hierarchs to build a monument in Turin to celebrate the glory of the Duke of Aosta and his role in the development of the Italian army and in the expansion of the country into Africa:

²⁴² ‘Maria Letizia di Savoia Napoleone’, *La Stampa*, October 26, 1926, p. 3.

²⁴³ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 6 – FRPR – 1927-1948, posters ordered by the City Council of Moncalieri, October 25, 1926, translated as ‘Like our [emphasis in the original] Princess in her lifetime, now and forever, Her spirit, together with the maternal one of the “Saint of Moncalieri”, will be our luminous guide and radiant example for future works’.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

*Se alla presenza spirituale dell'amato Principe si darà anche forma materiale con un monumento che tramandi ai posteri i suoi nobili sembianti, tutto il merito sarà della EV che interpretando il pensiero ed il desiderio della cittadinanza avrà reso degno omaggio a Chi per l'onore del suo Paese sacrificò gli agi della vita ed avviò l'Italia alla conquista di quelle terre africane per cui possesso sono impegnate attualmente le forze armate della Nazione.*²⁴⁵

The myth of the House of Savoy was also fostered by the links between the royal family and the local aristocracy. Turin was described as a city where 'la vecchia tradizione e la antica funzione di Capitale non ha per anco sopprese, nelle mentalità, le antiche distinzioni tra i ceti'.²⁴⁶ These class distinctions were also maintained thanks to a number of associations and clubs, many of which openly professed their loyalty to the monarchy. One such association was the already mentioned *Accademia delle Scienze*. Another, equally prestigious was the *Società del Whist*, founded in 1841 by Cavour. This club had been created in order to preserve traditional court life in Turin and could often count on the presence of members of the House of Savoy at its meetings (which were usually held in Piedmontese even during the Fascist period).²⁴⁷ Following the example of the *Società del Whist*, during the Fascist era other monarchic or philo-monarchic traditionalist associations were set up, like the *Famija Turineisa*, founded in 1925 and counting more than seven thousand members – chiefly from the local middle-classes – by the following year.²⁴⁸ The *Famija Turineisa* also held its meetings in Piedmontese and was founded upon an 'ideal superior a tute le meschinità politiche, ritornand

²⁴⁵ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 4 – FRPR – 1927-1947, letter from Aldo di Aichelburg to the Prefetto, November 8, 1935, translated as 'If the spiritual presence of the beloved Prince could also be given a materiale form with a monument to pass down his noble features, all the merit will be to Your Eminence [the Prefetto] for having interpreted the thoughts and the desires of the citizens and having paid homage to He whom for the honour of his Country renounced the privileges of life and led Italy to the conquest of those African lands where the Nation's armed forces are now engaged.'

²⁴⁶ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, letter from the Segretario Federale to Giovanni Giuriati, October 15, 1930, translated as 'the old traditions and its ancient role as Capital have kept alive old class distinctions in the Turinese mentality'.

²⁴⁷ ACS, MI – DGPS – 1927 – Busta 130 – Ordine Pubblico Torino, Telegram from the Prefetto Raffaele De Vita to the Ministry of Interior and the Head of the Government, December 29, 1927.

²⁴⁸ ACS, Archivi di Famiglie e Persone – Agostino D'Adamo – Busta 4, letter from the presidency of the Famija Turineisa to the Prefetto Agostino D'Adamo, December 14, 1926.

a le tradission paesane, a difèisa d'ij italian'.²⁴⁹ The *Famija Turineisa* saw the preservation of the Piedmontese traditions as a factor contributing to the defence of Italian heritage, a clear display of the belief that the Piedmontese roots of the Kingdom of Italy were still essential for the nation. Organizations like the two discussed above were crucial in both fostering and preserving the myth of the House of Savoy, but also in defending Piedmontese values and in passing them on to future generations.

The local myth of the House of Savoy was thus based on an historical metanarrative that saw the ruling family as the determining factor in the process of unification of the country, and, often, of the process of “piedmontisation” of the state system of the unified Kingdom of Italy. The myth was made possible by the popular representations of the male members of the family as valiant fighters and of the women as charitable and selfless. Just like many other myths, that of the Italian monarchy benefitted from an aura of mysticism – also thanks to the help of the local Catholic Church – that allowed it to be sacralized and to simultaneously embody a more mysterious character. Lastly, the myth was also strengthened by the tight links between the monarchy and the local aristocracy. However, challenged by the advent of the Fascist regime and its rhetoric, the myth needed to be constantly preserved and defended in the 1920s and 1930s. The local press ensured the myth would be reasserted time and again, whilst efforts to preserve the heritage of the monarchy – like the relocation and renewal of the Museo del Risorgimento – contributed to defend the myth.

Reasserting the Myth: the Role of the Press

This short section will look at the local press’ portrayal of the myth of the House of Savoy and at how newspaper articles contributed to highlighting and justifying the power of the ruling

²⁴⁹ Translated as ‘ideal superior to all political pettiness, going back to the local tradition in order to defend the Italians’.

family both on a local and on a national scale. The first part of this section will look at the case of the haphazardly fascistized *La Stampa* and at the language and style that the newspaper used when dealing with the monarchy. The second part, on the other hand, will focus on the fully fascistized *La Gazzetta del Popolo*. This will be a fascinating case study, as it will look at the monarchic allegiances of a newspaper that – despite being chiefly a mouthpiece of the dictatorship ever since the March on Rome – also maintained its nationalistic and philo-monarchic nature: the *Gazzetta del Popolo*, just like the regime, in fact still had to constantly acknowledge and praise the role of the monarchic element in the Italian diarchy.

Under the regime, *La Stampa* kept on giving much attention to the Sabaudian roots of Turin, to the visits of the king, and to the presence in Turin of the heir to the throne Umberto and his sister Iolanda Margherita. Articles in the fascistized *La Stampa* constantly made reference to the “royal” status of Turin and to its glorious past. Moreover, the constant presence of the House of Savoy in the life of the local population was widely covered by *La Stampa*, with articles celebrating the king and the princes for their appearances at events such as inaugurations and commemorations.²⁵⁰ The language used in many articles of *La Stampa* reminded the readers of the Sabaudian roots of the city and of the importance of the House of Savoy in the development of Piedmont as one of the most advanced regions in Italy. Turin was always portrayed as the city that created (or unified) Italy, something that was in direct opposition to the Fascist “Cult of Romanità”.²⁵¹ Even in articles characterized chiefly by Fascist rhetoric, Turin remained the city of the Sabaudian “Ironhead” (the colloquial name of Emanuele Filiberto, the Duke of the House of Savoy who had gained independence from France and established Turin as the capital of his Duchy), the “royal” city, or the “Sabaudian

²⁵⁰ For an example of Prince Umberto’s appearances: ‘Il Principe di Piemonte ha Inaugurato il Convalescenziario “Regina Margherita”’, *La Stampa*, July 5, 1927, p. 5, ‘Gli Impianti Elettrici dell’Orco Inaugurati alla Presenza del Principe di Piemonte’, *La Stampa*, August 3, 1931, p. 2, ‘Il Congresso Nazionale della Pesca Inaugurato dal Principe di Piemonte’, *La Stampa*, June 9, 1931, p. 2. For an example of the king’s visits: ‘La Giornata del Re a Torino’, *La Stampa*, October 18, 1924, p. 6, ‘La Vibrante Accoglienza di Torino ai Sovrani’, *La Stampa*, April 30, 1928, p. 1, ‘Il Re Ha Inaugurato Ieri a Torino il Monumento al Carabiniere’, *La Stampa*, October 23, 1933, ‘La Giornata Torinese di sua Maestà il Re’, *La Stampa*, November 9, 1935, p. 4, p. 1, ‘La Trionfale Giornata Torinese del Re’, *La Stampa*, June 12, 1939, p. 1.

²⁵¹ ‘La Gloriosa Insegna’, *La Stampa*, May 14, 1939, p. 1.

and Fascist” Turin.²⁵² The description of the city as first “Sabaudian” and then “Fascist”, even in articles dominated by Fascist rhetoric, is quite telling, as is the layout of the newspaper on the occasion of Mussolini’s third visit to Turin in 1939: the first page, the one usually focused on national and international events, reported the speech of Mussolini on the international state of affairs, whilst the second page, usually focused on regional affairs, gave the main header to the salute to the crowd given by the Prince of Piedmont, and discussed Mussolini’s appearance only in the main body of the article.²⁵³

The pages of *La Gazzetta del Popolo* upheld the myth of the House of Savoy throughout the Fascist period. Right after the March on Rome, the newspaper supported the view of the king as a strong leader and staunch defender of the motherland: ‘Innanzitutto occorre tenere presente e far sapere alto e forte che chi ha salvato rettamente l’Italia dalla guerra civile, dal disordine e da irreparabile rovina è stato esclusivamente e personalmente Vittorio Emanuele III’.²⁵⁴ When discussing the situation in Turin in 1923, moreover, the newspaper painted the city as ‘fedelissima alla Monarchia Sabauda’.²⁵⁵ In 1931, on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy, Guido Pallotta (future leader of the local Gioventù Universitaria Fascista and director of its newspaper *Vent’Anni*) once again provided a historical justification for the power of the king ‘un Vittorio Emanuele ch’è in tutto ben degno dell’Avo’.²⁵⁶ However, Pallotta also provided a similar justification for Mussolini by comparing him to Cavour (an act that seems a reasonable diplomatic manoeuvre in traditionalist Piedmont, but that went against the Fascist downplaying of the Risorgimento as a failed revolution that had been, in the words of Robert

²⁵² ‘Il Podestà Esprime al Duce la Riconoscenza di Torino’, *La Stampa*, May 18, 1939, p. 4, ‘Storia di un Monumento’, *La Stampa*, December 26, 1932, p. 6.

²⁵³ ‘Dal Saluto del Principe Sabauda all’Urlo Oceanico di Piazza Vittorio’, *La Stampa*, May 15, 1939, p. 2.

²⁵⁴ ‘Come Si E’ Giunti all’Incarico a Mussolini’, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, October 31, 1922, p. 1, translated as ‘First of all we need to keep in mind and let everyone know, clear and strong, that the one who saved Italy from a civil war, from disorder and from an irremediable catastrophe, has been exclusively and personally Victor Emmanuel III’.

²⁵⁵ ‘I Liberali Piemontesi dall’On. Mussolini’, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, October 25, 1923, p. 5, translated as ‘very loyal to the Sabaudian Monarchy’.

²⁵⁶ ‘Il Regno d’Italia Ha 70 Anni’, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, March 17, 1931, p. 6, translated as ‘a Victor Emmanuel who is fully worthy of comparison with his ancestor’.

Paxton, subsequently 'corrupted by liberals and weakened by socialists'²⁵⁷) and claimed that he was 'un Duce che di Cavour ha il genio e la costruttiva tenacità'.²⁵⁸ History was again used in 1933 to glorify the ruling family and to reassert the Piedmontese role in the unification of Italy: 'Patria che ebbe a Torino la sua culla e nel Piemonte i suoi primi e valorosi soldati'²⁵⁹ and in 1939 for the autarkic exposition – an exhibit held in Turin and organized to showcase the innovations and the successes of Fascist autarkic policies – 'Dal piccolo eroico Piemonte all'Italia Imperiale Fascista – La Visita [del Re] alla Rassegna dell'Autarchia: dall'antica concezione sabauda d'un Piemonte autarchico alle superbe realizzazioni mussoliniane'.²⁶⁰ Moreover, the *Gazzetta del Popolo* also contributed to the sacralization of the monarchy on many occasions, either by creating an aura of religious mystery around the ruling family (as in its descriptions of private religious functions held in the Chapel of the Shroud) or by reporting spontaneous manifestations of monarchic loyalty made by the Catholic community during the two expositions of the Holy Shroud.²⁶¹

La Stampa and *La Gazzetta del Popolo* have been picked as case-studies for this section because they were the most widely read newspapers in the city throughout the Fascist period. Yet, it is crucial to remember that many other local newspapers contributed to reasserting the myth of the House of Savoy and of the glorious Piedmontese past. For instance, the Fascist university publication *Il Lambello* described the king as 'degnissimo continuatore dell'opera del Primo Re d'Italia, il popolo Italiano si è sempre stretto, nelle ore tristi e nelle liete, perché in Lui

²⁵⁷ Robert O. Paxton, *Anatomy of Fascism*, (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p. 37.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., translated as 'a Duce who possesses Cavour's genius and his constructive tenacity'.

²⁵⁹ 'Ardenti Manifestazioni di Devozione e Gratitudine al Duce dei Metallurgici della Fiat, dei Minatori del Valdarno e di Altre Migliaia di Lavoratori', *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, October 1, 1933, p. 1, translated as 'a motherland that had its cradle in Turin and its first valiant soldiers in the Piedmontese population'.

²⁶⁰ 'Il Re Imperatore Presenzia a Torino alla Celebrazione di Due Secoli di Storia Guerriera', *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, June 12, 1939, article's sub-header translated as 'From the small and heroic Piedmont to Imperial and Fascist Italy – [The King's] Visit to the Autarkic exposition: [A journey] from the ancient Sabaudian conception of an autarkic Piedmont to the superb Mussolinian realizations'.

²⁶¹ 'I Reali Principi al Solenne Tirbuto in Memoria della Regina Margherita', *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, January 5, 1931, 'Principi, Vescovi e Gran Folla di Popolo Hanno Solennizzato la Cerimonia di Chiusura', *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, October 16, 1933, p. 2.

ha riconosciuto l'assertore tenace, instancabile, inflessibile, dei grandi destini della Patria'.²⁶² Moreover, this monarchic and traditionally Piedmontese metanarrative reached the local population also thanks to local commercials, like that of Maggi soups with the slogan '**Restiamo italiani, restiamo piemontesi!** E teniamoci il nostro buon senso'.²⁶³ All these examples are manifestations of a monarchic discourse that was still very much alive at the local level. However, this myth was being threatened by the Fascist attempts to revolutionize the system, and in order to be sustained it needed the help of the press and of a number of local initiatives, as will be discussed in the next section.

Defending the Myth of the House of Savoy: Architectural Preservation and the Museo del Risorgimento

As already mentioned, the Fascist regime constituted a menace for the survival of the myth of the House of Savoy in Turin: the Fascist regime, in fact, needed monarchic support (or at least acquiescence) in order to succeed in Piedmont, but the dictatorship's emphasis on *Romanità* was also aimed at reducing regionalist feelings and allegiances throughout the nation, and the myth of the Piedmontese House of Savoy – one of the cornerstones of local identity – was thus threatened. Therefore, this last section of the chapter will look at two clear manifestations of the city's desire to defend the centrality of the monarchy in local life from the potential threat represented by the dictatorship. The first part of the section will analyze the preservation of the architectural symbols of the monarchic past of the city (in particular the Teatro Carignano, a theatre very dear to the House of Savoy and facing Palazzo Carignano, the building in which Victor Emmanuel II was born). The second part of this section will then look at some

²⁶² 'Saluto al Re!', *Il Lambello*, August 10, 1940, p. 1, translated 'very worthy continuer of the work of the First King of Italy, the Italian population has always supported him, in sad and happy times, because in him the Italians saw the staunch promoter, tireless and inflexible, of the great destiny of the Motherland'.

²⁶³ Brodo Maggi commercial, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, January 16, 1929, p. 8, translated as '**Let's stay Italians, let's stay Piedmontese!** And let's keep our common sense'.

conferences and events held to celebrate the inheritance of the Risorgimento, and how they depict the monarchy, and at the final relocation, in 1938, of the Museo del Risorgimento to the aforementioned Palazzo Carignano.

Before looking at the specific case of Teatro Carignano, it is essential to spend at least a short time trying to understand why architecture can play such a prominent role in shaping collective memory. Firstly, as argued by Peter Fritzsche in *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History*, architecture is crucial for collective memory as it is perceived as something stable, even when the contemporary world is undergoing continuous and rapid changes.²⁶⁴ Moreover, architectural space can act as a *lieu de mémoire* and therefore offer people “cues” to stimulate their memory and re-establish a connection with the past.²⁶⁵ Therefore, in a period like the Fascist one in Turin, the preservation of buildings linked to the monarchy can be seen as an attempt to defend the very power of the ruling family. Moreover, the threat that these buildings were under from the Fascist regime allowed the Turinese population to better appreciate both their artistic and their symbolic value.

Between 1931 and 1932, Teatro Carignano and the buildings that surrounded it were threatened by the Fascist works for the renovation of the central Via Roma. On the 3rd of September 1931, *La Stampa* voiced the concerns of the property owners whose houses would have been affected by the planned works.²⁶⁶ Paolo Thaon di Revel, the Turinese Podestà (a title by which the regime identified Italian mayors from 1926), used the same newspaper to reply, arguing that ‘Via Roma nuova è una realtà posta in marcia dal Fascismo, che nessun ostacolo ormai può fermare’.²⁶⁷ In November 1932, *La Stampa* again intervened to defend the Teatro Carignano. This theatre was extremely dear to the members of the House of Savoy, and its

²⁶⁴ Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 203.

²⁶⁵ Benedict Stuchey, ‘European Lieux de Mémoire’, *German Historical Institute London Bulletin*, 24.2 (2002), pp. 121-2; Susan A. Crane, ‘Memory, distortion, and history in the museum’, in *History and Theory*, 36: 4 (1997), p. 49.

²⁶⁶ ‘Che Cosa C’E’ di Nuovo – Sotto e Sopra Via Roma’, *La Stampa*, September 3, 1931, p. 8.

²⁶⁷ F. O. ‘Via Roma Deve Essere Ricostruita entro il 1936’, *La Stampa*, September 8, 1931, p. 6, translated as ‘The new Via Roma is a reality created by Fascism that no obstacle can stop’.

preservation was advocated on the pages of *La Stampa* – with what the author of the article called “historical sentimentalism” – by pointing to the role of the theatre in the Sabaudian years of Turin and to its baroque style (something that, at the very least, the Fascists had to respect, even if the regime could not come to fully appreciate it).²⁶⁸ After a long series of urban planning meetings, and also thanks to the opinions voiced by *La Stampa*, the works for the renovation of Via Roma – that new Fascist reality that supposedly could not be stopped by any obstacle – did not alter the design of the old Teatro Carignano and of the twin churches of Piazza San Carlo.²⁶⁹ The new Via Roma ended up creating a long corridor between the city’s main entrance gate (the train station of Porta Nuova) and the Palazzo Reale, going between the twin churches of San Carlo and Santa Cristina. Fascist architectural renovation, thus, had to come to terms with the physical presence of symbols of the House of Savoy and of the Catholic Church, institutions whose influence on Piedmontese society was still very strong.

The inheritance of the Risorgimento was another essential part of the myth of the House of Savoy that was seriously threatened by the Fascist regime. As Lucy Riall has pointed out, some key figures of the Risorgimento – like, for instance, Giuseppe Garibaldi – managed to be heroes whose appeal went beyond traditional political divides, thus contributing to make the Risorgimento a popular metanarrative capable of unifying people with different political ideals.²⁷⁰ Because of this, the regime’s relationship with the Risorgimento was a complex one: the period was portrayed as a tentative revolution that set the stage for Italian Fascism but also one that did not succeed in changing Italian society. Moreover, the heroes of the Risorgimento could not be compared to the *Duce* because, as the journal *Critica Fascista* reported: ‘neither Cavour, nor Mazzini nor Garibaldi will be comparable to Mussolini in the light of history. None of these three attained that constructive universality or had the whole human personality of Mussolini; none of them put together such a unanimous consensus or

²⁶⁸ Mar. Ber. ‘Abbattere il Teatro Carignano?’, *La Stampa*, November 19, 1932, p. 8.

²⁶⁹ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 229 – Affari Diversi – Comune di Torino – 1927,1931, Busta “Via Roma”; ‘Nei Cantieri di Via Roma’, *La Stampa*, November 20, 1932, p. 7.

²⁷⁰ Gerwarth and Riall, ‘Fathers of the Nations’, p. 393.

possessed such powers of fascination; none was burdened by such responsibility or had such a vast field of action.²⁷¹

Despite the rhetoric of the Fascist party, Cesare Maria De Vecchi – the already mentioned Piedmontese *Quadrivir* from the March on Rome with his allegiances split ‘Tra Papa, Duce, e Re’²⁷² – took it upon himself to defend this heritage. After becoming the head of the Comitato Piemontese per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano, throughout the 1930s he organized a long series of conferences and events to celebrate the period.²⁷³ De Vecchi was then also an instrumental figure in the relocation of the Museo del Risorgimento from the Parco del Valentino – to the south of the city centre – to Palazzo Carignano – right in the pulsing heart of Turin.²⁷⁴ The king himself attended the inauguration of the new museum, and it was immediately clear that, as Umberto Levrà wrote ‘il museo torinese era in modo esplicito quello della dinastia, del vecchio Piemonte modello di stato e di società, Prussia d’Italia e motore dell’unificazione, della storia d’Italia autarchica e prosecuzione obbligata di quella sabauda. Dopo l’inaugurazione, i Savoia vi tornarono più volte, Mussolini non vi mise mai piede’.²⁷⁵ The Museo del Risorgimento supported the myth of the House of Savoy, of its noble lineage, and of its steadfast defence of Piedmontese values: as with other myths, it is irrelevant whether every member of the royal family actually possessed those values, the crucial issue for the fostering of the myth was that the royals were portrayed as defending those principles and that the population, also thanks to initiatives like the re-establishment of

²⁷¹ Quoted in Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 115, 139. Extract from a 1927 issue of *Critica Fascista*.

²⁷² Reference to his published diaries titled *Tra Papa, Duce e Re*, Sandro Setta (ed.) (Roma: Jouvence, 1998)

²⁷³ ACS, MI – DGPS – 1933 – Sezione II – Busta 56 – Ordine Pubblico Torino, telegram from the Prefetto Umberto Ricci to the Ministry of Interior, January 17, 1933.

²⁷⁴ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 570 – CTAS – 1925-1943, letter from the Podestà to the Prefetto, August 29, 1938, and letter from the Prefetto to the Podestà, September 5, 1938.

²⁷⁵ Umberto Levrà, *Il Museo Nazionale del Risorgimento Italiano di Torino*, (Milano: Skira, 2011), p. 20, translated as ‘The Turinese museum was explicitly that of the dynasty, of the old Piedmont as a model for both state and society, the Italian version of Prussia and engine behind the unification, [it was the museum of] the history of the autarkic Italy as a logical consequence of Sabaudian history. After its inauguration, members of the House of Savoy went back there numerous times, whilst Mussolini never stepped inside’.

the Museo del Risorgimento, kept on being persuaded that this was the case.²⁷⁶ The renewal of the Museo del Risorgimento, with its typically Turinese metanarrative of an Italy created and moulded by Piedmont, was – just like the defence of Palazzo Carignano in 1931-2 – a crucial part in the preservation and the strengthening of the local myth of the House of Savoy during the Fascist period.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the House of Savoy managed to preserve its social power in Turin thanks to its constant public presence and how – with the help of a number of institutions and organizations – it also succeeded in keeping very much alive the local myth of the monarchy and of its necessary centrality in Italian social and political life throughout the Fascist period. Two general conclusions can be reached from an analysis of the role of the monarchy and of monarchism in Turin under the regime. Firstly, it appears clear that, at least at the local level, the House of Savoy acted as a limiting agent for the totalitarian ambitions of the Fascist dictatorship. As this chapter has demonstrated, the House of Savoy still enjoyed remarkable power – and popularity – in Turin in the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, the constant presence of members of the ruling family was in sharp contrast with the usual absence of Fascist hierarchs in Turin (something that will be looked at in more depth later in this thesis) and it contributed to highlight the differences of the two institutions. The very fact that the Fascist regime still needed to prove its loyalty to the monarchy at the local level is, in itself, both a display of the power still enjoyed by the House of Savoy and of the actual limitations of the dictatorship. Secondly, it seems evident that – without having to assess its truthfulness – the persistence of the myth of the House of Savoy throughout the Fascist era was a manifestation of a local civic culture that was still centred around Piedmontese traditions and

²⁷⁶ von der Goltz and Gildea, 'Flawed Saviours', p. 442.

values and that sacralized the monarchy. Displays of *piemontesismo*, therefore, are a reflection of a strong local identity that at best struggled to find a compromise with the national one and at worst was at loggerheads with Rome and with the directives that were coming from the nation's capital.

3. Spiritual Against Temporal Power: The Catholics in Turin

*Ebbene, noi diciamo che solo Iddio può piegare la volontà fascista: gli uomini e le cose mai.*²⁷⁷

The rarely, if ever, used archives of the Archdiocese of Turin can offer precious information on the dynamics of the Catholic groups in Turin during the Fascist period.²⁷⁸ Not only can the material found in these archives raise questions about the discrepancies (or the commonalities) between Catholic and Fascist ideology, but it can also point to questions of identity and community in Turin. First of all, it will be essential to understand what were the aims, in both the political and the social sphere, of the Turinese Catholic Church in the 1920s and 1930s (and these will have to be compared with the goals of the Vatican in the period). The goals of the local Catholic Church during the Fascist era have not been analyzed fully: Mariangiola Reineri has been the only historian to satisfactorily focus on this issue, but she did so in the 1970s, whilst the works of Paola Bresso and Bartolomeo Gariglio – despite raising some very interesting points – are often marred by their near total reliance upon secondary sources.²⁷⁹ On the other hand, the aims of the Vatican in the same period have been looked at by a number of historians, in particular by John F. Pollard.²⁸⁰ After this initial discussion it will be possible to look at the ways in which the Turinese Catholic Church pursued its aims, with the help of its newspapers and bulletins, but most of all with its associations and groups. The

²⁷⁷ Quote by Mussolini reported in *La Stampa*, 'Il Premio del Duce ai Rurali nell'Undicesima Celebrazione della Vittoria del Grano', December 3, 1934, translated as 'And so, we say that only God can bend the fascist will: men and things could never do that'.

²⁷⁸ Particularly useful sources for the writing of this chapter have been found in the: Fondo Gamba, Fondo Fossati, and Carte Varie.

²⁷⁹ Mariangiola Reineri, *Cattolici e Fascismo a Torino, 1925-1943*, (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1978), Bartolomeo Gariglio, *Cattolici Democratici e Clerico-Fascisti*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1976), Paola Bresso, 'Mondo Cattolico e Classe Operaia Piemontese dal 1922 alla Guerra', in Aldo Agosti and Gian Mario Bravo (eds.), *Storia del Movimento Operaio, del Socialismo e delle Lotte Sociali in Piemonte, vol. 3*, (Bari: De Donato, 1979-1980), pp. 199-224.

²⁸⁰ John F. Pollard, *The Vatican and Italian Fascism, 1929-1932*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), John F. Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy – Religion, Society and Politics since 1861*, (London: Routledge, 2008).

most important issue for a dissertation on the challenges to the social power of the Fascist regime in Piedmont, however, will be the last one to be looked at in this chapter. The last section will deal with the responses of considerable sections of the Turinese population to what Reineri has come to consider as the “totalitarian aspirations” of the Turinese Catholic Church.²⁸¹

Before moving on to a discussion of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the regime at the local level, it is essential to briefly look at the way in which the two institutions came to terms on a national level. Pius XI – who was pope between 1922 and 1939 – viewed the Catholic Church as a firm and monolithic institution capable of looking after every need of Italian society, something that was bound to clash with some of the ideals that stood at the base of the Fascist corporative state.²⁸² Pius XI condemned the “illicit nationalism” of the most violent Fascists, although this was also seen as implying that the more moderate Fascists (coincidentally, often loyal Catholics) were welcomed by the Church.²⁸³ Catholic and Fascist values overlapped in many areas (gender roles, opposition to communism, a strong insistence on the need for order) and this meant that – ever since 1922 – the Catholic Church and the Italian state found a common ground that had never existed during the Liberal period.²⁸⁴ The relationship between the two – considered by De Felice to be a “marriage of convenience” – reached its high point in 1929 with the Lateran Pacts (and the subsequent Fascist recognition of the pope as a foreign ruler and of the centrality of the Catholic Church in Italian society).²⁸⁵ Yet, this “marriage of convenience” clearly had its ups and downs: whilst the two institutions shared some of their core values, this was often coincidental rather than deliberate, and tensions between the two would often rise (in particular over matters like religious freedom,

²⁸¹ Reineri, *Cattolici e Fascismo*, p. 49.

²⁸² Lucia Ceci, *L'Interesse Superiore: il Vaticano e l'Italia di Mussolini*, (Roma: Laterza, 2013), pp. 73-4.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

²⁸⁴ Anthony Rhodes, *The Vatican in the Age of the Dictators, 1922-1945*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), p. 34.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45, reference to the “marriage of convenience” in Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il Fascista vol. 2 – L'Organizzazione dello Stato Fascista, 1929-1929*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2008), and in Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy*, p. 103.

Fascist violence, and the role of Catholic youth associations).²⁸⁶ The city of Turin and its Catholic community can then act as an excellent case-study to fully analyze how Catholic Church and Fascist regime interacted on the ground, whether their “marriage of convenience” actually worked, and whether the popularity of one could hamper the social power of the other.

Whilst, borrowing from Reineri’s work, this chapter will discuss the “totalitarian aspirations” of the Catholic Church in Turin, it is important to remember that these cannot be fully equated with the Fascist pursuit of the totalitarian control of the population. While, as it will be discussed later, there was an overlap in the kind of societies that both the regime and the Catholic Church wanted to create and defend (for instance in the field of gender roles or in the desire to defeat and ideally eradicate communism) and neither of the two welcomed dissident voices, the two institutions operated in different realms. The Fascist quest for totalitarianism was inspired by its secular need to establish an immediate control of the population in order to stabilize its power. The Catholic Church in Turin, on the other hand, wanted to assert its control over the local population also for transcendental reasons, a dimension absent in the Fascist rationale. Both institutions, therefore, wanted to solidify their power-base in Turin, but for different reasons: the regime aimed at finally controlling the population of a city that had given Fascism a cold shoulder ever since 1922, whilst the Catholic Church pursued its “totalitarian ambitions” in order to assert its independence from the national government and in order to ensure the salvation of the local people. Whilst the regime aimed at creating a totalitarian state, one in which Fascist organizations were an essential and defining part of the system, the Turinese Catholic Church pursued what could be termed a “social totalitarianism”, one in which Catholic organizations were crucial yet also a means to a higher transcendental end that could only be reached by following Catholic doctrine.

²⁸⁶ D.A. Binchy, *Church and State in Fascist Italy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 326-7.

An analysis of the broad “totalitarian aspirations” of the local Catholic Church can then open the way to the discussion of two wider issues, both addressed chiefly by Emilio Gentile, that are at the forefront of current historiography: firstly the problem of the totalitarian nature of the Fascist regime itself, and secondly the debate on the cult of the dictatorship as a form of secular religion. Gentile’s claims that the Fascist regime was as totalitarian as the Nazi and the Soviet ones will be called into question: the strong presence of the Catholic Church, in particular at local grassroots level, raises questions about the actual degree of social power that the dictatorship enjoyed in the city of Turin.²⁸⁷ The existence of another very powerful traditionalist institution not controlled by the regime, and the capacity of senior prelates to influence both the local and the national political scene, seem to point in the direction of the works of Juan J. Linz and R.J.B. Bosworth, who both discuss the limitations of the Fascist totalitarian project.²⁸⁸ The idea of Fascism as a secular religion, on the other hand, should under no circumstance be discarded: it is undeniable that the regime had many characteristics typical of a cult and that it borrowed heavily from traditional religion.²⁸⁹ However, the degree of success of this secular religion is questionable in a city where the Roman Catholic Church was still operating fully, accepting some Fascist impositions but rejecting others.

Outside and Above Politics – Rhetorical Assertions or Actual Policy?

Cardinal Giuseppe Gamba, who held his cathedra in the delicate period between 1925 and 1929, repeatedly affirmed that the Turinese Catholic Church was ‘al di sopra e al di fuori della

²⁸⁷ Emilio Gentile, *La Via Italiana al Totalitarismo – Il Partito e lo Stato nel Regime Fascista*, 3rd edition (Rome: Carocci, 2008), p. 156.

²⁸⁸ Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes* (London: Boudler, 2000), p. 7, R.J.B. Bosworth, ‘Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy’, *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 14, No.1 (2005), pp. 37-8.

²⁸⁹ Emilio Gentile, *Il Culto del Littorio*, (Roma: Laterza, 1993), pp. 301-6.

politica', thus rhetorically cementing the idea of an a-fascist institution.²⁹⁰ This section of the chapter will deal with the truthfulness of this statement, looking at the different ways in which the local Catholic Church approached the world of politics in public (through newspapers, associations, and even sermons) and behind closed doors (crucial in this case will be the personal letters exchanged between the Turinese Cardinals – first Gamba and then Maurilio Fossati – and Fascist hierarchs or eminent prelates in Rome). Firstly, however, it will be necessary to highlight the fact that the Catholic Church – both on a local and on a national level – distinguished between *party politics* (from which the Catholic Church seemed to detach itself in public, in particular after the Concordat) and *universal politics* (the general pursuit of the common good, to which the Catholic Church always strove to contribute since this seemed to also fall under its spiritual authority).²⁹¹

As will be shown later in this section, although it is debatable whether the Turinese Catholic Church could actually be considered to be “outside” of the political world, at least the affirmation of Cardinal Gamba that the Church was “above” politics – intended primarily as *party politics* – at least seems to hold true. The *universal* worries of the Catholic Church had an all-encompassing and transcendental aspect that – from a religious perspective – made them more important than *party* politics. The local Catholic Church, in fact, put itself on a pedestal, constantly arguing that its religious concerns outweighed political ones. This position was maintained even after the Concordat by Cardinal Gamba's successor, Cardinal Maurilio Fossati. After the Lateran Pacts of 1929, the Turinese Catholics were exhorted to cooperate with the Fascist State, however they were also constantly reminded that the needs of the Catholic Church came before those of the regime. This position was summarised in a circular letter sent to the Piedmontese parishes shortly after the Concordat that read ‘I Cattolici Italiani, ora, non solo possono, ma debbono portare allo Stato il leale e fattivo concorso delle loro energie per la

²⁹⁰ ASD, 19.136 – Carte Varie – Stampa Cattolica – Busta 1 – Cardinal Gamba, recurring references translated as ‘outside and above politics’.

²⁹¹ Franco Molinari and Vito Neri, *Olio Santo e Olio di Ricino – Rapporto su Chiesa e fascismo*, (Torino: Marietti, 1976), p. 105.

completa realizzazione di quegli ideali che furono posti a fondamento dell'ordine nuovo'²⁹² – therefore promoting the idea of a synergy, at least to some extent, of *universal* values and aims between the Catholic Church and the Fascist regime – ‘Ricordando però che Chiesa e Stato sono società distinte, dovranno astenersi da tutto ciò che potesse significare asservimento della coscienza religiosa allo Stato. Collaborazione, sì; asservimento, no. Perché, sotto un altro aspetto, risorgerebbero mali peggiori di quelli che furono felicemente superati’²⁹³ reminding Turinese Catholics in this way that the *universal* precepts of the Catholic Church always had to be considered ahead of *party politics*.

The idea that the Catholic world was above Fascist impositions because of its religious character was also present in the local Catholic press, as testified by a letter sent by the director of *La Voce dell'Operaio* to Cardinal Fossati in 1931: ‘In 56 anni di vita *La Voce dell'Operaio* non si è mai piegata ... Se qualche volta DOBBIAMO diffonderci in argomenti di carattere civile ... viene subito accanto il correttivo dell'argomento religioso ... Se il giornale fosse sempre esclusivamente pieno di argomenti religiosi, finirebbe per non piacere e interessare il grosso del pubblico anche cattolico’.²⁹⁴ The same sentiments appeared in another case: during the months leading up to the foundation of a new Catholic newspaper in Turin, *Il Corriere*, the Turinese Curia declared that ‘Esso non può certo disinteressarsi dei problemi e degli avvenimenti politica’,²⁹⁵ suggesting that because of its transcendental power the Catholic Church was allowed to comment – at least to an extent – on *party politics* (even if it claimed to be above them). The idea, therefore, was that the Turinese Catholic newspapers could discuss

²⁹² ASD, 19.136 – CV – SC – Busta 4 – *Il Momento*, Letter from the director of *La Voce dell'Operaio* to Cardinal Maurilio Fossati, December 16, 1931, translated as ‘Italian Catholics not only can, but must now bring to the State their loyal and effective energies for the complete realization of those ideals that have been put at the base of the new order’.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, translated as ‘Remembering, however, that Church and State are different societies, they will have to abstain from anything that could mean the servitude of the religious conscience to the State. Yes to collaboration, no to subjugation. Because this [subjugation] would lead to the resurrection of worse evils than those that have been happily overcome’.

²⁹⁴ ASD, 14.14.42 – Fondo Fossati – SC – Busta *Voce dell'Operaio*, translated as ‘In its 56 years of life *La Voce dell'Operaio* has never bent ... If at times we MUST discuss arguments of a civil character ... they are immediately looked at from a religious perspective ... If the newspaper was always and only full of religious issues, than it would not be of interest for the majority of the readership, even if Catholic’.

²⁹⁵ ASD, 19.136 – CV – SC – Busta *Il Momento* - Letter from the Curia Metropolitana di Torino, undated, translated as ‘this clearly cannot ignore political issues and events’.

political matters from a position of strength and avoid the regime's reappraisal because of their religious character. Frequent manifestations of Catholic self-righteousness, or of the Catholic desire to impose religious paradigms above political ones, like those described above were among the factors that persuaded Mussolini that the Catholic Church could not be considered as one of those institutions that Fascism could 'umiliare, abbattere, infrangere'.²⁹⁶ Therefore, the Turinese Catholic Church considered itself to be "above" *party politics*, but, as it will be shown later in this section, this did not mean that it would not try to influence politics.

Many aims of the local Catholic Church within the realm of what has already been defined here as *universal politics* were identical to the Fascist ones, thus making cooperation with the regime almost natural on a number of issues. However, as D.A. Binchy already argued in 1941, these points of agreement were 'essentially fortuitous' in so far as they derived from different premises and led to different conclusions.²⁹⁷ The Turinese Catholic Church, in fact, encouraged the creation of large families because this was meant to be God's desire, it opposed the individualism of liberalism because this was a product of secularization, it supported the Francoist rebels in Spain because they defended the Catholic Church, and it rejected Marxism because this had rejected religion in the first place.

The social position of women, the respect for traditional family values, and the need for austerity were three of those issues that saw the regime and the Turinese Catholic Church take a very similar position. Women, according to the Turinese Catholic Church, had to live a relatively segregated life and have an extremely austere lifestyle, taking inspiration from Queen Margherita (again a royal figure who was being glorified, if not sacralised, by the Catholic Church), who had no interest in politics or political parties.²⁹⁸ The idea of a sober and stern queen as a role-model for Catholic women under a dictatorship was then revived in Francoist Spain with the cult of Queen Isabel. According to the Turinese Catholic Church,

²⁹⁶ Arturo Carlo Jemolo, *Chiesa e Stato in Italia negli Ultimi Cento Anni*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1963), p. 434, translated as 'humiliate, knock down, shatter'.

²⁹⁷ Binchy, *Church and State*, pp. 326-7.

²⁹⁸ 'Alle Presidenti dei Gruppi Parrocchiali', *L'Armonia*, February 28, 1926.

women could save money, whilst earning in beauty and spirituality, by 'non incipriarsi, non profumarsi, non fumare, non ballare, non tagliarsi i capelli, non tingersi le labbra'.²⁹⁹ Also, according to the laymen and laywomen who volunteered to write short articles on local Church bulletins, Turinese girls had to think about the way in which they would have been judged by Jesus before they picked which dress to wear.³⁰⁰

On the problematic issue of the birthrate of the local population, the Catholic Church and Fascist regime fought on the same front. Cardinal Gamba would often be present at regime events related to the "demographic battle".³⁰¹ Moreover, the hierarchy of the Turinese section of Azione Cattolica Italiana argued that 'Con una sincerità coraggiosa e senza veli gli organi massimi del Potere e dello Stato hanno collocato la questione demografica al primo piano della vita nazionale' but the document also said that the current 'sfibramento morale ... impedisce l'accettazione piena e l'adempimento totalitario di tutti i doveri individuali, familiari, patriottici'.³⁰² In this document it is therefore possible to see the local Catholic support for the Fascist *Battle for Births*, but it is also possible to understand that, in this case, the Catholic Church supported the regime's actions because they would have led to the achievement not only of the Fascist aims, but also of the Catholic ones (in a way also totalitarian, as the document ambiguously states).

Another fight that saw the regime and the Turinese Catholic Church fighting on the same front was that against blasphemy. The Piedmontese Church and the PNF, in fact, organized a series of events to promote an anti-blasphemous "crusade" (as it was called in

²⁹⁹ ASD, 14.14.42 – FF – SC – Busta Società per la Buona Stampa – 'Un Buon Guadagno', *L'Apostolo in Famiglia*, January 4, 1931, translated as 'not powdering their noses, not wearing perfume, not smoking, not dancing, not cutting their hair, not wearing lipstick'.

³⁰⁰ ASD, 14.14.79 – FF – ACI Femminile – Busta Consiglio Diocesano – Opuscolo "Ascendere" – Estratto da "Omaggio a Maria, Castellana d'Italia", 1942.

³⁰¹ ACS, Ministero dell'Interno – Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza – 1928 – Busta 177 – Ordine Pubblico – Torino, Telegram from the Prefetto Luigi Maggioni to the Ministry of Interior, December 24, 1928.

³⁰² ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Giunta Diocesana – Demografia e Moralità, translated as 'With a courageous sincerity and openly the highest organs of the State have put the issue of demography at the forefront of national life', and as 'moral weakening ... forbids the full acceptance and the totalitarian fulfillment of individual, familiar, and patriotic duties'.

official documents) that was to be carried forward by Fascist hierarchs within Fascist institutions, and that was to be marked by a series of prayers and ceremonies led by members of the local clergy.³⁰³ In the latter half of the 1930s, an entire week in January was set aside for this crusade. The political authorities gave 'largo appoggio' to these events, and priests were invited to give talks at local circles of the Fascist Party to better explain why it was a 'dovere religioso e civile' to fight blasphemy.³⁰⁴ During the *settimane antiblasfeme*, priests were also invited to give lectures at the Turinese circles of *Dopolavoro* (the Fascist working-class organizations) because of the great power that the Catholic Church had over local workers.³⁰⁵

One further issue that pushed together the regime and the local Catholic Church was their anti-communism. As argued by Luigi Salvatorelli, the anti-fascist columnist of *La Stampa* in the early 1920s, the Catholic Church had two different approaches to the harsh policies of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia: with the first it was hesitant and open to talks, whilst with the latter it saw no possibility of any relations outside of a full ideological war.³⁰⁶ This anti-communism did not wither away at any point during the Fascist era. Anti-communism, as Reineri argued, was particularly evident during the Spanish Civil War, when the Turinese Catholic Church launched its own propaganda campaign (on the pages of *La Voce del Popolo*) supporting the crusade of the Francoist rebels against the Republican forces.³⁰⁷ The Turinese Catholic Church, therefore, was not "outside" the world of politics as Cardinal Gamba had claimed. It was "above" politics because it put Catholic precepts on a higher level than party ones, but the Catholic Church in Turin was also a key player in local and national politics and it backed the regime on many grounds. Yet, this is not to say that the Turinese Catholic Church shared the government's position on every issue.

³⁰³ ASD, 14.14.42 – FF – SC – Busta Società della Buona Stampa – Programma della Settimana Antiblasfema.

³⁰⁴ 'La Settimana Antiblasfema', *La Stampa*, January 7, 1935, p. 2.

³⁰⁵ 'La Settimana Antiblasfema', *La Stampa*, January 8, 1935, p. 5.

³⁰⁶ Quoted in Ernesto Rossi, *Il Manganello e l'Aspersorio – La Collusione fra il Vaticano e il Regime Fascista nel Ventennio*, (Milano: Kaos, 2000), p. 188.

³⁰⁷ Reineri, *Cattolici e Fascismo*, p. 171.

In Turin, as in most other Italian cities, the Catholic Church fiercely defended its values. Often these values were similar to the Fascist ones, but not infrequently Catholic and Fascist doctrine were incompatible, thus leading to ideological clashes. Only a small fraction of the Turinese clerics decided to openly oppose Fascism as a political system, but every Catholic was bound to condemn those parts of Fascist ideology that went against Catholic precepts.³⁰⁸ The first issue that the Catholic Church, both in Turin and on a national level, did not want to compromise upon was the independence of its members and of its associations. The Cardinal – whether Gamba or Fossati – defended the freedom of his priests, often acting as an intermediary between Fascist authorities and the members of the clergy who were not welcome to the regime. This was evident, for example, in the support shown by Cardinal Fossati for the parish priest of Rivalta, at the outskirts of Turin, who had refused to allow local youth into his church wearing the uniforms of the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB).³⁰⁹ Clerics could often be on the black list of local Fascist hierarchs because of their readiness to assert their independence. In general, however, photographic evidence of a priest's presence at a Fascist ceremony, together with a few words by the cardinal that emphasised the moral righteousness of the incriminated member of the clergy, were usually enough for the Prefetto or the Podestà to withdraw any charges of "unpatriotism" moved against a cleric.³¹⁰

Both Cardinal Gamba and Cardinal Fossati looked after the individual priests of the Archdiocese of Turin, but they defended the freedom of the local Catholic associations (in particular after 1931, when Azione Cattolica Italiana came under diocesan control) even more. Turinese Catholics kept a positive attitude even when Fascist oppression was at its apex (as happened in 1927-8, and then again in 1931): according to some confidential minutes taken by local ACI leaders in 1927, the fact that their public displays of piety were often cut short in those problematic years meant that members of the ACI had more time for individual prayer

³⁰⁸ Binchy, *Church and State*, p. 683.

³⁰⁹ ASD 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Letter from E. Canepa, September 11, 1933.

³¹⁰ ASD, 14.3 – Fondo Gamba – Carte Personali. The most documented case here is that of Don Matteo del Bosco in May 1927, with a series of letters by Cardinal Gamba, together with a set of pictures of the priest, that led to the withdrawal of the charges against him.

and meditation, thus enriching the spiritual life of young Catholics without provoking the rage of local Fascist bosses.³¹¹ In the reports given by the leaders of ACI to Cardinal Gamba in 1927 it was written that 'Qua e là ... fra i nostri e le autorità fasciste è l'idillio perfetto', thus fostering the idea that the Fascist regime was far from being monolithic, with local hierarchs who were more or less inclined to reach a compromise with Catholic organizations independently from the orders they received from Mussolini's regime in Rome.³¹² From 1929, the local ACI hierarchs were telling the organization's members to 'rispettare la legittima autorità ed obbedire alle leggi' whilst also 'mantenere i fondamenti della salvezza e della felicità dei popoli'.³¹³ It was precisely the idea of preserving the happiness of all people, whilst also supposedly obeying the authorities of the State, that led to other clashes with the regime.

Respecting the authorities and obeying the law whilst maintaining the principle of happiness for all people proved to be an impossible task for the Turinese Catholic Church after the Racial Laws of 1938, and it caused a drastic split between local Church and Fascist authorities.³¹⁴ Whilst not openly attacking the regime on this issue, Cardinal Fossati – and to an even greater extent his secretary Monsignor Vincenzo Barale – helped dozens and dozens of people of Jewish descent (ranging from practising Jews to converts to Catholicism) by giving them financial help when their incomes were either completely cut or reduced as a result of the Racial Laws of 1938, and later the Turinese Catholic Church even helped tens of Jews to flee the country in order to avoid deportation.³¹⁵ As Vincenzo Barale recalled in his post-war diaries, in 1944 Fascist troops surrounded the Archbishop's See in Turin in order to round up the Jewish people that were supposed to be hidden there, but not finding anyone they arrested the Monsignor.³¹⁶ The individual cases in which the Archdiocese intervened to help the local Jewish community will be discussed in the last section of this chapter, but it is

³¹¹ ASD, 19.117 – CV – Azione Cattolica – Busta 10 – Giunta Diocesana – Appunti Risevati, July 6, 1927.

³¹² Ibid., translated as 'here and there the situation between us and fascist authorities is perfectly idyllic'.

³¹³ *La Voce dell'Operaio*, December 8, 1929, translated as 'respect the legitimate authority and obey the law' and 'maintaining the basic principles of salvation and happiness for all people'.

³¹⁴ Reineri, *Cattolici e Fascismo*, p. 189.

³¹⁵ ASD, 14.14.89 – FF – Acattolici – Busta Ebrei.

³¹⁶ ASD, 14.14.3-4 – FF – Diari del Mons. Vincenzo Barale.

essential to point out here that the Turinese Catholic Church did operate underground to sabotage the implementation of the Racial Laws.

The transcendental power of the Turinese Catholic Church allowed it to gain the confidence necessary to believe that it had freedom of action. It was precisely this confidence that prompted the Church to constantly show its support, or lack thereof, for the actions of the Fascist government. The ones discussed until this point were public displays of the dynamics of the relationship between the hierarchs of the local Catholic Church and the Fascist Party. There was, however, another dimension to this relationship, and this chapter will now look at the hidden connections between the Archbishop's See and local Fascist hierarchs, appreciating the ways in which the Church and the local government exchanged favours as equally strong and separate institutions. The local Fascist hierarchs never ceased to state how Mussolini, 'Uomo Provvidenziale', was ruling 'per Volontà del RE e per paterno amore del Pontefice Pio XI'.³¹⁷ Whilst love was probably too strong a term, it is possible to argue that Mussolini was ruling because of the assent of the pope. The situation was surely similar in Turin, where, throughout the Fascist period, the Catholic Church did not oppose the local government too vehemently in order to preserve the independence of its associations but also in order to retain its influence upon local *party politics*.

Both Cardinal Gamba and Cardinal Fossati maintained a continuous correspondence with the local Prefetti and Federali in which they constantly asked the Fascist hierarchs to help the careers of many individual exemplary Catholics.³¹⁸ Fascist hierarchs could help these exemplary Catholics by persuading employers to give special attention to their applications or by granting membership of the Fascist party to the recommended applicants even though subscriptions to the PNF were closed (and the applicants had been previously denied

³¹⁷ ASD, 14.3 – FG – Carte Personali – Circular Letter from Provveditore Umberto Renda, February 14, 1929, translated as 'Providential Man ... for the desire of the KING and the fatherly love of Pope Pius XI'.

³¹⁸ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP, ASD 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Busta Post-fascismo.

membership because of political reasons).³¹⁹ As Arturo Carlo Jemolo has argued, the recommendation of a cardinal ‘poteva quasi quanto quella del deputato nelle prefetture e nei ministeri’, and a high degree of interaction between state and religious authorities on similar issues had been a constant in Turin long before the Fascist era.³²⁰ In return, the Prefetto often required the presence of Catholic authorities at local Fascist manifestations in order to assert Fascist authority in Turin (and his reactions would be particularly irate – yet ultimately powerless – if Catholic authorities rejected his invitations).³²¹ Letters of recommendation were also sent to Rome via Cesare Maria de Vecchi di Val Cismon, a staunch Piedmontese, one of the *quadrumviri* of the March on Rome, the first Italian Ambassador to the Holy See, and most of all an enigmatic figure whose allegiances were constantly divided ‘tra papa, duce, e re’ as reflected by the title of his published diaries.³²²

In the 1930s, Cardinal Fossati frequently asked local Fascist hierarchs to persecute those blackshirts who had harassed members of Catholic associations.³²³ In order not to alienate the local Catholic Church, Prefetti and Federali generally proceeded to question, punish, and on occasion even dismiss the culprits.³²⁴ Pollard has argued that the Vatican, in the late 1920s, used its power to directly push the Fascist government to dismiss Roberto Farinacci, Giovanni Gentile, and Aldo Oviglio.³²⁵ At a local level, the actions of Cardinal Gamba and Cardinal Fossati mirrored those of the pope: the two cardinals managed in fact to support their protégés and to infiltrate local *party politics* thanks to a series of mutual favours

³¹⁹ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP – Letter from the Federale di Torino, January 9, 1929.

³²⁰ Jemolo, *Chiesa e Stato*, p. 448, translated as ‘could help [getting a job] in the prefectures and the ministries almost as much as that of a Member of Parliament’.

³²¹ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP, ASD 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo, in both folders there are numerous similar requests coming from both the Prefetto and the Federale of the time, ACS, MI – DGPS – 1932 – Sezione II – Busta 52 – Movimento Sovversivo – Torino, Telegram from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, June 2, 1932.

³²² ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP – Letter from Cesare Maria de Vecchi di Val Cismon, January 26, 1929, Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon, *Tra Papa, Duce e Re*, Sandro Setta (ed.) (Roma: Jouvence, 1998).

³²³ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Letter from the Fiduciario del Partito Filippo Gattiji, February 18, 1940

³²⁴ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Letter from the Curato di Sant’ Alfonso Carlo Cavallo, February 28, 1940, and Letter from the Fiduciario del Partito Filippo Gattiji, February 18, 1940, and Resoconto di Aggressione sul Tram (not signed, written between February 20 and February 24, 1940).

³²⁵ Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy*, p. 86.

exchanged with local Fascist hierarchs and both, like Pius XI, managed to obstruct the careers of members of the Fascist Party who acted against the Catholic Church and its faithful. In the midst of this mutual clientelistic relationship, even Mussolini paid homage to the Catholic Church during his rare visits to Turin, both by attending solemn masses and by visiting Catholic orphanages and hospitals.³²⁶

Clearly, the Turinese Catholic Church also had strong connections with the other source of political authority in the city, the House of Savoy. Members of the ruling family, in particular princess Iolanda and the heir to the throne Umberto, often accepted the invitations of the Turinese cardinals or of the leaders of the various Catholic organizations to take part in religious manifestations of any kind.³²⁷ In return, the cardinals would frequently order the celebration of a *Te Deum* in the cathedral in honour of the Royal Family, occasionally even ignoring Vatican orders to stop this practice (such honours should not have been reserved in the 1920s for the family that had united Italy at the expense of the Papal States).³²⁸ The House of Savoy represented such an important part of local Catholic life that before the beginning of a number of events organized by the Salesian family (a Catholic association for the poorest strata of society that had originated in Turin in the late 19th century) celebratory telegrams were sent by the Salesians to the Pope and to Victor Emmanuel III (but not to Mussolini or a Fascist hierarch).³²⁹ Another manifestation of the good relations that existed between the Archbishop's See of Turin and the House of Savoy was Cardinal Gamba's strong – yet unsuccessful – attempt to liaise with the Pope in order to ensure that Umberto's wedding in

³²⁶ AST, Prefettura di Torino – Gabinetto – Primo Versamento – Busta 486 – Presidente del Consiglio, 1926-1933, letters from the Questura to the Civic Authorities, October 20 and 22, 1932.

³²⁷ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP – Letters from the Primo Aiutante di Campo, December 16th 1925, October 2, 1926, ASD 14.3 – FG – CP – Letter from the Segretario di Stato Cardinal Gasparri, May 18, 1929, ASD, 14.14.79 – FF – ACI Femminile – Letter from the Consiglio Superiore della Gioventù Femminile Cattolica Italiana, March 28, 1931.

³²⁸ Examples can be found in ASD, 19.111 – CV – Casa Savoia – Letter from the Segretario di Stato Cardinal Gasparri, May 16th and June 6, 1925, or AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 3 – Famiglia Reale, Poi Presidenza della Repubblica, 1925-1940, Letter from the Archbishop's See to the Prefetto, February 13, 1937.

³²⁹ ACS, MI – DGPS – 1926 – Busta 92 – Ordine Pubblico – Torino, Letter from the Prefetto Agostino D'Adamo to the Ministry of Interior, May 27, 1926.

1931 could be celebrated either in Santa Maria Maggiore or in San Giovanni in Laterano in Rome.³³⁰

At times, Catholic Church interactions with members of the House of Savoy were far less formal than what traditional etiquette would have suggested, as when Emanuele Filiberto, 2nd Duke of Aosta, invited Cardinal Gamba and his prelates to a ball in 1929 (of course, the Duke said, the dances would not start until the Cardinal and his followers had left the palace!).³³¹ Such documents are of high historical interest since they show how strong the links were between the highest echelons of the Catholic Church and the monarchy in Turin. Therefore, it seems natural to wonder how easy it could have been for the Fascist regime to enter the political scene and break (or at least loosen) the grip on local power of two such powerful and firmly rooted institutions. Gentile has claimed that the Fascist Party benefitted from the identification of the Party itself with the Catholic Church as this allowed it to better repress dissent, but the expositions of the Holy Shroud (upon which the next chapter will focus) seem to paint a picture in which the clearest identification – at least in Turin – was actually between the House of Savoy and the Catholic Church, thus leaving the Fascist Party aside.³³²

Attempts to prevent the regime from interfering with Catholic celebrations of monarchic power can be found throughout the Fascist era, as in the case of the celebration of the *Te Deum* in the church of San Francesco D'Assisi on the occasion of Victor Emmanuel III's birthdays, events to which party hierarchs were not invited throughout the 1930s which caused a minor scandal in the pro-fascist press.³³³ Still on the topic of celebrations of monarchic power, it is interesting to mention the peculiar case of the parish priest of Giaglione (a small village in the mountains around Turin) who throughout the 1920s and early 1930s allowed local monarchists to freely ring the church bells on the occasion of royal anniversaries,

³³⁰ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP – Letter from the Segretario di Stato Cardinal Gasparri, November 14, 1929.

³³¹ ASD, 14.1 –FG – CP – Letter from Emanuele Filiberto di Savoia, February 1, 1929.

³³² Gentile, *Culto del Littorio*, p. 126.

³³³ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 3 – FRPR, 1925-1940, Note for the Prefetto, November 14, 1940.

birthdays, and other important events, whilst he often forbade local party hierarchs from doing so for Fascist celebrations.³³⁴ Church bells could also be an instrument of opposition to the regime in general, as in the case of Don Giordano from Ciriè (a suburb of Turin), who rang them insistently in order to disturb a rally of local Fascists in 1935.³³⁵

It is important to point out that the political aims of the Turinese Catholic Church and those of the Vatican, despite being similar, were not always identical. As Anthony Rhodes has argued in *The Vatican in the Age of the Dictators*, the Holy See 'often has less control over its hierarchy than the most constitutional monarch has over his Ministers'.³³⁶ In Turin, the independence of the local Catholic Church was at times very evident, in particular when it came to defending the interests of the House of Savoy. The case of the irate letters of Cardinal Gamba to the Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Gasparri on the issue of the royal wedding have already been mentioned, and this problem was only solved by an apology from the pope who claimed not to have been informed of Gamba's request (however, it remains unclear whether the pope was genuinely unaware of Gamba's plea until too late or whether his refusal was due to the animosity between the Vatican and the House of Savoy that dated back to the unification of Italy).³³⁷ Gamba and Gasparri also locked horns on the issue of the Turinese Catholic press. The bone of contention in this case was the clerical-syndicalist newspaper *Il Lavoratore*, supported by Gamba but opposed by the Vatican because of its uncompromising anti-fascist stance.³³⁸ In both cases the Vatican had its way – the royal wedding was not celebrated in a papal cathedral but rather in a chapel in the Quirinale, and *Il Lavoratore* ended up being a short-lived experiment that only lasted for a couple of months.³³⁹

Another contentious issue – that this time saw the Turinese Catholic Church realizing its

³³⁴ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 628 – Cerimoniale – 1927-1948 – Busta Fondazione Fasci di Combattimento – Letter from the Podestà of the Comune of Giaglione to the Prefettura, April 4, 1932.

³³⁵ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 509 – Autorità Ecclesiastiche Locali, Clero, Azione Cattolica, 1937-1947, letter from the Fascist Federation of Ciriè to the Prefetto, October 21, 1935.

³³⁶ Rhodes, *The Vatican in the Age of the Dictators*, p. 354.

³³⁷ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP – Letter from the Segretario di Stato Cardinal Gasparri, November 14, 1929.

³³⁸ 'Nuova Rivista Sindacale: "Il Lavoratore"', *L'Armonia*, February 14, 1926, and ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Letter from the Segretario di Stato Cardinal Gasparri, July 3, 1926.

³³⁹ Reineri, *Cattolici e Fascismo*, pp. 72-3.

desires – was the celebration of a *Te Deum* in the Duomo of Turin to celebrate the birthday of Vittorio Emanuele III in 1925. In this case, Cardinal Gamba simply ignored Vatican dispositions that obliged prelates not to intervene in the royal celebrations of 1925.³⁴⁰ All these internal fights go to show that even the Catholic Church was far from being a monolithic institution, and that local prelates were not afraid to challenge the Holy See and to try to assert their (relative degree of) independence.

In this section, therefore, it has been shown how the Catholic Church of Turin considered its religious mission to be above *party politics*. The Catholic Church had *universal* worries that went far beyond the boundaries of conventional *party politics*, and its all-encompassing stand could not be openly attacked by the Fascist government. Throughout the Fascist period, including during the Second World War, the Turinese Catholic Church had a clear agenda within the realm of what it considered to be *universal politics* and actively engaged to locally pursue its aims. This agenda had many items in common with the Fascist one (and these were often highlighted in order to preserve Fascist support – even economic – for many Catholic charitable initiatives), but there was still plenty of room for disagreements (in particular over issues relating to the autonomy of clerical institutions or pertaining to the implementation of the Racial Laws).³⁴¹ The anti-communism of the Piedmontese Catholics, for instance, was one of those issues that saw the Turinese Catholics and the Fascist government on the same line even during the Resistance War: Beppe Fenoglio, in his novel *Il Partigiano Johnny*, provides an excellent portrait of the animosities between communist partisan brigades and catholic-monarchist ones.³⁴² The Turinese Catholic Church was also not willing to reach a compromise with the communist forces on a post-war settlement: already thinking in post-war terms, after a meeting to discuss the Nazi withdrawal from northern Italy, Giuseppe Bicchierai,

³⁴⁰ ASD, 19.111 – CV – CS – Letter from the Segretario di Stato Cardinal Gasparri, May 16 and June 6, 1925.

³⁴¹ Bresso, 'Mondo Cattolico e Classe Operaia', p. 208.

³⁴² Beppe Fenoglio, *Il Partigiano Johnny*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1994), for an accurate analysis of these animosities Philip Cooke, 'The Red and the Blue: the Depiction of the Italian Partisan Resistance in Fenoglio's "Il Partigiano Johnny"', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 91, No. 2 (Apr., 1996), pp.365-381.

secretary of the Archbishop of Milan, informed Cardinal Fossati that it was essential that 'risulti come l'Autorità Ecclesiastica e gli Alleati abbiano fatto di tutto per impedire i disagi alle popolazioni e come questi debbano essere attribuiti ai comunisti'.³⁴³ In order to pursue their Catholic agenda, Cardinal Gamba and Cardinal Fossati intervened, directly and indirectly, in Turinese *party politics*, and they even came to clash with the Vatican on certain occasions. The principal way to pursue this Catholic agenda was through the big and powerful Catholic organizations, as pope Pius XI had argued and as it will be shown in the next section of this chapter.³⁴⁴

The Active Pursuit of the Totalitarian Aims of the Turinese Catholic Church

Throughout the Fascist era, the social aims of the Catholic Church were pursued chiefly through a number of lay ecclesiastical associations, most of which were under the umbrella of the *Azione Cattolica Italiana*. The history of the ACI under the regime is well documented and it has always been a complex one. The ACI was seen as a clear threat to the totalitarian ambitions of the Fascist government throughout the 1920s (in a period in which, on a national scale, the association was actually losing members).³⁴⁵ The ACI and the regime came to a compromise with the Lateran pacts in 1929, but this did not last for long, and, by 1931, the regime forced the Vatican to give up its control of the ACI (the various dioceses thus came to take full responsibility for the activities of the various branches of the organization).³⁴⁶ What is curious about this process is that from the point when the Turin section of the ACI came under

³⁴³ ASD, 14.14.107 – FF – Vincenzo Barale, segretario dell'Arc. Card. Maurilio Fossati – Busta Carte Concernenti il Periodo Bellico – Letter from Giuseppe Bicchierai to Maurilio Fossati, December 8, 1944, translated as 'it has to be evident how the Ecclesiastical Authorities and the Allies have done everything to prevent the population from experiencing problems of any sort, and how these problems must be blamed on the communists'.

³⁴⁴ Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy*, p. 95.

³⁴⁵ ASD, 19.117 – CV – AC – Busta 10 – Giunta Diocesana – Appunti Risevati, July 6, 1927, ASD, 14.14.78 – Fondo Fossati – ACI Maschile – Tabella Forza Federale, 1931, Ceci, *L'Interesse Superiore*, p. 147.

³⁴⁶ Binchy, *Church and State*, p. 528.

diocesan control its numbers constantly increased until the beginning of the Second World War and the clashes with the regime continued (leading even to not infrequent displays of physical violence, as will be discussed later in this chapter).³⁴⁷ The situation amongst the Turinese Catholics in that tumultuous 1931 was perfectly described by a regime informer, who wrote to the then secretary of the PNF Achille Starace:

Lo scioglimento dei circoli giovanili cattolici ha esasperato il clero in modo fantastico e lo ha scagliato contro il Regime con proposito di impegnarsi per ora in opera di sabotaggio. I circoli cattolici sono chiusi, ma l'azione si svolge nelle sacrestie, saranno ostacolate le iscrizioni dei giovani ai balilla e della bambine alle piccole italiane ... La propaganda contraria al Regime nel senso astensionista sarà svolta specialmente a mezzo della maestre elementari molte delle quali sono accaparrate somme appartenenti a congreghe religiose e ad ordini terziari. Il ragionamento semplice e persuasivo che si tiene al volgo è il seguente: i circoli giovanili cattolici erano l'istituzione prediletta del Pontefice, Mussolini li ha sciolti con la forza illegale e senza alcun motivo plausibile per recare offesa al Capo della Chiesa che rappresenta Cristo in terra, in conseguenza Mussolini è nemico di Cristo e della Religione; noi dobbiamo essere e siamo invece devoti al Papa ed alla Casa Savoia che è religiosissima.³⁴⁸

This section will look at an array of activities organized by the Turinese ACI, but also at those Catholic associations that were not controlled directly by the ACI, and, lastly, at the use made by the Turinese Catholic Church of the available media in order to pursue its aims.

Probably the most active of the groups belonging to the Turinese ACI, the *Società Gioventù Cattolica* (GC) organized activities for Catholic boys who would later join the ranks of the *Federazione Italiana Uomini Cattolici* (FIUC). In her work, Reineri has highlighted two crucial points relating to the nature of the Turinese GC (and of the ACI in general). Firstly, its

³⁴⁷ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Attività dell’Azione Cattolica, 1939, ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Statistica ed Organizzazione, 1945.

³⁴⁸ ACS, Archivi Fascisti - PNF - Direttorio Nazionale - Segreteria Politica - Situazione Politica Nelle Provincie - Busta 25 – Torino – Note for Achille Starace, June 16, 1931, translated as ‘the dismantlement of the Catholic youth circles has exasperated the clergy in a fantastic way and has pushed it against the regime with the aim of sabotaging the dictatorship. The Catholic circles have been closed, but the activity takes place in the sacristies, they will obstruct the enrolment of the boys in the Balilla and of the girls in the Piccole Italiane ... Propaganda against the regime in a sense of abstentionism will be carried forward in particular by primary school teachers, many of whom have received funds from religious groups and other orders. The rationale presented to the people is simple and persuasive: Catholic youth circles were the favourite institutions of the Pope, Mussolini dissolved them with illegal force and without any plausible reason in order to offend the Leader of the Church, who represents Christ on earth, therefore Mussolini is an enemy of Christ and of Religion; we instead have to be devout to the Pope and to the House of Savoy, which is extremely pious’.

leaders believed in the capacity of Turinese Catholics to contribute to the improvement of local society through small acts of piety, and this was an extremely powerful weapon of evangelization at grassroots level.³⁴⁹ Secondly, the Turinese GC was a cross-class association that brought together the former Sabaudian aristocracy, the middle classes that had belonged to the *Partito Popolare Italiano* (PPI), and the working classes that had once had their own independent organizations (nearly entirely dismantled by the regime by 1926).³⁵⁰ The fact that the GC was capable of uniting young people belonging to different classes was, in turn, a severe threat for the Fascist regime, whilst it also made the Catholic Church a major player in the process of integration of the various and fragmented social groups in Turin.

As early as 1927, Turinese Catholics had a very clear idea of how the regime perceived the GC and the ACI, as well as of what was needed in order to preserve the independence of Catholic associations. In a set of secret notes, written in July of 1927, it can be read that ‘il partito dominante è totalitario e vede un pericolo per la propria compagine in qualunque organizzazione di ogni genere e colore’.³⁵¹ As Count Carlo Lovera di Castiglione – one of the local leaders of the ACI and another person who epitomized the links between powerful institutions and social groups that pre-dated the Fascist regime – had already declared a couple of months earlier, it was impossible to ignore Fascism as an entity and as a government, and, in order to preserve the independence of the ACI and the GC, it was essential not to have the dictatorship as a declared enemy.³⁵² Lovera did not necessarily advocate a total alliance with Fascism, but he pointed out that the Catholic Church needed the regime’s assent in order to maintain the independence of its associations and in order to do something for the education (not just religious) of local youth.³⁵³ Once the Lateran Pacts were signed, the

³⁴⁹ Reineri, *Cattolici e Fascismo*, p. 28.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁵¹ ASD, 19.117 – CV – AC – Busta 10 – Giunta Diocesana – Appunti Risevati, July 6, 1927, translated as ‘The dominant party is totalitarian and perceives every [outside] organization of whichever kind and colour as a threat’.

³⁵² ASD, 19.117 – CV – AC – Busta 10 – Giunta Diocesana – Letter and Comments by Carlo Lovera di Castiglione, February 4/6, 1927.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

Turinese Catholic Church claimed that 'niente più rassicura lo Stato, i pubblici poteri e i Governi, che la formazione delle coscienze sui principii dell'Azione Cattolica voluta dal Santo Padre come presidio insieme della Chiesa e della Società'.³⁵⁴ However, this truce was to be short-lived, and, as Franco Molinari and Vito Neri have argued, the crisis of 1931 between the regime and the various national sections of the ACI (guilty of posing too serious a threat to the regime's own youth organisations, and therefore condemned to move under diocesan – and no longer Vatican – control after having even been banned for a few months) destroyed the illusion of catholicizing Fascism.³⁵⁵ Yet, the crisis of 1931 also proved that there were points upon which the positions of the Catholic Church and the Fascist State were irreconcilable and that it was impossible to fully *fascistize* the Catholic Church and its organizations. The regime believed that it could solve its problems by enforcing the de-centralization of the ACI, but the Turinese Catholic associations, in particular the GC, benefitted greatly from their transition to diocesan control.

The Turinese GC was an organization capable of looking after most aspects of the upbringing of a boy from the city. Clearly, the GC of Turin was based upon religious precepts, but its actions went far beyond the spiritual life of the boys (as monsignor Barale was recorded admitting over the telephone 'Si è costituito il gruppo di aspiranti, che sono i nostril "Balilla" in opposizione agli altri Balilla').³⁵⁶ The main aim of the association was to educate its members, and the GC used the term "education" in its broadest sense, taking care of the religious, moral, but also social upbringing of young Catholic boys. The association organized study groups in all areas, with older and more prepared students helping the younger and less advanced ones.³⁵⁷ The local GC also held its own sports events and tournaments, and, when these came to be

³⁵⁴ ASD, 19.136 – CV – SC – Unsigned Circular Letter, translated as 'nothing reassures the State, the public power, and governments more than the knowledge that consciences are being formed on the principles of the Azione Cattolica, desired by the Holy Father as a bastion for both Church and Society', 1929.

³⁵⁵ Molinari and Neri, *Olio Santo e Olio di Ricino*, p. 109.

³⁵⁶ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 507, AELCAC, 1926-1946, Letter from the Ministry of Interior to the Prefetto, translated as 'we have created the group of the aspirants, who are our "Balilla" in opposition to the other Balilla'.

³⁵⁷ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Cesare Balbo – Rapporto Annuale 1934/5.

prohibited by the regime from 1931 onwards, the association simply claimed to be using its own sports grounds only for recreational and non-competitive purposes.³⁵⁸ Arguing that the recreation centres of the Turinese parishes were the most appropriate places for the religious and personal growth of young boys, the GC made sure that these places were always equipped with pool tables, decks of cards, and board games in order to ensure that local boys could enjoy their moments of recreation whilst being protected by Catholic institutions.³⁵⁹ Even after 1931, the Turinese sections of AC worked so well that their capacity to limit Fascist social power appeared clear to state authorities as well: 'le associazioni di AC pur non preferendosi finalità contrarie ai principi del regime, praticamente rendono i propri iscritti quanto meno indifferenti alle manifestazioni di questo nei vari casi della vita sociale e nell'educazione sportiva della gioventù'.³⁶⁰

This description of the activities of the Turinese GC is that of an apparatus created for the achievement of the "social totalitarianism" of the Catholic Church, and the regime was acutely aware of this issue.³⁶¹ Incapable of stopping the associations belonging to the ACI, in 1931 the Fascist government used all its strength to break the link between these and the Vatican. The ACI therefore became, as has already been mentioned, diocesan.³⁶² One of the chief problems linked to this was the fact that most of the Turinese senior leaders of the ACI represented a threat for the regime because they were considered to be embodiments of the continuity of the ideals of the Popular Party.³⁶³ Simultaneously, Turinese ACI members showed a new readiness to display their loyalty towards the association (something that will be

³⁵⁸ ASD, 19.117 – CV – AC – Busta 10 – Giunta Diocesana – Promemoria, July 23, 1927, and ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Attività dell'Azione Cattolica, 1939.

³⁵⁹ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Busta Scontri 1931, and ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Attività dell'Azione Cattolica, 1939.

³⁶⁰ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 507, AELCAC, 1926-1946, letter from the Carabinieri to the Prefetto, April 18, 1933, translated as 'the associations of AC, despite not having aims opposed to the principles of the regime, practically make their own members at the very least indifferent towards the manifestations of the regime aimed at the physical education of the youth and at the organization of social life'.

³⁶¹ ASD, 19.117 – CV – AC – Busta 10 – Giunta Diocesana – Appunti Risevati, July 6, 1927.

³⁶² Binchy, *Church and State*, p. 528.

³⁶³ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 507, AELCAC, 1926-1946, Letter from the Questura to the Prefetto, February 20, 1930, AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 508 – AELCAC, 1937-1947, riserve letter from the Prefettura to the Ministry of Interior, March 28, 1928, note to the Prefettura, August 17, 1929.

analysed in the last section of this chapter) whilst the worries of the Fascist regime remained far from being solved. In 1931, at the apex of the crisis, young members of the ACI made even more openly political gestures, like attempting to affix posters on the walls of Turin celebrating the Catholic Party, Cardinal Fossati, and the “Pope King”.³⁶⁴ Throughout the 1930s the Fascist government continued to monitor the activity of the GC in the various parishes of Turin.³⁶⁵ As the range of activities of the local GC widened with time (with more sports and more games, but also with the projection of movies, the creation of cafes and pubs, and with the establishment of amateur Catholic theatre companies) the Fascist reports were written with a drier language, becoming simply descriptive rather than polemical, and suggesting that, by the late 1930s, local hierarchs had realized that Fascism could no longer fight against the Catholic Church over the education of the Turinese youth and that the strength of the local Catholic Church had to be accepted rather than fought.³⁶⁶

Far from being a revolutionary association, the Turinese ACI did its best to reinforce many traditional social values (in particular with regard to the position of women and the role of the family). The feminine section of the GC (the *Gioventù Femminile*, GF) and the *Unione Femminile Cattolica Italiana* (UFCI) were to have the least possible contact with their masculine counterparts. The situation had been the same before the First World War, when Vatican orders declared that ‘l’azione promossa dall’*Unione fra le Donne Cattoliche d’Italia* segua il proprio indirizzo, né abbia colle associazioni maschili una comune azione’.³⁶⁷ This spirit was then maintained in Turin throughout the Fascist period, when even the idea of a summer camp where boys and girls could interact still appeared as inconceivable.³⁶⁸ Traditional values were installed in the girls belonging to the GF thanks to a long list of events. Chief among these

³⁶⁴ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 507, AELCAC, 1926-1946, Letter from the Questura to the Prefetto, June 22, 1931.

³⁶⁵ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Letter from Don Armando Pievano, May 29, 1931.

³⁶⁶ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Attività dell’Azione Cattolica, 1939.

³⁶⁷ ASD, 19.117 – CV – AC – Busta 5 – Donne Cattoliche e Gioventù Femminile, Circular Letter from the Secretary of State, July 1, 1911, translated as ‘the action promoted by the *Unione fra le Donne Cattoliche d’Italia* has to follow its own path, and has to have no common action with the male associations’.

³⁶⁸ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Cesare Balbo – Letter by the Associazione Cesare Balbo, 1935.

events were the *Settimana della Signorina* and the *Settimana della Giovane*, organized in the late 1930s in many Italian cities.³⁶⁹ In Turin, the aims of these weeks were to ‘risolvere cristianamente uno dei più gravi problemi della vita: quello dell’amore [...] indicare alla signorina i mezzi per conquistare la fortezza cristiana’ as the young girls were called to action by God, by Jesus and by the cardinal ‘polso e pastore delle anime a lui affidate’.³⁷⁰ The idea of the cardinal not only being the shepherd of his flock, but also a strong man capable of firmly leading his people, seems to borrow from Fascist rhetoric more than from the Catholic values of the time. The power of the Catholic Church amongst Turinese women was so evident that often even Fascist campaigns for the regimentation of the lives of local women had to involve a strong religious component, and often these had to begin with a mass or a special service (as in the case of the Fascist *Settimana della Donna* in 1944).³⁷¹

The lives of the girls belonging to the GF were extremely regimented, arguably more so than those of the boys belonging to the GC. Their degree of mobilization was higher, with girls belonging to the GF being pushed to volunteer for charitable activities much more strongly than the boys of the GC.³⁷² Sports were also not an integral part of the upbringing of the girls of the GF as they were for the boys. By as early as 1925, the local ACI was already running its own religion exams for the women within its ranks – the GF girls in the *beniamine* and *aspiranti* and the women in the *effettive* (belonging not to the GF, but to the UFCI).³⁷³ These exams took place at the end of the catechism courses for the academic year – courses in which there was no room for an open discussion and for the questioning of religious dogma – and they were chiefly on biblical topics and on the institutional history of the Catholic Church.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁹ ASD, 14.14.79 – FF – ACI Femminile – Busta Settimana della Giovane, and ASD, 14.14.79 – FF – ACI Femminile – Busta Settimana della Signorina.

³⁷⁰ ASD, 14.14.79 – FF – ACI Femminile – Busta Settimana della Signorina – Programma della Settimana della Signorina (February 25 - March 3, 1940), translated as ‘resolve in a Christian way one of the most pressing matters in life: that of love [...] to show young Christian women the means to conquer the Christian fortress’ and ‘firm hand [literally wrist] and shepherd of the souls given to him’.

³⁷¹ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 568 – Cultura, Turismo, Manifestazioni Sportive, 1924-1940, letter from the Segretario Federale to the Gruppo Femminile Fascista Repubblicano, September 28, 1944.

³⁷² ASD, 14.14.79 – FF – ACI Femminile – Busta Consiglio Diocesano – Relazione Sezioni Minori, 1937/8.

³⁷³ ASD, 19.117 – CV – AC – Busta 10 – Giunta Diocesana – Regolamento Esami e Gare di Religione, 1925.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

They required dogmatic answers, and, with their published rankings and prizes to be awarded, they reflected an attempt on the Catholic Church's side to indoctrinate youth in a style that was similar to that of the Fascist state schools and that reflected the dogmatism of education in the 1930s. Another similarity between the GF and the UFCI and the Fascist organizations for the regimentation of youth was the rigorous division of the members according to their age, something that, according to Reineri, the Catholic associations openly copied from the regime.³⁷⁵

GF and UFCI were also less cross-class than their masculine counterparts, with members coming predominantly from the middle class of the city (girls from a working class background were usually those who received the help of the GF and UFCI, whilst aristocratic women had their own independent section of the ACI, the *Sezione Ceto Signorile Maria Cristina di Savoia*) and this class division was arguably intended to preserve traditional values amongst women (girls from different classes would thus interact in the full knowledge of their different social ranks).³⁷⁶ A similar differentiation would not have been possible for Catholic men: class differences were in fact more blurred as men were much more often forced to cooperate (or to compete) with people from different social backgrounds in the workplace, on sports grounds, or in the army. Furthermore, aristocratic women had traditionally been linked to particular Catholic institutions rather than to others, and this allowed them to maintain class divisions even within the Catholic Church. A Catholic institution that benefitted greatly from the mobilization of Turinese aristocratic women, for example, was the poor and old people's home *Piccola Casa della Divina Provvidenza* (generally referred to as *Cottolengo* from

³⁷⁵ Reineri, *Cattolici e Fascismo*, p. 29.

³⁷⁶ ASD, 14.14.79 – FF – ACI Femminile – Busta Consiglio Diocesano – Note sulla Sezione Ceto Signorile “Maria Cristina di Savoia” estratto dal giornale “Servire più in Alto”, December 12, 1942.

the name of its founder), with many aristocratic ladies volunteering there and leaving sizable inheritances to the institution.³⁷⁷

The last main association that belonged to the ACI was the *Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana* (FUCI). In Turin there were two groups belonging to this association: one for male university students (the Cesare Balbo), and one for female university students (the Maria Gaetana Agnesi).³⁷⁸ Despite the fact that the Turinese FUCI was clearly smaller in size than both the GC and the GF, it was still considered to be a strong rival by the *Gioventù Universitaria Fascista* (GUF) (the secretary of the GUF of Turin, Guido Pallotta, constantly complained about the lack of commitment to the Fascist cause of his fellow students and about the excessive strength of the local FUCI).³⁷⁹ Again in this case, the two sections of the FUCI had different plans for their members: the men of the Cesare Balbo organized conferences, study groups, and broadcast their opinions and music through their own radio station (something the GUF of the time did not have and that caused the Cesare Balbo a number of bureaucratic and legal problems), whilst the women of the Maria Gaetana Agnesi did charitable work in the poorest areas of industrial Turin.³⁸⁰ The activities of the women of the Turinese FUCI had a twofold aim: they were intended to promote a set of traditional Catholic values amongst female university students, but they were also thought of as ways to interact with the urban proletariat, thus successfully infiltrating and establishing Catholic social power over an extremely numerous working-class that had lost most of its own organizations and yet had not been won over by Fascist rhetoric.

The Archdiocese of Turin also organized activities outside the umbrella of the ACI to reach out to particular sections of local society that had not been fully integrated by the

³⁷⁷ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 213 – Scioglimento Circoli e Associazioni, 1925-1948, letter from the Prefettura to the Ministry of Interior, June 2, 1926, letter from the Primo Aiutante di Campo to the Prefetto, May 29, 1926

³⁷⁸ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Cesare Balbo.

³⁷⁹ Doug Thompson, *State Control in Fascist Italy: Culture and Conformity, 1925-1943* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 44.

³⁸⁰ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Cesare Balbo – Circolo Universitario di Azione Cattolica “M.G. Agnesi” – Relazione delle attività svolte nell’anno 1934-5.

regime. The biggest association independent of the ACI to be run by the Archdiocese was the *Associazione Scout Cattolici Italiani* (ASCI). After the smaller sections of the ASCI in the Italian provinces had been closed by the regime in 1927, the Archdiocese of Turin pushed the leaders of the Turinese ASCI (active until 1928 because of the size of the city) to join the ACI in order to continue with their activities under an umbrella that could not be destroyed by the government.³⁸¹ Leaders of the ASCI, thus, joined the ACI, losing the name of their association in order to enter the ranks of the GC or the FIUC, but managing to carry on with a number of their activities. Moreover, in the case of Rivoli (on the outskirts of Turin) the former leaders and members of the ASCI not only joined the ACI, but they also managed to nearly fully take over (and lead astray, according to the local party secretary), the local *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB)

I balilla ed avanguardisti di Rivoli sono esploratori cattolici che vestono la camicia nera. Sino a che i balilla ed avanguardisti frequentano le scuole elementari vestono la nostra divisa. Cessati gli studi elementari ed abbandonata la scuola gettano via la camicia nera e si fanno soci della "Stella Maris" circolo sportivo cattolico

A Rivoli sino a pochi anni fa i Balilla erano pochissimi mentre fiorivano gli esploratori cattolici dell'Istituto Murialdo. Quando per Legge furono soppressi gli esploratori, accadde qui un fatto caratteristico: tutti i dirigenti del Comitato Esploratori cattolici, dal presidente (Conte Cavalli) sino al segretario furono nominati membri del Comitato dell'ONB ed i piccoli esploratori cattolici vestirono la camicia nera³⁸²

The Turinese Catholic Church was also the first in Italy to reach out to local artists, organizing masses and events especially aimed at them (the first *Messa dell'Artista* was

³⁸¹ ASD, 19.117 – CV – AC – Busta 6 – Esploratori Cattolici – Circular Letter on the situation of the ASCI, April 8, 1926.

³⁸² AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 628 – Cerimoniale 1927-1948 – Busta Leva Fascista, letter from the Party Secretary of the Municipality of Rivoli to the Prefetto, June 17, 1930, translated as 'The *balilla* and the *avanguardisti* of Turin are Catholic explorers who wear a black shirt. As long as *balilla* and *avanguardisti* are in elementary school they wear our uniforms. As soon as the elementary school is over they throw away the black shirt and join the "Stella Maris", a Catholic sports group. Up until a few years ago in Rivoli the *balilla* were very few whilst the Catholic explorers of the Institute Murialdo were blossoming. When the law suppressed the groups of Catholic explorers we had a peculiar event: all the leaders of the Committee of Catholic explorers, from the president (Count Cavalli) to the secretary were appointed members of the Committee of the ONB and the young Catholic explorers all started wearing a black shirt'.

labelled as 'exceptional' on the pages of *La Stampa*).³⁸³ This was the result of the requests from the recently founded and lay *Commissione Nazionale per l'Assistenza Religiosa agli Artisti*. They established a first link with Cardinal Fossati and this was in itself a clear sign of the social power held by the Catholic Church in Turin during the Fascist era and of the way sections of local society were willing to display their loyalty towards the Church.³⁸⁴ Many Turinese artists, following in the footsteps of Felice Casorati and the *Sei di Torino*, thus resisted the call of Fascism to 'disertare la torre d'avorio di un estetismo chiuso nel culto dell'arte, a convertirsi alla fede nel fascismo, a divenire propagandisti del culto del littorio'.³⁸⁵

The Turinese Catholic Church used all the media at its disposal in order to pursue its aims. The most immediate medium was, clearly, the press. The cases of the major Catholic newspapers have already been looked at in the first chapter, but it is essential to point out that *Il Momento* and *La Voce dell'Operaio* were complemented by a remarkably large number of bulletins and other publications.³⁸⁶ The two most important bulletins were *Vita Cristiana*, initially published illegally before the regime was forced to grant the Turinese Catholic Church the right to publish it, and *Il Giovane Piemonte*, aimed at the young members of the ACI and considered to be 'il migliore e il più efficace (talora purtroppo anche l'unico) mezzo di formazione delle coscienze giovanili'.³⁸⁷ Parish priests played a crucial role in the spread of these publications and were openly pushed by Cardinal Gamba and Cardinal Fossati to advertise Catholic publications in their sermons (and even the cardinals were following directions from the Vatican, with its State Secretary recommending that 'I Vescovi Piemontesi nel loro ben noto zelo vedranno di aiutarlo privatamente affinché nelle famiglie entri piuttosto

³⁸³ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Ufficio Centrale dell'Azione Cattolica – Letter from Cardinal Fossati, June 19, 1935, 'La Messa degli Artisti e il Discorso di Padre Gillet', *La Stampa*, January 16, 1933, p. 2.

³⁸⁴ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Ufficio Centrale dell'Azione Cattolica – Letter from the Commissione Nazionale per l'Assistenza Religiosa agli Artisti, May 14, 1935.

³⁸⁵ Gentile, *Culto del Littorio*, p. 200, translated as 'desert the ivory tower of an aestheticism enclosed in the cult of art, to convert to the faith in fascism, to become propagandists of the cult of the littorio', Mar. Ber., 'Pittori Giovani', *La Stampa*, January 14, 1929, p. 3.

³⁸⁶ ASD, 19.136 – CV – SC.

³⁸⁷ ASD, 14.3 – FG – SC - Ordine del giorno presentato al Consiglio Regionale dagli Assistenti Ecclesiastici e Presidenti Federali, 1923, translated as 'the best and most effective (and at times unfortunately the only) way to form the consciences of youth'.

il MOMENTO che altri giornali non cattolici').³⁸⁸ As has already been mentioned, the FUCI also had its own radio station in the 1930s, and this survived despite the Fascist attempts to impose heavy sanctions upon it in order to force its closure.³⁸⁹ By the late 1930s, moreover, many Catholic recreation centres had their own projectors and theatres (for both stage shows and movie screenings).³⁹⁰ Even the screening of movies was done with a clear social intent, with parish priests carefully picking movies suitable for the upbringing of young Catholics whilst also preventatively censoring scenes judged to be "immoral".³⁹¹

The Turinese Catholic Church, thus, ran a series of organizations that mirrored the Fascist corporative structure, and it did so whilst also using the available media in order to pursue its aims of social control. The success of these Catholic policies was, in its own right, a clear display of the limitations of the totalitarian project of the regime. Church and Fascist State constantly drew inspiration from each other for the development of their organizations. As the former Fascist Minister of Justice, Alfredo Rocco, wrote

*Una delle novità essenziali dello Stato fascista, che esso ha sotto qualche punto di vista comune con un'altra grande istituzione dalla vita millenaria, la Chiesa cattolica, è quella di possedere, accanto alla normale organizzazione dei poteri pubblici, un'altra organizzazione comprendente una infinità di istituzioni, le quali hanno per iscopo di avvicinare lo Stato alle masse, di penetrare profondamente in esse, di organizzarle, di curarne più da vicino la vita economica e spirituale, di farsi tramite ed interprete dei loro bisogni e delle loro aspirazioni.*³⁹²

³⁸⁸ ASD, 19.136 – CV – SC – Letter from the Holy See, October 5, 1928, translated as 'the Piedmontese Bishops, with their famous zeal, will have to privately help the diffusion of Il Momento so that this newspaper, rather than other non-Catholic ones, will enter into the homes'.

³⁸⁹ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Cesare Balbo – Letter from Pietro Tacchi Venturi to Mons. Giuseppe Pizzardo, 1934.

³⁹⁰ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Attività dell'Azione Cattolica, 1939.

³⁹¹ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Giunta Diocesana – Demografia e Moralità.

³⁹² Alfredo Rocco, *Scritti e Discorsi Politici*, vol. III (Milano: Giuffrè, 1938), pp. 944-5, translated as 'One of the essential novelties of the fascist State, that is from some point of view common also to the Catholic Church, another great institution with a millenary life, is that it [the State] has, besides the normal organization of public power, another organization that includes an infinity of institutions that aim to link the State and the masses, to deeply penetrate these [masses], to organize them, to really take care of their economic and spiritual life, to interpret and solve their needs and aspirations'.

The real test for the totalitarian aspirations of the regime was not to be the simple existence of Catholic organizations that rivalled the Fascist ones, but rather the degree of success of Catholic associations and the loyalty towards them openly displayed by the Turinese people, as it will be shown in the next section of this chapter. Catholic organizations, therefore, hampered the ambitions of social control of the Fascist regime by providing the Turinese population with an alternative set of associations that offered similar possibilities to those offered by state organizations (in particular access to modern media, sports facilities, meeting places for games and small theatre performances, and chances for members to do charitable work).

The Response of the Local Population to the Policies and the Social Power of the Turinese Catholic Church

The response of the local population to the policies of the Turinese Catholic Church is the most important issue discussed in this chapter (or at least it is the most important issue for a study on the limitations of the social power of the Fascist government in Turin). These responses can be divided into two different categories: on the one hand it is possible to analyze the responses of particular groups with a well-defined identity (in particular the ACI and its various branches, but also non-Catholic groups, like the Jewish community and members of the Fascist party), on the other hand it is essential to remember that individuals also interacted with clerical institutions and independently reacted to the actions of the Turinese Catholic Church. These individual responses took many different forms: from personal donations to particular institutions within the Catholic world, to desperate requests for financial help from the Archdiocese (rather than from the Fascist government), to countless pleas for an intercession by the cardinals in applications for jobs in virtually any sector (both private and public).

The displays of loyalty given by members of the various organizations of the ACI are amongst the most revealing manifestation of allegiance to the Turinese Catholic Church. They are a clear demonstration of the limitations of Fascist social power, of individual and group allegiance to the Turinese Catholic Church, and, often, of an uncompromising a-fascist stance taken by many ACI members who, despite not being strictly speaking anti-fascist, were ready to defend the independence of their institutions. The loyalty of the Turinese population to the ACI was severely tested in 1931, right at the end of the truce between Fascist and Catholic organizations that had been granted by the Lateran Pacts, when the regime decided to launch an offensive against the centralized ACI before forcing it to fall under diocesan – and not Vatican – control.

As systematically reported by parish priests, in 1931 Turinese members of the Fascist party – usually with the help of some of their “manigoldi” (thugs) – proceeded to strip the local sections of the ACI of all the material that could be used for purposes that were not strictly religious (pool tables, decks of cards, goalposts).³⁹³ Parish priests appealed to Cardinal Fossati, who then turned to the Fascist authorities asking for clarifications. Some of these events ended up with blood being spilt and with ‘colpi di bastone ... sedie per aria ... grida ... uno riportò una ferità larga tre centimetri ... grondante sangue ... un altro una grave contusione sopra di un occhio’.³⁹⁴ In 1931 Fascist violence would also hit older members of other sections of the ACI, as reported by a member of the FIUC who was attacked by a group of Fascists yelling ‘batti batti ... tanto sono come le pecore, che più le batti e più diventano mansuete!’ before his aggressors ran away sheepishly as soon as other people started coming.³⁹⁵ Catholic Church and regime reached again a *modus vivendi* later in 1931, when the sections of the ACI came under diocesan control: ACI circles obtained the materials that had been confiscated by

³⁹³ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Busta Scontri 1931, ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Letter from Don Armando Pievano, May 29, 1931.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., translated as ‘[people being] hit with clubs ... chairs being thrown ... screams ... a guy with a wound that was three centimeters wide ... dripping blood ... another one with a serious contusion above an eye’.

³⁹⁵ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Busta Scontri 1931, undated and unsigned, translated as ‘hit him, him him ... anyway they are just like sheep: the more you hit them the meeker they get’.

Fascist authorities and went back to their activities.³⁹⁶ Similar instances of Fascist violence against Catholics in the early 1930s are not very well known in the available historiography, but raise interesting points. For instance, questions emerge regarding the actual degree of power of a regime that still had to rely on violence 9 years after the seizure of power, and it is also remarkable that Fascist aggressors were prosecuted – upon the request of Cardinal Fossati – by their own superiors (who thus openly acknowledged the power of the highest spheres of the Turinese Catholic Church).

Accounts like the ones analyzed above are revealing in many aspects. Firstly, they show that Fascism, in order to affirm its authority in Turin, still had to rely on violence against unarmed people. As Michael Ebner has argued ‘Mussolini intended Fascist state violence to make the people of the Italian peninsula and islands into Fascists or, at the very least, Italians’.³⁹⁷ However, it does not seem as if Fascist violence achieved its desired results in the case of the Turinese ACI. It is also debatable whether it is possible to talk about the period that De Felice considered to be the “years of consensus” for the regime (between the late 1920s and late 1930s) in these terms with regard to Turin, a city in which Fascism still had to rely on the methods of the early 1920s. Secondly, it is interesting to note that, after this series of incidents, the Turinese ACI grew stronger rather than weaker, increasing the number of its circles and of its members on a yearly basis, and this was another very serious blow to Fascist ambitions.³⁹⁸

Another set of incidents is represented by the repeated beatings of members of the Turinese ACI at the hands of Fascist black-shirts in 1939 and 1940, at the beginning of the rhetorically “glorious” opening Italian campaigns of the Second World War. Reports on these incidents were written to Cardinal Fossati by the victims, by ACI authorities, by parish priests,

³⁹⁶ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Busta Scontri 1931.

³⁹⁷ Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2011), p. 263.

³⁹⁸ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Consiglio Diocesano – Riepilogo Tesseramento Unione Uomini, September 11, 1936,

or even by ordinary civilians.³⁹⁹ The issue at stake here was the display of ACI badges outside of Catholic structures. Ever since 1928 Cardinal Gamba had declared that those badges were meant to differentiate Catholics 'dagli altri che non militano nell'esercito di Cristo' and Fascist hierarchs knew well who those "others" were meant to be.⁴⁰⁰ By 1935 the Vatican had accepted that ACI badges could not be worn on Fascist uniforms, but allowed individual bishops and cardinals to decide whether to allow civilians in their communities to wear these badges on their everyday clothes.⁴⁰¹ Fossati reached a compromise with the local Fascist authorities and the Turinese Catholics were thus allowed to wear their ACI pins in public, but, by 1939, a number of black-shirts started to persecute – verbally and physically – ACI members wearing their badges (in particular those travelling on public transport).⁴⁰²

The large amount of documents available on this series of incidents paints an extremely vivid picture of the situation and of the diplomatic relations between local Fascist and Catholic authorities. Firstly, it is interesting to see the determination with which ACI members defended their beliefs (always challenging the black-shirts without however resorting to physical violence).⁴⁰³ Secondly, it is essential to note that ordinary civilians entered the dispute to defend the ACI members, and then provided their accounts to both Fascist and Catholic authorities (most of the reports of Fascist violence on Turinese Catholics in the 1930s kept in the Archivio Storico Diocesano portray local members of the PNF as being careful not to be noticed by anyone, but in those cases in which harassed Catholics had witnesses, the local Fascist hierarchy distanced itself from the perpetrators of violence).⁴⁰⁴ This can be seen as a clear manifestation of opposition to the despotic measures of the Fascist regime on the part

³⁹⁹ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Gioventù Maschile di Azione Cattolica.

⁴⁰⁰ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 508 – AELCAC – 1937-1947, private letter from the Prefettura to the Ministry of Interior, March 28, 1928, translated as 'from the others who are not enrolled in Christ's army'.

⁴⁰¹ ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Segretario Generale Colli – Distintivi e Tessere, 1935.

⁴⁰² ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Busta Scontrì 1939/1940.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., letters regarding the cases of Michele Calvo, November 3, 1939, Emilio Lecce, February 18, 1940, Ercole Ranizzotti, undated (between February 20 and February 24, 1940), Antonio Cesare Engel and Vittorio Ramberti, March 24, 1940.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., Letter regarding the case of Ercole Ranizzotti, undated (between February 20 and February 24, 1940).

of Turinese citizens, but also as an attempt to restore the tranquillity that was typical of Turin even during the bleakest years of the regime.⁴⁰⁵ Thirdly, it is crucial to note that parish priests could not come to a peaceful and acceptable solution to these issues with low ranking and district Fascist authorities.⁴⁰⁶ Parish priests, in fact, claimed to have been treated by these low ranking Fascist authorities with the same kind of disrespect shown by the black-shirts towards ACI members.⁴⁰⁷ District trustees of the Fascist party, however, immediately bowed down when Cardinal Fossati intervened, offering formal apologies, returning items that had been confiscated, and punishing the black-shirts who had acted illegally.⁴⁰⁸ This goes to show how local Fascist bosses could afford to act arrogantly and carelessly – under the traditional Fascist motto “me ne frego” (I don’t give a damn) – with people without much authority like parish priests, but they had to bow down, take steps back, and act in the most conciliatory manner if the Church decided to exert its full power.

The experience of many Jewish people in Turin, in particular after the promulgation of the Racial Laws in 1938, is also indicative of the grassroots power of the local Catholic Church. Dozens of people of Jewish background saw in the Turinese Catholic Church the only institution capable of helping them to leave the country at an extremely delicate time.⁴⁰⁹ These people had often directly asked the Holy See for help, but their pleas had not been satisfied. Matters changed, however, if they obtained a letter from Cardinal Fossati: at that point their chances of obtaining a visa for a foreign country – in most cases Brazil – increased dramatically.⁴¹⁰ Despite being the most impressive accomplishment, helping people fleeing the country was not the only way in which the Turinese Catholic Church could help the local Jewish community. Jewish people of what was considered to be “mixed blood” (who had an Aryan

⁴⁰⁵ Massimo Escard, ‘Torino Guerriera’, *Vent’Anni*, September 15, 1939, p. 5.

⁴⁰⁶ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Busta Scontrì 1939/1940 – Letter from the Curato di S. Alfonso Carlo Cavallo, February 28, 1940.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo - Letter from the Fiduciario del Partito Filippo Gattiji, February 18, 1940.

⁴⁰⁹ ASD, 14.14.89 – FF – Acattolici – Busta Ebrei.

⁴¹⁰ ASD, 14.14.89 – FF – Acattolici – Busta Ebrei – The epistolar exchanges between Cardinal Fossati and the Secretary of State Cardinal Luigi Maglione on the issue of visas for Jewish people start already in 1940.

parent) and wanted to convert to Catholicism – or who could prove to have been baptized – could in fact ask their parish priests (who in turn would ask Cardinal Fossati, who could, if needed, consult with the Holy See) to attest to their Catholic faith, and in this way they could avoid persecution.⁴¹¹ A third way in which the local Catholic authorities could help ease the pain of the Jewish community was by acting as an underground intermediary: prelates could in fact gather limited information on the whereabouts and on the health of Jewish relatives and friends who had either been deported or who lived in countries invaded by Nazi Germany (although, clearly, not much could be found out about people who had been deported to death camps).⁴¹²

The *Archivio Diocesano* holds epistolary evidence of more than a dozen cases in which the Turinese Catholic Church (and Monsignor Vincenzo Barale, secretary to Cardinal Fossati, more than anyone else) ran the risk of upsetting the Fascist government in order to help Jewish families as previously outlined.⁴¹³ This evidence is indicative of the kind of actions that the Turinese Catholic Church could take in order to protect and help Jewish people, however it is highly fragmentary and the records found in the archives do not reflect the overall number of people helped by Barale, which was probably larger, as can be sensed by the letters sent to the monsignor in the post-war period by entire groups and associations and by the fact that – after the war – he was praised by the Union of the Italian Israelite Communities because ‘Accolse e protesse tutti gli Ebrei che durante le persecuzioni si rivolsero a lui per aiuti e per consigli. Attraverso inenarrabili pericoli trasse a salvamento, nascondendo o facilitando l’espatrio, singoli e famiglie; nemmeno in carcere interruppe la sua attività instancabile, illuminata dalla fede’.⁴¹⁴ As an informer wrote to Achille Starace in 1938 ‘Negli ambienti

⁴¹¹ ASD, 14.14.89 – FF – Acattolici – Busta Ebrei – letters exchanged between Cardinal Fossati and the Secretary of State Cardinal Luigi Maglione from August and September 1939.

⁴¹² ASD, 14.14.89 – FF – Acattolici – Busta Ebrei – letter sent by the Secretary of State Cardinal Luigi Maglione to Cardinal Fossati, January 2, 1943.

⁴¹³ Evidence contained in ASD, 14.14.89 – Fondo Fossati – Acattolici – Busta Ebrei, and ASD, 14.14.107 – XI – Fondo Fossati – Vincenzo Barale Segretario dell’Arcivescovo Cardinal Maurilio Fossati.

⁴¹⁴ Quoted in Giuseppe Garneri, *Tra Rischi e Pericoli: Fatti e Testimonianze nel Periodo della Resistenza, della Liberazione e della Persecuzione Contro gli Ebrei*, (Pinerolo: Alzani, 1981), p. 135, translated as

cattolici si biasima apertamente tutta la politica antiebraica e questo biasimo, risaputo dalla popolazione, provoca una solidarietà verso gli ebrei che si manifesta in tutte le occasioni possibili'.⁴¹⁵ The help of the Turinese Catholic Church for the local Jewish community is therefore indicative of two factors: firstly, of the fact that the Church proved ready to challenge the Fascist regime even during the tumultuous years of the Second World War, and, secondly, it is a demonstration of the centrality – and of the degree of integration – of the Turinese Jewish community in the life of the city.

The Jewish community in Turin was firmly rooted in local society and had traditionally considered the city to be a safe haven, and during the Second World War the established institution that could help Jewish people the most was, with no doubt, the Catholic Church.⁴¹⁶ After the end of the war, the help of the Turinese Catholic Church was frequently recognized by the Jewish community of the city, and Monsignor Vincenzo Barale was one of the 23 Catholic figures in Italy to be honoured with the gold medal from the Union of the Italian Israelite Communities.⁴¹⁷ The award was given to Monsignor Barale for his willingness to put his own life at risk in order to help Jewish people flee the country or hide safely in monasteries, convents, and Catholic hospitals in Piedmont.⁴¹⁸ Cardinal Fossati had worked to defend his secretary during the Fascist period – even pulling many strings with local Fascist hierarchs when Monsignor Barale was arrested for his underground activities – and, once the war was over, openly praised the bravery and selflessness of his own secretary.⁴¹⁹ The medal, with the ceremony that accompanied the award, was not just a recognition of Barale's work,

'welcomed and protected all the Jews that turned to him for advices and help when they were being persecuted. Running unspeakable risks, he saved single people and families, either by hiding them or by helping them to emigrate; not even in jail did he stop his tireless activity, enlightened by his faith'.

⁴¹⁵ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino – Note for Achille Starace, December 21, 1938, translated as 'in the Catholic circles the anti-Semitic policies are openly criticized and this critique, well-known to the population, leads to displays of solidarity towards the Jews in every possible moment.'

⁴¹⁶ For an account of the protected position of the Jewish community in the years before 1938, see Marina Jarre, *Ritorno in Lettonia* (Torino: Einaudi, 2003), and Primo Levi, *Il Sistema Periodico* (Torino: Einaudi, 1994).

⁴¹⁷ ASD, 14.14.89 – FF – Acattolici – Busta Ebrei – Letter from the Israelite Community of Turin to Cardinal Fossati, May 15, 1945.

⁴¹⁸ ASD, 14.14.107 – XI – FF – Vincenzo Barale Segretario dell'Arcivescovo Cardinal Maurilio Fossati, Corrispondenze, Vito Vita, *Chiesa e Mondo Operaio: 1943-1948*, (Torino: Effata, 2003), p. 58.

⁴¹⁹ ASD, 14.14.107 – FF – VB, letter from Avv. Raffaele Zancone, March 20, 1946.

but also a crucial point in the official re-integration of the Jewish community in Turin in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and a recognition of its suffering.

Even the relationship between the local section of the Fascist party and the Catholic Church is a clear manifestation of the social power of the latter. In Turin, Fascist hierarchs often required religious help from high prelates. The most clear example, in this case, was that of Agostino Iraci, Prefetto in 1933 and 1934, who, before accepting his post, openly requested the assistance of a 'pio, dotto, e saggio' priest with whom he could have 'conversazioni di indole religioso-morale'.⁴²⁰ The fact that local Fascist hierarchs always requested the presence of a Catholic authority at their celebrations is in itself an acknowledgement of the power of the Turinese Catholic Church.⁴²¹ Moreover, this also goes to show how weak the Gentilean *Culto del Littorio* – with its idea that the secularization of the Italian state and society had allowed the Fascist dictatorship to gain a holy aura that had previously belonged to the Catholic Church – was in a city where, in order to assert its power, the regime still had to rely on the helping hand of the cardinal.⁴²² As Arturo Carlo Jemolo argued, in the 1930s 'di nuovo non v'era pubblica cerimonia nella quale non s'invocasse la benedizione del vescovo o del sacerdote, di nuovo il vescovo era autorità cittadina, alla quale le autorità civili si recavano a rendere omaggio al loro arrivo'.⁴²³ In addition, the Fascist dismay when priests refused to give their blessings or to partake in Fascist events – something that manifested itself particularly strongly in 1931⁴²⁴ and then again, regularly although less frequently, until the end of the regime – is in itself a recognition of the social power of the Catholic Church (as when the already mentioned

⁴²⁰ ASD, 14.14.104 – Carte di F. Paleari, Provicario Generale (1931-1936), Letter from Don Luigi Baiano, September 22, 1933, translated as 'pious, learned, wise' and 'conversations of a religious-moral character' underlined in the original.

⁴²¹ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP, ASD 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo, in both folders there are numerous similar requests coming from both the Prefetto and the Federale of the time.

⁴²² Gentile, *Culto del Littorio*, p. 301, Marina Cattaruzza, 'Religioni Politiche, Totalitarismi e Fine Della Storia: Alcune Considerazioni', in Emilio Gentile (ed.), *Modernità Totalitaria – Il Fascismo Italiano*, (Roma: Laterza, 2008), p. 12, Mauro Canali, 'Repressione e Consenso nell'Esperimento Fascista', in Emilio Gentile (ed.), *Modernità Totalitaria – Il Fascismo Italiano*, (Roma: Laterza, 2008), p. 80.

⁴²³ Jemolo, *Chiesa e Stato*, p. 448, translated as 'again there was not a single public ceremony in which the blessing of the bishop or of the parish priests was not asked, again the bishop was an authority in the city to which civil authorities paid homage upon their arrival.

⁴²⁴ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 507, AELCAC, 1926-1946, letter from Cardinal Fossati to the Prefetto, June 18, 1931.

priest Don Giordano, from the small town of Ciriè, blatantly ignored the loud parade passing in front of his church as he sat in the churchyard reading his newspaper and completely ignoring the Fascist chants in the background).⁴²⁵ In Turin the Catholic Church also received strong economic support from the regime in order to fund the renovation works in its churches, and the Fascist government strongly aided the restoration works in the Chapel of the Shroud and in the church of San Francesco D'Assisi, two architectural symbols of the royal family and of the Piedmontese Baroque of the 17th and 18th centuries.⁴²⁶

Again, the diaries of the most important Turinese Fascist hierarch, Cesare Maria de Vecchi di Val Cismon (in particular the entries he wrote during the period between 1929 and 1931, when he served as the first ever Italian ambassador to the Holy See), can offer a precious insight into the compromises that the regime had to reach with the Catholic Church at the local level, but also into the social power of the Catholic Church in Turin. In the interpretation of de Vecchi, in fact, Fascism was 'monarchico, cattolico, fedele nell'ubbidienza al duce che ci ha dato la provvidenza'.⁴²⁷ It is undeniable that the Catholic Church often needed Fascist assent in order to pursue its own aims, but it is also evident that Fascism needed the Turinese Catholic Church in order to assert its power over a city that had traditionally leaned heavily towards the left (Catholic organizations had in fact gained ground in the city thanks to the vacuum that followed the dismantling of socialist and communist organizations).⁴²⁸ In Turin, the Fascist party was by no means strong enough to achieve its totalitarian aspirations, and even the *Culto del Littorio* was far from established: not only did the regime desperately need the public presence of Catholic figures for its manifestations, but the crowds that these Fascist

⁴²⁵ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 509 – AELCAC – 1937-1947 – letter from the Fascist Federation of Ciriè to the Prefetto, September 10, 1935 (no evidence suggests that the cardinal took action against Don Giordano).

⁴²⁶ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP – Letter from the Prefetto, July 21, 1924.

⁴²⁷ de Vecchi di Val Cismon, *Tra Papa, Duce e Re*, p. 162, translated as 'monarchic, Catholic, and obediently faithful to the duce given to us by divine providence'.

⁴²⁸ Reineri, *Cattolici e Fascismo*, p. 98.

events attracted were by no means comparable to those that the Catholic Church managed to mobilize with the two displays of the Holy Shroud in 1931 and 1933.⁴²⁹

The fact that so many Fascist authorities in Piedmont openly recognized the power of the Catholic Church (and were even often fervent Catholics, like Cesare Maria de Vecchi) raises questions about the supposed all-encompassing nature of the Fascist cultural belief system. Local Fascist hierarchs required the presence of priests at their events (and openly complained when priests failed to participate), they mobilized an enormous amount of public employees to assist the Catholic Church with the displays of the Shroud, and they often exchanged gifts with high prelates when a member of a Fascist family took a sacrament (in particular for the first communions, often administered to the children of the most important families in Turin by the Cardinal himself).⁴³⁰ The fact that priests were required to participate in Fascist events, but also the willingness of the local government to offer its help for Catholic rituals – like the displays of the Shroud – or to co-organize conferences and lectures – as it did for the previously discussed *settimane antiblasfeme* in the late 1930s – are evidence of a regime that, far from establishing its own *Culto del Littorio*, still needed Catholic help and support in order to obtain spiritual validity at the eyes of the local population.

Further evidence of the Fascist need for a Catholic blessing (and not just in a metaphorical sense) is provided by the complaints from all state authorities in 1931 in response to Fossati's decision to forbid his priests from taking part in Fascist events in response to Fascist harassment and closure of Catholic associations.⁴³¹ When Fossati dispatched his orders to the Archdiocese of Turin, he justified these by writing to the Prefetto 'mi pareva poco dignitoso per noi e per i Fasci stessi, mentre si chiudevano i nostri Circoli

⁴²⁹ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – Corrispondenza Sindone – Letter from Coronel G. M. De Albertis, June 20, 1931.

⁴³⁰ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP – Letter from the Prefetto Agostino D'Adamo, November 1925, ASD 14.3 – FG – CP – Letter from the Prefetto Raffaele de Vita, May 23, 1927, ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Letter from the Federale Piero Gazzotti, July 5, 1934, ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CS – Letter from the *Podestà* Paolo Thaon di Revel, October 21, 1933

⁴³¹ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 507, AELCAC, 1926-1946, Letter from the Capo Manipolo of the MSVN to the Comando della Prima Legione "Sabauda", 1931.

Giovanili, mentre contro parecchi di questi Circoli erano state inscenate disgustose dimostrazioni, mentre le nostre bandiere benedette sono tuttora sotto sequestro, l'essere noi a benedire i Gagliardetti Fascisti'.⁴³² Local party hierarchs in the end accepted Fossati's demands for the prompt re-opening of Catholic centres, and the Turinese clergy returned to participate in Fascist events. After the crisis of 1931 was overcome, the Fascist need for Catholic support was never questioned and it was even clearly expressed by the Segretario Federale Andrea Gastaldi in 1933, when he wrote to Cardinal Fossati that the regime 'vuole attraverso alla educazione religiosa del popolo, dare agli italiani una coscienza sana e radicare in essi il sentimento della fedeltà e dell'amore alla Patria e alla Famiglia'.⁴³³ Moreover, the fact that many local Fascist hierarchs – and their families – still had a strong connection with the Catholic Church, and with the Catholic world in general, raises questions about the extent to which even the Fascists fully believed in the regime's doctrine, and this is, in itself, a demonstration of the actual limits of the regime's social power.

The importance of the secular power of the Turinese Catholic Church over the local population during the Fascist period cannot be stressed enough. Turinese people relied heavily on help from their Cardinal, or even from their parish priests, in order to live better lives or to improve their position within local society. All this help from the Catholic Church, however, came at a price: those who required the support of Catholic institutions had to prove their faith and to perform acts of piety after receiving help. In this way the Catholic Church appeared as a charitable institution willing to help its members – in particular the less privileged ones – whilst solidifying its own social power. This image of the Catholic Church as a valiant charitable institution was so strong that, for instance, the director of the previously

⁴³² AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 507, AELCAC, 1926-1946, letter from Cardinal Fossati to the Prefetto, June 18, 1931, translated as 'I did not find it decorous for us and for the same Fascists to have us blessing Fascist badges, at a time in which our Youth Circles have been closed, at a time in which disgusting demonstrations have been made against many of these Circles, at a time in which our blessed flags are still confiscated'.

⁴³³ ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Letter from the Segretario Federale Andrea Gastaldi, May 16, 1933, translated as 'wants, through the religious education of the people, to give the Italians a healthy conscience and to strengthen their feelings of loyalty and love towards Motherland and Family'.

mentioned *Piccola Casa della Divina Provvidenza* (Cottolengo) demanded – rather than asked – for extra funds from the Fascist state for what was deemed to be ‘la più grande e singolare opera benefica del mondo intero’⁴³⁴ (and the phrase was underlined even on the official letters!). Individuals generally received two forms of help from the Archdiocese: the poorest ones obtained direct financial help, whilst others, as has already been discussed, could count on the actions of the Church as a powerful mediator when dealing with actual or potential employers.

The requests for direct financial help from the Catholic Church can reflect the faith of the most humble Turinese people in an institution whose charitable nature made it look like a more natural port of call than a regime rhetorically founded on strength and autarky (unfortunately, it cannot be established whether claimants also appealed to the Fascist authorities for financial help). Once requests were received, the Archdiocese had to dispatch its personnel to assess the situation, and thus determine whether help was actually needed, and what was the amount required.⁴³⁵ In the reports that were later sent to the Cardinal, vicars and friars who had been dispatched diligently described the situation: the number of people living within the same household, the family members who were actually employed, the health status of the people requiring help, and any other special observation made during the visit (or visits). What seems to have been the determining factor in the outcome of these requests, however, was not simply need (most families who claimed to require help actually appeared to truly be in need), but whether the people seeking help were of a high moral standard and whether they could be considered as *‘esemplari Cattolici praticanti’*.⁴³⁶ On top of that, after the economic downturn of the 1930s the Turinese Catholic Church set up around twenty soup kitchens. These, whilst helping the poorer people of the city, proved to be a

⁴³⁴ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Cermioniale 1927-1948 – Busta Centenario Cottolengo, letter from the director of the *Piccola Casa della Divina Provvidenza* to the Podestà, June 1927, translated as ‘the biggest and most singular charitable institution of the whole world’

⁴³⁵ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP – letter from the Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Gasparri on August 2, 1927.

⁴³⁶ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP – letter sent to the Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Gasparri on August 10, 1928, translated as ‘exemplar practicing Catholics’.

popularity boost for the Catholic Church amongst the local middle classes and the Turinese shopkeepers (who could give away vouchers for the soup kitchens to their customers, who would then donate them to the poor people in their neighbourhood). The regime clearly could not openly object to similar initiatives, but local party and state hierarchs bitterly recognized that 'pur non rivestendo alcun carattere di speculazione politica, procura ovvio vantaggio morale all'organizzazione cattolica e risulta favorevolmente commentata nella popolazione'.⁴³⁷ The Catholic Church, therefore, got something back from the people it helped: in a way it invested money in people who could later become living demonstrations of Catholic piety, reasserting the social power of the Catholic Church and its readiness to embark upon grassroots activities in order to improve local society.

A last sign of the social power of the Catholic Church in Turin was its capacity to raise money for its cause. The funds for many Catholic projects came from the Fascist government, as has already been highlighted. These were generally large sums that were being donated for important architectural works or events, like the renovation of a Church or the organization of the expositions of the Shroud. However, throughout the Fascist period, countless donations by private individuals and groups continued.⁴³⁸ At times the conditions surrounding these donations were extremely curious, as in the case of the widow Teresa Barberis, who decided to donate an extremely conspicuous sum to the Archdiocese (50000 Italian Lire of the time). The widow, in fact, requested that 30000 of these Lire were to be used for the creation of a scholarship for a person belonging to her own parish (or to one of her family members).⁴³⁹ While such a specific request can look amusing, the document in itself is a really useful source, as it is a clear manifestation of the strong link that many locals felt with the Turinese Catholic Church, but also with even more local realities (the parish) and with their families. Sources like this one seem to support the arguments of R.J.B. Bosworth, who has argued that, throughout

⁴³⁷ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 509 – AELCAC, 1937-1947, letter from the Questore to the Prefetto, December 19, 1931, translated as 'despite not having a political character, it gives an obvious moral advantage to the Catholic organizations and it is favourably received by the population'.

⁴³⁸ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP, ASD, 14.14.22 – Fondo Fossati – Carte Personali.

⁴³⁹ ASD, 14.1 – FG – CP, Letter from Teresa Barberis, November 28, 1925.

the Fascist period, the lives of Italians remained determined more by local and familiar realities (and by traditional gender roles) than by the policies of the regime.⁴⁴⁰ Moreover, alongside individually made personal donations, the Cardinal could also count on the timely generosity of his flock, always willing to collectively donate money during the many fundraising activities held by the Turinese Catholic Church throughout the Fascist period, and on the desire of many parents to send their children to religious summer camps rather than Fascist ones.⁴⁴¹ Yet, it is important to note that even in the Fascist summer camps in Piedmont the Catholic Church still played a crucial role, and that children were constantly protected by what can almost be perceived as an “alternative” trinity: Christ, the *Duce*, and the King. As a Fascist pamphlet for a summer camp for Turinese children said in 1934, ‘in ogni dormitorio vigila il “Cristo” e a Lui si innalza mattino e sera la commovente preghiera dei piccoli ... auspicando alla fortuna d’Italia ed alla salute delle LL. Maestà e del Duce, i cui ritratti guardano amorevolmente i Coloni’.⁴⁴² Here, it is interesting to note how the element of prayer was highlighted by the Opera Nazionale Balilla: no priest participated in this summer camp, but the regime was still fully aware of the values that parents wanted to promote to their children.

The mighty apparatus that the Catholic Church set up in Turin in order to strengthen its own social power was thus a very efficient one. The ambitions of a “social totalitarianism” of the Turinese Catholic Church were pursued through a long list of associations and organizations that went way beyond the religious sphere, and these associations enjoyed an impressive degree of success as has been discussed in this section of the chapter. Moreover, it has to be remembered that individuals also contributed independently to the achievement of the aims of the local Catholic Church. Yet, the project of the Turinese Catholic Church was

⁴⁴⁰ RJB Bosworth, ‘Everyday Mussolinism’, pp. 37-8.

⁴⁴¹ ASD, 19.117 – CV – AC – Busta 6 – Esploratori Cattolici – Letter from the ASCI, November 18, 1925, ASD, 14.14.87 – FF – Fascismo – Letter from the Segretario Federale Piero Gazzotti, June 22, 1934, and letter from Ida Lupo Cantoni, July 8, 1936.

⁴⁴² ASD, 14.14.83 – FF – Istituti di Assistenza e Beneficienza – Busta Colonie - Opuscolo Colonia Marina del Patronato Scolastico di Torino in Loano, ONB, 1934, translated as ‘Christ monitors every dormitory, and to Him the children touchingly raise their prayers every day and every night ... wishing for the fortune of Italy and for the good health of their Majesties and of the Duce, whose portraits lovingly look at the campers’.

clearly incomplete as it was forced to operate within a Fascist context. In turn, however, the success of Catholic associations also demonstrates how incomplete the Fascist totalitarian process was in itself, as it found an insurmountable obstacle in a religious organization that could still count on the loyalty and the support of huge sections of local society.

Conclusion

As was already hinted at in the introduction, the strong presence of the Catholic Church at the grassroots level highlights the haphazardness of the process of fascistization of Turin. Far from establishing totalitarian control over local society, the regime had to deal – and come to terms – with a Turinese Catholic Church that in this period shared with the dictatorship a similar (but not identical) desire to assert its power over the people of Turin. The Catholic Church in Turin did not want to revolutionize local society – the values it defended were traditional, in particular regarding gender boundaries and roles, and the Church was a strong supporter of the House of Savoy – but it wanted to maintain and defend its transcendental (and also secular) power from the secular threat of Fascism. This chapter has tried to go beyond the traditional institutional accounts that the available historiography offers, aiming to highlight the degree of loyalty towards the Catholic Church of considerable sections of Turinese society. An analysis of this loyalty, in turn, can help the historian better understand how the aforementioned Catholic “social totalitarianism” – as defined earlier in this chapter – was an ambitious project that could be carried forward simultaneously both by local society “from below” with small acts of piety and by Catholic institutions “from above”. It has also highlighted how the Catholic Church often successfully contested areas of disagreement with the regime whilst also establishing a *modus vivendi* with the regime on issues of agreement, where making common cause was perceived as advantageous.

Defending the idea that the Italian Fascist state established a totalitarian system on the lines of the Nazi and Soviet ones, Emilio Gentile talks about the Italian “masses” in his works.⁴⁴³ However, the Turinese Catholic Church (just like the city’s core of anti-fascist intellectuals, the staunchly monarchist aristocracy, or the community of left-leaning workers) is a piece in a complex and fragmented local society that makes the term “mass” inapplicable. Research on the Catholic Church in Turin during the Fascist period shows how many Turinese people remained linked to local institutions, but it is also a demonstration of how hard it would be to talk about a “Turinese identity” in Manichean terms. Different social groups had in fact different perceptions of their own “Turinese identity” (albeit these were sometimes overlapping as, for instance, most groups would highlight characteristics like their almost Calvinistic work ethic and their interest, above all, in local and parochial matters). A highly fragmented local society, with clearly defined social groups that identified themselves with strong ideals or institutions (like in this case the Catholic Church) was therefore impossible to fascistize fully. The regime had to be satisfied with a partial fascistization of the local system, had to allow local hierarchs to be conciliatory towards Catholic desires and requests, and had to accept Catholic influence on local politics and, most of all, local society.

The popularity of the local Catholic Church also raises questions about the success of the idea of a Fascist secular religion, as defined again by Emilio Gentile. What is unquestionable is that Fascism had religious and mystic traits in itself, and that these (in iconographic, scenographic, and rhetorical terms) were often borrowed from traditional religion.⁴⁴⁴ However, it is important to remember that, throughout the Fascist period, in Turin it was still the Catholic Church that, according to the same Fascist authorities, could organize events for a city that ‘non ha mai visto così tanto concorso di persone’ and whose priests were called upon to provide an aura of “sacralization” to Fascist events.⁴⁴⁵ The main events

⁴⁴³ Gentile, *Via Italiana al Totalitarismo*, p. 148.

⁴⁴⁴ Gentile, *Culto del Littorio*, pp. 301-6.

⁴⁴⁵ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CS – 1931 – Letter from Coronel G. M. de Albertis, July 20, 1931, translated as ‘has never seen such popular participation’.

organized by the Turinese Catholic Church – the two exhibitions of the Holy Shroud in 1931 and 1933 – will be analyzed in the next chapter, but even more frequent Catholic parades were described in the press as true ‘manifestazioni di forza’ with

la Gioventù Femminile ordinatamente schierata sotto i suoi numerosi vessilli, ... dei circoli maschili della Federazione diocesana ... con una selva di bandiere, delle associazioni universitarie ‘Gaetana Agnesi’ e ‘Cesare Balbo’, che non potrebbero essere più numerose ... dei giovani esploratori cattolici in perfetta disciplina, dei piccoli e delle piccole crociate precedute da un giovane guerriero e dominati da una gran croce ... dei piccoli rosarianti domenicani e dei folli stuoli di angeli e di paggi.⁴⁴⁶

Even the idea of a Fascist secularized religion, therefore, appears as an interrupted process in Turin, where the regime constantly had to come to terms with local groups with a well-defined identity and a strong desire to defend and assert their independence.

The Turinese Catholic Church, therefore, acted as one of the limiting agents of the totalitarian aspirations of the regime in the city for a series of reasons. Firstly, thanks to its determination to defend the validity of its *universal* values, Catholicism offered to the people of Turin a set of beliefs and rules that was independent from the Fascist ones (and one that, precisely because of its *universal* nature, the dictatorship could not openly oppose). Secondly, the Turinese Catholic Church operated on a corporative and associative structure that resembled that of the regime. This obstructed Fascist plans in two ways: firstly in a direct way, by offering to the local population an alternative set of organizations and associations to which they could belong, and, secondly, in a more subtle way, by inculcating in the members of Catholic associations principles that could at times be similar to Fascist ones (in particular in the field of traditional family values), but that could also be opposed to the regime (like pacifism or the respect for different ethnic and religious groups). Lastly, the Turinese Catholic

⁴⁴⁶ ‘Il trionfo di Maria Consolatrice’, *Il Corriere*, May 25, 1926, translated as ‘manifestations of strength’, and ‘Grandiosa Apoteosi di Maria Ausilitatrice’, *Il Corriere*, June 22, 1926, translated as ‘the Gioventù Femminile, orderly, lined up under its many banners ... the male circles of the diocesan Federation ... with a forest of flags, the university associations ‘Gaetana Agnesi’ and ‘Cesare Balbo’ that could not be more numerous ... the young Catholic explorers in perfect discipline, the small crusaders preceded by a young warrior and dominated by a big cross ... the small Dominicans reciting the rosary and large crowds of angels and pageboys’.

Church obstructed Fascist aspirations because of the very success of its own associations and because of the grassroots activities it pursued, feeding the Catholic faith of its own members and defending the central position of the Catholic Church in considerable sections of local society.

4. Rebellion Against Modernity: The Two Expositions of the Holy Shroud – 1931, 1933

As previously mentioned in the second chapter of this dissertation, the two expositions of the Holy Shroud (in 1931 to satisfy the desire of the House of Savoy and in 1933 to celebrate the Catholic Jubilee) attracted more people than any other event in Turin during the Fascist era. The *Adunate Oceaniche* – the large-scale events organized by the regime in order to mobilize Italian or local society – that were organized for the only three visits of the *Duce* to Turin seem of little importance if compared to the two occasions in which the Turin Shroud, a linen cloth which bears the imprint of a male body and which pilgrims believed was the shroud that had been used to wrap the body of Christ – considered by locals as the most important Catholic relic in the world – was put on display.⁴⁴⁷ The build-up to the two Shroud events, the media campaign that came before and after them, and the newly experienced wave of mysticism and spiritualism that hit the city, all contributed to the mobilization of large parts of the local population, and brought more than a million pilgrims to Turin on both occasions.⁴⁴⁸ Similar to the previous chapter, a sizeable portion of the material used here was found in the *Archivio Storico Diocesano* in Turin, with the addition of a number of references to the partially open archives of the *Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia* in Turin and to the pages of the Turinese press of the time.⁴⁴⁹

The first issue that will be discussed in this chapter will be the symbolic value of the Shroud. The linen cloth, in fact, contributed to reasserting the power of the Catholic Church in the city after the first major crisis with the regime (that of 1931). The Holy Shroud was a relic

⁴⁴⁷ To better understand the impact of the events on the local population, it is possible to compare articles from *La Stampa* celebrating the 1931 exposition ('Torino Invasa da Inverosimile Folla', *La Stampa*, May 11, 1931, p. 6, 'Due Milioni di Persone Sono Passate dalla Sindone', *La Stampa*, May 26, 1931, p. 6), with those on Mussolini's visit the following year ('Il Pranzo Offerto dai Principi', *La Stampa*, October 25, 1932, p. 4, 'Il Discorso del Senatore Agnelli', *La Stampa della Sera*, October 24, 1932, p. 2, 'Il Duce fra i Lavoratori, nelle Officine, nei Cantieri', *La Stampa*, October 25, 1932, p. 2).

⁴⁴⁸ 'La Solenne Cerimonia di Chiusura della S. Sindone alla Presenza del Principe di Piemonte', *La Stampa*, October 16, 1933, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁹ Particularly useful sources for the writing of this chapter have been found in the: Fondo Fossati and Carte Varie of the ASD.

whose cult had reportedly begun in the medieval period, something that contrasted sharply with the Fascist idea of a reactionary modernism, and the rhetoric, rituals, and pilgrimages that surrounded it all presented medieval traits.⁴⁵⁰ However, the Holy Shroud was not just a symbol of the Catholic Church, but also of the monarchy, and the exposition of 1931 was organized to celebrate the wedding of Umberto, the Prince of Piedmont, with Maria José of Belgium.⁴⁵¹ The relic was used by the House of Savoy in order to strengthen and sacralise its position (by the 1930s definitely undermined on a national level, but still strong at a local one). No study has been published on this specific issue yet, but the methodological parameters and themes established by Marc Bloch in *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France* can be effectively transposed to the case of Turin in the early 1930s.⁴⁵²

The second and third sections of the chapter will look at the effect of the expositions on the local population. The second section will discuss the rediscovered mysticism and spiritualism of the city, with references to the “miraculous” medieval past of the relic, the highly suggestive ritual for the expositions, and the conversions and graces that the Shroud events brought about. The third section will be dedicated to analyzing the mobilization of the entire city for the two expositions and to the impact that these had on the local community. Given the previously mentioned absence of detailed studies on the expositions, inspiration for these two sections has been drawn largely from David Blackbourn’s methodology in his work on the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Marpingen.⁴⁵³

The fourth section of the chapter will be dedicated to the strong media campaigns surrounding the events, with examples taken not just from the Catholic press (*La Voce dell’Operaio/La Voce del Popolo* above all), but also from philo-Fascist newspapers (in

⁴⁵⁰ For a definition of reactionary modernism, see Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁴⁵¹ Gian Maria Zaccone, ‘Adolfo Barberis e la Sindone’, in *Adolfo Barberis nella Chiesa Torinese*, Studia Taurinensia vol. II, (Torino: Effatà, 2008), p. 130.

⁴⁵² Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, (London: Routledge, 1973).

⁴⁵³ David Blackbourn, *Marpingen – Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Bismarckian Germany*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

particular *La Gazzetta del Popolo*) and *La Stampa*. A comparison between the approaches taken by these different newspapers will allow for a better understanding of the way in which the expositions impacted local society, and also of the way in which the two displays were portrayed to different groups of the Turinese population. A part of this section will also look at the posters that covered the walls of Turin during the two expositions, and at the way in which the exposition was used in some commercial adverts of the time.

The last section of this chapter will then offer a comparison between the expositions of the Shroud and Fascist events held during the same period in order to further highlight the impressive capacity of the Turinese Catholic Church to fully mobilize local society. Issues to be compared will include the number of people attracted by the events, press releases that covered the occurrences, eye-witness accounts of popular participation, and the scenographies created and put in place for the occasions. Fascist events that will be looked at in this section will include the three official visits to Turin made by Mussolini (those of 1923, 1932, and 1939) as well as the *Littoriali dello Sport* of 1933, the most important sporting event organized by Fascist authorities in Turin under the dictatorship.

The two expositions represent an extremely appropriate case-study for a discussion of the social power of traditional institutions in Turin (both the Catholic Church and the House of Savoy). The displays also raise important questions about the applicability of Emilio Gentile's claims, that Fascism undermined traditional religion, in the case of Turin. The fact that the two events managed to attract an unparalleled number of pilgrims represented a serious blow to the social power of the regime in the city. The events are indicators of how, in the Turinese daily life of the 1930s, it was often easier for the local population to perceive Catholic and monarchical power rather than Fascist authority: Mussolini himself made very few visits to the city, in sharp contrast with the dozens of times in which the king and other members of the royal family went back to their ancestral homeland, and the prominence of Catholic and monarchic buildings could not be rivalled by Fascist architectural works in Turin. Most of all,

however, the two expositions highlight some problems with the Gentilean conception of the *Culto del Littorio*: whilst it is unquestionable that Fascist rituals borrowed heavily from religious ones, it is easy to perceive that Catholic mysticism in Turin was in no way weakened under the regime (quite the opposite in fact, as events like the expositions of the Shroud showed that the Catholic Church in Turin was still the first and main dispenser of spirituality and mysticism in the city).⁴⁵⁴ Moreover, as highlighted by Bosworth in *The Italian Dictatorship*, 'Gentile does not recognize that "mythical thought" was coming to power and influence all over the place in the twentieth century and not only in Fascist Italy'.⁴⁵⁵ Gentile's affirmation that secularization, coupled with the decline of traditional religion, led to the sacralisation of the regime will therefore be called into question throughout this chapter by looking at how Catholic rituals could still successfully strengthen the mysticism and spiritualism of the Turinese population.⁴⁵⁶

The Symbolic Value of the Holy Shroud

The huge popularity of the Holy Shroud in the early 1930s can be partially explained by looking at the symbolic importance of the linen cloth. First of all, this section will need to devote some space to the religious significance of the relic (keeping in mind that the Shroud was considered to be the most valuable relic of the entire Catholic world, and its authenticity was unquestioned by Church authorities and believers alike).⁴⁵⁷ Following this, the particularly "Turinese" character of the Shroud will have to be addressed. The Holy Shroud was not just a symbol of the Catholic Church and of its presence amongst the locals, but it was also a symbol

⁴⁵⁴ Emilio Gentile, *Il Culto del Littorio*, (Roma: Laterza, 1993), pp. 301-6.

⁴⁵⁵ R.J.B. Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship – Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism*, (New York: Arnold, 1998), p. 61.

⁴⁵⁶ Gentile, *Culto del Littorio*, p. 301.

⁴⁵⁷ ASD, 20.4.1 – Carte Varie – Corrispondenza Sindone 1933 – Carte Varie – "Sull'autenticità della S. Sidnone di Torino", pamphlet by Mons Prof Giov Batt Alfano, 1934. (The folder seems to be inappropriately named as it also contains material related to the exposition of 1931 and a series of documents related to a number of conferences and events organized throughout the 1930s).

of the power and benevolence of its owner, the House of Savoy. The Shroud represented the most important link between the monarchs and local Catholics, and, as such, it was used to reassert the social power of the monarchy in the region. Lastly, the relic – and the chapel in which it rested when not on display – testified to the centrality of the House of Savoy in Turinese life and also, according to many, to the links with the French heritage of the royal family.⁴⁵⁸

The Holy Shroud was considered to be ‘senza dubbio la reliquia più preziosa che possa custodire la Chiesa cattolica’.⁴⁵⁹ Local prelates pushed the community not to question the authenticity of the linen cloth and to ignore the potential findings obtained through modern scientific tests and photographic analysis.⁴⁶⁰ Turinese clerics tried to persuade local Catholics to believe in the legitimacy of the relic by looking at its millenary history as reported by an uninterrupted series of documents preserved by the Catholic Church.⁴⁶¹ In itself, this was a manifestation of the Catholic Church’s desire to strengthen its position as the highest spiritual authority in Turin and of the fact that mysticism (and the need for a spiritual, rather than scientific, justification for one’s beliefs) was still widely used by Catholic priests in order to mobilize their flocks. Moreover, calls to ignore scientific findings and to rely on Church documents can also be interpreted as displays of the Catholic desire to counter the forces of secularism that could lead to the questioning of the relic, and mysticism could therefore be used to defeat empiricism.

During the Fascist period, the Holy Shroud was considered of exceptional importance not just because of its religious value, but also because it was regarded as the greatest symbol of the close relationship between the Catholic Church and the House of Savoy in Turin. This solid relationship dated back to the times of the Kingdom of Piedmont and Sardinia and often

⁴⁵⁸ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Carte Varie – Conferenza sulla s.s. Sindone indetta dalla Unione Nazionale Trasporto Ammalati a Lourdes e Santuari d’Italia, October 12, 1933.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., translated as ‘with no doubt the most precious relic that could be preserved by the Catholic Church’, p. 3.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., p. 12.

saw the two institutions mobilize jointly in order to help each other (a particularly touching moment came for example in 1831, when a number of consecutive prayer vigils were organized by the Archdiocese to accompany the last days of King Carlo Felice).⁴⁶² These local links were not broken even when relations between the Vatican and the Kingdom of Italy turned sour after 1870 and the Holy See told prelates in Turin to manifest less sympathy for members of the House of Savoy (as mentioned in the previous chapter, Turinese Catholics continued to celebrate royal anniversaries in spite of Vatican instructions not to do so and always paid homage to members of the House of Savoy visiting Turin or spending their summers in Piedmont).⁴⁶³ Relations between the pope and the monarchy improved only after the Concordat: back on good terms with the House of Savoy, by 1931 the Vatican openly praised the capacity of the ruling family and of the Turinese Catholic Church to jointly mobilize hundreds of thousands of people.⁴⁶⁴

The powerfully symbolic value of the Holy Shroud for both the Catholic Church and the House of Savoy was widely acknowledged in Turin. In 1931, the ACI organized a series of spiritual retreats in Turin that would culminate with a visit to the Royal Princes before a pilgrimage to the Cathedral in order to fully experience the exposition.⁴⁶⁵ Crucially, even the two most prominent Turinese Fascists – Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon, Italian Ambassador to the Holy See, and Vittorio Cian, Fascist Senator and Professor at the University of Turin – recognized the value and power of the Holy Shroud for both the ruling house and the Catholic Church alike. In 1930, De Vecchi tried to push Pius XI to appoint a new Archbishop of Turin quickly in order to have the exposition of the Shroud in the same year as the wedding of Umberto with Maria José of Belgium (however, the appointment of Maurilio Fossati to replace Giuseppe Gamba ended up taking an entire year and the exposition was only

⁴⁶² ASD, 19.111 – Carte Varie – Casa Savoia – Letter from the Primo Aiutante di Campo to the Archbishop of Turin, April 7, 1831.

⁴⁶³ ASD, 19.111 – CV – CS – Letters from the Segretario di Stato Cardinal Gasparri, May 16, June 6, and September 25, 1925.

⁴⁶⁴ ASD, 14.14.93 – Fondo Fossati – Carte Varie – Letter from the Segretario di Stato Cardinal Pacelli, May 13, 1931.

⁴⁶⁵ ASD, 14.14.79 – FF – ACI Femminile – Letter from the Contessina Balbiano di Torino, March 28, 1931.

organized for 1931).⁴⁶⁶ Vittorio Cian, on the other hand, was the one who best identified the exposition of 1931 as a symbol of the power of the Catholic Church and of the House of Savoy. In a personal letter to Cardinal Fossati, Cian – without directly mentioning the Fascist regime – defined the exposition as ‘un avvenimento solenne, nel quale si sono vedute associate in felice armonia le immagini della Fede e della Patria, nel cui accordo – nel nome dell’Augusta Casa di Savoia – sta la grandezza del popolo italiano’.⁴⁶⁷ Despite having no involvement in the decision to hold the two expositions, the Fascist regime was clearly not in position to say anything negative about the two events and this constitutes, in itself, another example of the limitations of the dictatorship.

The expositions of the Shroud contributed not only to displaying the strength of the Catholic Church and its capacity to mobilize the entire local society, but also highlighted and reinforced the social power of the House of Savoy in Turin. The rhetorical language used during the expositions, but also the very rituals and the mysticism that they involved, contributed to sacralise the monarchy – at least locally – at a time in which it was losing ground on a national level. In *Il Culto del Littorio*, Emilio Gentile talks about the sacralisation of politics as an entirely modern phenomenon – almost an invention of Italian Fascism – that only borrowed from traditional religion but that was made possible by the forces of 19th and 20th century secularization: ‘La sacralizzazione della politica è dunque un fenomeno moderno, anche se si nutre e si sviluppa assimilando le tradizioni delle religioni classiche’.⁴⁶⁸ Gentile’s claims on this issue, however, can easily be countered thanks to the work of Marc Bloch and his *The Royal Touch*. In what is one of his most important books, Bloch highlighted how, from the Middle Ages until the early 18th century, French and English kings used their “royal touch” (believed to cure scrofula) in order to enhance their authority: monarchs in fact needed to reaffirm their

⁴⁶⁶ Cesare Maria de Vecchi di Val Cismon, *Tra Papa, Duce e Re*, Sandro Setta (ed.) (Roma: Jouvence, 1998), May 21, 1930.

⁴⁶⁷ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Letter from Vittorio Cian, May 30, 1931, translated as ‘a solemn event, in which we saw, harmoniously united, the images of Faith and of the Motherland, in whose agreement – in the name of the August House of Savoy – lies the greatness of the Italian people’.

⁴⁶⁸ Gentile, *Il Culto del Littorio*, p. 306, translated as ‘The sacralization of politics is thus a modern phenomenon, despite the fact that it draws from – and it develops thanks to – traditional religion’.

divine right to rule and had to enshrine themselves in a sense of religious mystery. Monarchs would manifest their healing powers to their subjects during solemn masses and extraordinary religious events.⁴⁶⁹ The healing power of the kings was believed to be handed down in the family lineage, and the power was not doubted by believers: it was in fact never affirmed that the royal touch was always successful when performed, and it was believed that those who had received the touch but were not healed were in fact lacking faith.⁴⁷⁰

The expositions of the Shroud in the 1930s, with their unprecedented size and with the constant presence (and celebration of) members of the royal family can therefore be seen as mystifying the House of Savoy in a way that echoes the medieval sacralisation of the power of the Thaumaturgic Kings through their royal touch. As will be shown throughout this chapter, the members of the House of Savoy, just like the Thaumaturgic Kings, had access to something of a highly mystical nature (in this case the Holy Shroud) that could only be accessed with their permission and in their presence during particularly solemn religious events (so extraordinary and rare that the expositions of the 1930s were the first ones of the 20th century) and that even had the power to heal and convert people.

The House of Savoy sought its sacralisation in a number of ways during the two expositions of the Holy Shroud in 1931 and 1933. Before the first exposition, the monarchs openly acknowledged the need for the blessing of the highest authorities of the Catholic Church – whilst also demonstrating much needed diplomatic caution – before allowing the relic to be exposed: King Vittorio Emanuele III waited for almost an entire year after the wedding of his first son before ordering the exposition as he wanted to wait for the nomination of the new Archbishop of Turin.⁴⁷¹ In order to ensure the smooth running of the event, but also in order to strengthen the bond between Catholic Church and House of Savoy, every detail of the exposition – including invitations to solemn rituals, processions, and the

⁴⁶⁹ Bloch, *The Royal Touch*, pp. 235, 240, 243.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 235-240.

⁴⁷¹ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – special monograph *L'Ostensione della Santa Sindone a Torino, 1931*, p. 33.

daily management of the events – was agreed upon by both Prince Umberto and Cardinal Fossati, either personally or through their secretaries.⁴⁷² The most important rituals of the expositions were, in themselves, manifestations of the links between Catholic Church and monarchy and of the power of the latter. On the occasion of the closing ceremony of the exposition of 1931, for instance, Prince Umberto was the last person to enter the Cathedral, and the first one to leave it in order to lock the Shroud in its dedicated Chapel.⁴⁷³ Moreover, in what was a mystically charged moment, it was the Archbishop who had – after genuflecting in front of the crucifix – to give the keys to the Shroud’s shrine to Prince Umberto, ultimately responsible for securely locking the relic until the next exposition.⁴⁷⁴

Images and documents related to the Shroud also played an important role in the process of sacralization of the monarchy. The exposition of the Holy Shroud of 1931 was, in fact, the first one since the development of the first pictures of the relic – those of amateur photographer Secondo Pia and, later, of Giuseppe Enrie.⁴⁷⁵ Initially reluctant to publicize copies of the photograph, the House of Savoy allowed their distribution in 1931, provided that the earnings from the sales would go to charitable institutions, a move that encountered wide approval from the local population and that allowed the Turinese population to hang pictures of the relic in their houses like icons.⁴⁷⁶ In 1931, members of the royal family also took it upon themselves to organize a special exhibition of material and documents that testified to the miraculous past of the relic, something that had not been organized for the previous expositions of the Shroud.⁴⁷⁷ In this way, images of the Holy Shroud, and constant references to the role of the House of Savoy in its preservation, could go well beyond the portal of the Cathedral of Turin, and contributed dramatically to the process of sacralisation of the House of Savoy in the city.

⁴⁷² ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – letter from General A. Clerici, April 2, 1931.

⁴⁷³ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 - Appunti per la Chiusura della Ostensione della Santissima Sindone, 1931.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia (CIS) – Archivio Secondo Pia.

⁴⁷⁶ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – letter from the Primo Aiutante di Campo, May 7, 1931.

⁴⁷⁷ 'I Principi di Piemonte Inaugurano la Mostra Storica della Sindone', *La Stampa*, May 8, 1931.

Even the location of the Chapel of the Shroud could be seen as playing a symbolic role in the life of the Turinese community in the 1930s: situated behind the apse of the Cathedral, it was possible to admire it from Piazza Castello, the central square of the city, where the Royal Palace, Palazzo Madama (former seat of the Parliament of the Kingdom of Sardinia), and the Royal Theatre were located. The Chapel of the Shroud was therefore a permanent feature of the daily life of many Turinese people. It contributed to turn the “imagined” Catholic and monarchic communities in Turin into two “experienced” communities, a concept developed by Jay Winter in his two-volume *Capital Cities at War - Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919*.⁴⁷⁸ Moreover, on the topic of the importance of royal buildings for the local population, it is crucial to remember that visits to monarchic sites increased dramatically during the expositions of the Shroud, with hundreds of thousands of visitors stepping into the Royal Palace in little over two weeks in 1931 as the most notable statistic.⁴⁷⁹

The expositions of the Holy Shroud in 1931 and 1933 attracted millions of pilgrims because of the very nature of the linen cloth. Firstly, it has to be remembered that the Shroud was a particular relic. Considered to be the most important religious object preserved by the Catholic Church, the Shroud was seen as an irrefutable proof of the truthfulness of Christ’s life and death as told in the gospels. As shown in this section, the Shroud had a very strong additional symbolic value for the local population, and in particular for the House of Savoy. The Piedmontese monarchs benefitted greatly from the popularity of the Shroud (a popularity to which they had crucially contributed in the first place): the relic in fact symbolized the friendship and the communality of interests between the House of Savoy and the Catholic Church, and this in turn gave the monarchy a holy aura that the Fascist regime, even after the Lateran Pacts of 1929, could never have enjoyed in Turin.

⁴⁷⁸ A concept highlighted particularly in Jay Winter, ‘Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919: Capital Cities at War’, in Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War – Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919*, vol. I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 4.

⁴⁷⁹ ‘Una Marea di Folla in Duomo’, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, May 15, 1931, p. 6.

Mysticism and Spiritualism

The two expositions of the Shroud were clear manifestations of the mysticism that could still pervade Turin in the 1930s and of how the wave of spiritualism caused by the displays of the relic was in no way related to Fascism or the Fascist government. Firstly, as a relic, the Holy Shroud epitomized this wave of mysticism thanks to its past, often described as “miraculous”, and thanks to the negative pictures of the linen cloth taken by Secondo Pia in 1898 (that revealed a much clearer face than the one that could be seen with the naked eye).⁴⁸⁰ Secondly, Catholic and monarchic mysticism was revived during the solemn ceremonies that were organized for the two expositions. This surge of spiritualism was, in turn, also reflected by the local population, with a number of people claiming to have been converted or healed after seeing the relic. The two expositions completely revitalized the population’s interest in the Holy Shroud for years to come (something that had never happened with previous expositions), and the latter half of the 1930s witnessed the establishment of a museum of the Holy Shroud and the organization of a large number of lectures and seminars on Sindonological Studies (a term that refers to the study of the Holy Shroud from a scientific, historical, or religious perspective.).

The Holy Shroud was a mystically charged object not solely because of its nature as a relic. What differentiated the Shroud from other relics was its very history and the popularity that it had been gaining since the medieval period. The Shroud was not just perceived as a graphical representation of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, but was sacralised because of the fact that, as an object, it had had to overcome multiple dangers in order to complete its journey to Turin. In 1349, when it was in Besançon, and in 1532, when it was still in Chambery, the Shroud was in fact damaged by fire.⁴⁸¹ Signs of the fires were evident, despite the fact that

⁴⁸⁰ ‘L’Ostensione della Santa Sindone’, *La Voce dell’Operaio*, May 3, 1931.

⁴⁸¹ Documento 1 – Archivio del Famulato Cristiano – Conferenza sulla SS. Sindone (Popolare), ‘Appendice Documentaria’, Enzo Ferraro, in Zaccone, ‘Adolfo Barberis e la Sindone’, p. 147

patches had been used in an attempt to restore the linen cloth to its former aspect.⁴⁸² What made the Holy Shroud particular was that ‘l’opera corrosiva del tempo e le mille vicende non hanno ancora cancellato la Divina immagine’.⁴⁸³ The idea of a medieval “trial by fire” became a constant rhetorical topos used by Catholic hierarchs in order to promote the cult of the relic.⁴⁸⁴ The popularity of the Shroud in the 1930s therefore partially owed to the fact that, in the inter-war period just like during World War One, many Catholics saw pain as something to be ‘accepted and sublimated in the pursuit of purification, sacrificially intermingling social and religious elements’.⁴⁸⁵ Moreover, the fact that the features of Jesus Christ preserved on the Holy Shroud could be seen much more clearly from photographic negatives added an ulterior aura of spiritualism, inspiring pilgrims to go beyond what their naked eyes could see to fully grasp the essence of the relic. As reported by *La Voce dell’Operaio* in 1933:

*E’ forse possibile ad un cristiano lo sguardo solamente curioso, interessante, compiacente? Sarebbe troppo poco. Chi si recherà nei prossimi giorni alla Metropolitana di Torino con questi unici, superficiali sentimenti, dimostrerà di avere una fede languida, un cuore freddo, una incomprendione biasimevole dei suoi doveri di sincera giubilanza cristiana (...) Dinnanzi alla Santa Sindone, per quanto è possibile, bisogna lasciare cadere ogni sensibilità umana, per potersi elevare con la maggiore dedizione al tributo della anima riconoscente, al volo dell’anima promettente.*⁴⁸⁶

The solemn ceremonies that were organized for the two expositions added to the degree of mysticism already ensured by the very nature of the Holy Shroud. A number of these ceremonies were open to the public. Adolfo Barberis – a priest who was later to become one of the most important experts in Sindonological studies – organized a series of conferences that he defined as “popular” in which he emphasized the value of redemption through agony

⁴⁸² ‘Com’è Apparsa La Sindone Al Suo Custode E Al Suo Fotografo’, *La Stampa*, March 5, 1931, p. 4.

⁴⁸³ ‘L’Ultima Settimana dell’Ostensione della S. Sindone’, *La Voce dell’Operaio*, May 17, 1931, translated as ‘the corrosive action of time and the thousands of events have not yet erased the Divine image’.

⁴⁸⁴ ‘L’Ostensione della Santa Sindone’, *La Voce dell’Operaio*, May 3, 1931.

⁴⁸⁵ Annette Becker, *War and Faith – The Religious Imagination in France, 1914-1930*, (New York: Berg, 1998), p. 24.

⁴⁸⁶ ‘Editoriale’, *La Voce dell’Operaio*, September 24, 1933, translated as ‘Is it possible for a Christian [to look at the Holy Shroud with a] simply curious, interested, complacent look? That would not be enough. Whoever will go to Turin Cathedral over the next few days with these sole, superficial, feelings will show a faint faith, a cold heart, and a reprehensible incomprehension of his duties of sincere Christian jubilation (...) In front of the Holy Shroud, as much as possible, we need to leave behind every human sensitivity, in order to elevate ourselves with the greatest devotion to the tribute of the grateful soul, to the flight of the promising soul’.

and established clearly that the image on the linen cloth was not the result of simple contact or of vaporization, but rather it was due to fulguration, an event that could not be explained solely by logic and science.⁴⁸⁷ With the exception of the ceremonies for the opening of the Holy Urn, all other religious ceremonies were open – at least partially – to the public (even the ceremonies for the closing of the Holy Urn, when the number of members of the royal family and high prelates in attendance was lower).⁴⁸⁸ For organizational reasons, but also in order to inspire pilgrims to fully grasp the uniqueness of the event they were participating in, people were only allowed one visit to the Holy Shroud in 1933 (whilst there is no evidence of a similar decision being taken in 1931).⁴⁸⁹ Pilgrims were pushed to perceive the need and the necessity to pray as well as the need to look at the relic not just with their eyes, but also with their hearts, in order to revitalize their faith and to make the visit a “spiritual treasure for the future”.⁴⁹⁰

Other ceremonies, however, were not open to the public, increasing the curiosity of the pilgrims for the relic and its mystical charge. This was the case, for instance, for the opening of the Holy Urn in 1931, carefully described by all the Turinese newspapers for the population that was left outside the Cathedral:

‘il Principe Umberto e la Principessa Maria si accostano alla tavola su cui è distesa la Reliquia della Passione; postisi in ginocchio, baciano la tela che avvolse il corpo piagato del Redentore, sostando a mani giunte in muta e commossa contemplazione. Il reverente tributo vede genuflettersi davanti al Lino della Passione i degni discendenti della gloriosa Dinastia; a uno a uno i Reali Principi indugiano su la Reliquia con vivo turbamento e con profonda pietà religiosa’⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁷ Documento 1 – Archivio del Famulato Cristiano – Conferenza sulla SS. Sindone (Popolare)

⁴⁸⁸ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Letter from the Primo Aiutante di Campo to Cardinal Fossati, October 9, 1933.

⁴⁸⁹ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Letter from Cardinal Fossati to Pious XI, July 22, 1933.

⁴⁹⁰ ‘L’Ultima Settimana dell’Ostensione della S. Sindone’, *La Voce dell’Operaio*, May 17, 1931.

⁴⁹¹ ‘L’Ostensione della Santa Sindone nel Duomo di Torino alla presenza del Principe di Piemonte in rappresentanza del Re’, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, May 4, 1931, p. 1, translated ‘The Royal Highnesses Prince Umberto and Princess Maria approach the table on which the Relic of the Passion is laid; kneeling, they kiss the linen that wrapped the plagued body of the Redeemer, stopping with their hands joined in silent and moved contemplation. The reverent tribute sees the worthy heirs of the glorious Dynasty kneeling in front of the Linen of the Passion. One by one the Royal Princes stop in front of the Relic with visible emotion and with profound religious piety’.

The above quote depicts the Royal couple in a saintly manner: they are kneeling down whilst contemplating the relic while prelates and members of the Royal Family around them lose importance and fade into the background. The fact that pictures of the event were being published, but that only a handful of people were actually allowed to witness the event, added more to the mysticism of the situation and contributed to sacralise the moment – and the Royal couple – further. Another event that was not open to the public was the photographic shoot of Giuseppe Enrie, which happened at night during the exposition of 1931 and during which, allegedly, the first colour picture of the Holy Shroud mysteriously disappeared.⁴⁹² The events that had the highest mystical charge were probably those that had both a public and a private side to them, like the above mentioned opening of the Holy Urn in 1931 (when thousands of people gathered in the churchyard but were not allowed in the Cathedral), or the closings of the Holy Urn, when the Cardinal would show the Holy Shroud to the pilgrims assembled outside the Cathedral before entering the church to lead a procession of high prelates that would terminate in an intimate ceremony with members of the House of Savoy in the Chapel of the Shroud.⁴⁹³

The mystical power unleashed by the expositions of the Shroud can also be appreciated by looking at the conversions and graces that pilgrims experienced or received after seeing the relic. People who had grown up ‘spiritualmente all’oscuro di ogni religione’ claimed that seeing the Holy Shroud ‘è valso ad ispirarmi forza e fiducia nella fede cattolica che è la prima che ho conosciuto’ and inspired them to ask Cardinal Fossati to be baptized.⁴⁹⁴ In Turin, graces (spontaneous acts of benevolence and gifts from a deity to the people) remained a prerogative of the Catholic Church and not of the Fascist regime, despite the fact that according to Gentile – in a chapter of *Il Culto del Littorio* titled ‘Il Nuovo Dio D’Italia’ – ‘la vista

⁴⁹² Zaccone, ‘Adolfo Barberis e la Sindone’, p. 131.

⁴⁹³ ASD 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Appunti per la Chiusura della Ostensione della Santissima Sindone, picture of Cardinal Fossati displaying the Holy Shroud in the churchyard in the appendix (3).

⁴⁹⁴ ASD, 14.14.89 – FF – Acattolici, Letter from Giacobbe Furman, September 27, 1933, translated as ‘spiritually unaware of any religion’ and ‘has given me strength and confidence in the Catholic faith which is the first one I have ever known’.

del duce veniva percepita dalla gente come la venuta di un messia apportatore di bene, al quale si chiedevano delle grazie'.⁴⁹⁵ Mussolini himself was very aware of the capacity of the Catholic Church to mobilize masses with mystical rituals and of how these events impacted upon the population (as a journalist he was in Rome in February 1922 to report on the atmosphere in Saint Peter's Square during the days of the conclave that would end with the election of Pius XI).⁴⁹⁶ The expositions of the Holy Shroud are a reminder of the fact that – at least in Turin – the Catholic Church was still the main dispenser of graces.

A visit to the Holy Shroud was said to have healed pilgrims of various illnesses, but the most common ones involved people regaining the ability to walk (similar to the paralytic healed by Jesus in the gospels) or people getting their sight back after being hit by a highly mystical ray of light.⁴⁹⁷ Whilst sketching a profile of the people who enjoyed graces during the expositions of the Shroud is nearly impossible due to the fragmentary nature of the available sources, it is possible to identify some common features in the letters sent from people claiming healing experiences to the Cardinal: letters were often written in a highly colloquial style (like in the case of Maria Malbocchia, who started the main paragraph of her letter with 'Appena entrata nella Chiesa Metropolitana, oh! Gioia! Oh! Miracolo'), they reflected the gratitude of the believers towards the relic itself, seen as an object capable of healing people just by virtue of its existence, and they would often describe the scenes of jubilation for the obtained graces as happening right outside the Cathedral (almost as if not to spoil the solemn atmosphere inside the church).⁴⁹⁸ Interest in the Holy Shroud remained strong even years after

⁴⁹⁵ Gentile, *Culto del Littorio*, p. 287, translated as 'the sight of the duce was perceived by the population as the coming of a beneficent messiah to whom graces were asked'.

⁴⁹⁶ Franco Molinari and Vito Neri, *Olio Santo e Olio di Ricino – Rapporto su Chiesa e fascismo*, (Torino: Marietti, 1976), p. 53.

⁴⁹⁷ ASD, 14.14.93 – FF – CV, letter from Maria Malbocchia to Cardinal Fossati sent through the Chancellor of the Bishop of Cuneo, May 17, 1939, ASD 20.4.1 – CV – CS 1933 – Letter from Don Matteo Vassarotti, vicario economo della Crocetta, to Cardinal Fossati, May 18, 1931, Gli Ammalati Dinanzi alla Sindone – Uno Spettacolo di Profonda Commozione', *La Stampa*, May 16, 1931, p. 8.

⁴⁹⁸ ASD, 14.14.93 – FF – CV, letter from Maria Malbocchia to Cardinal Fossati sent through the Chancellor of the Bishop of Cuneo, May 17, 1939, translated as 'Right after entering the Cathedral, oh! Joy! Oh! Miracle'.

the expositions and the secretaries of Cardinal Fossati received letters describing graces received after a pilgrimage to the Holy Shroud well into the late 1930s.⁴⁹⁹

The wave of mysticism that hit Turin with the two expositions of the Shroud left its mark on the city, and people kept on turning to God for graces even during wartime. The clearest example of this was the experience of the patients and the personnel of the Sanatorio San Luigi during the Allied bombings of 1940 and 1941. Prayer vigils were said to have led not to one, but to a series of miracles that allowed every person in the hospital to survive the bombings despite the fact that one of the main targets in Turin – the FIAT factory in Mirafiori – was right at the doorstep of the sanatorium.⁵⁰⁰ According to an official account by the hospital's directors, nuns employed by the hospital put the lives of their patients before their own and accomplished feats beyond their strength thanks to the help of God.⁵⁰¹ The same account stated that it was the intercession of the Virgin Mary and of Saint Louis that allowed even a World War One veteran to survive the most frightening nights of his life.⁵⁰² Testifying to the fact that the hand of God protected the hospital, it was claimed that no sacred image was destroyed by the bombings, despite the fact that many walls had crumbled and that the scene had been described by witnesses in apocalyptic terms.⁵⁰³ In the lengthy report that the hospital directors produced in 1941, no reference was made to the Italian anti-aircraft forces, and everything was said to have been due to the prayers of the people in the sanatorium and to the intercession of the Virgin Mary and Saint Louis.⁵⁰⁴

The two expositions of the Shroud did not just revitalize mysticism in the city, but they also meant that the Shroud enjoyed unprecedented popularity and made it, for the first time,

⁴⁹⁹ The latest such letter is that of Maria Malbocchia, describing a grace that was experienced by her mother during the exposition of the Holy Shroud in 1898, ASD, 14.14.93 – FF – CV, letter from Maria Malbocchia to Cardinal Fossati sent through the Chancellor of the Bishop of Cuneo, May 17, 1939.

⁵⁰⁰ ASD, 14.14.82 – FF – Istituti di Assistenza e di Beneficenza – Busta San Luigi – La Protezione della Consolata e di San Luigi sopra il R. Santorio S. Luigi Gonzaga di Torino negli Anni di Guerra 1940-1941, written on June 21, 1941, p. 1.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 6.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

a really defining feature of the city. As Michael O'Sullivan has pointed out, many scholars have argued that the Catholic *milieu* 'preserved traditional values by using progressive organisational methods to combat threats to traditional beliefs and practices'⁵⁰⁵ and this is exactly what the Catholic Church in Turin did in this period, both in relation to the already discussed Catholic associations and to the series of events and institutions that were set up in order to promote the cult of the Holy Shroud. The *Cultores Sacrae Sindonis* were created in 1935 in order to foster the cult of the relic and to revitalize the long-existing brotherhood of the Holy Shroud.⁵⁰⁶ A Museum of the Shroud was created in 1936 thanks to the efforts of the *Cultores Sacrae Sindonis* and the brotherhood of the Holy Shroud, and it contained a long series of documents and minor relics related to the linen cloth.⁵⁰⁷ Conferences were also organized in order to shed light on the mysteries of the Shroud and its value by both hierarchs of the Catholic Church and laymen, as in the case of a lecture organized by *La Stampa* in 1938.⁵⁰⁸ With this conference, the directorship of *La Stampa* intended to address one of the chief symbols of Turinese identity and the aura of mysticism that surrounded it. The conference was envisaged to be 'tra le più importanti di quante siano avvenute quest'anno, nella nostra città' and *La Stampa* sent a personal and formal invitation to the conference to Cardinal Fossati to make the event 'tanto più solenne per la presenza della Vostra Sacra Porpora, e quindi tanto più caro al cuore dei Torinesi'.⁵⁰⁹ Even *La Stampa*, therefore, seemed to seek the patronage of the Turinese Catholic Church in order to assert the importance of some of its events.

The two expositions of the Holy Shroud, therefore, show how the Catholic Church remained the key institution capable of displaying mystical features in Turin during the Fascist

⁵⁰⁵ Michael O'Sullivan, 'West German Miracles: Catholic Mystics, Church Hierarchy, and Postwar Popular Culture' *Zeithistorische Forschungen/ Studies in Contemporary History*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2009), p. 11.

⁵⁰⁶ Zaccone 'Adolfo Barberis e la Sindone', p. 132.

⁵⁰⁷ Documento 4 – Archivio del Famulato Cristiano – Progetto di Massima Per Una Mostra Sindonologica Documentaria, Enzo Ferraro, in Zaccone, 'Adolfo Barberis e la Sindone' pp. 153-4.

⁵⁰⁸ ASD 14.14.42 – FF – Stampa Cattolica – Busta *La Stampa* – Letter from the directorship of *La Stampa* to Cardinal Fossati, April 27, 1938.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, translated as 'One of the most important [conferences] held in our city this year', and 'so much more solemn because of the presence of Your Holy Crimson Garment, and therefore so much more dear to the hearts of the people of Turin'.

era by drawing upon the relic's nature in opposition to the reactionary modernism of Fascism. Moreover, the expositions also contributed to give to the House of Savoy, owner of the precious relic, a new spiritual aura, whilst the Fascist regime did not gain any form of sacralisation from the events. This wave of mysticism was partially inherent to the Shroud itself, thanks to its "miraculous" past and thanks to the pictures of Secondo Pia and Giuseppe Enrie. However, it is essential to remember that the ceremonies that marked the two expositions were carefully planned by the entourages of Cardinal Fossati and Prince Umberto in order to maximize the mysticism of the events (a task that also saw the crucial collaboration, as will be addressed later in the chapter, of the local and national press). The newly found spiritualism that hit Turin in the early 1930s brought about conversions and graces (but, unfortunately, no exact figure can be given for these), and remained present in the city throughout the Fascist period, as did the recently discovered interest in the Holy Shroud both as a relic and as a defining feature of Turinese life. The symbolic value of the Holy Shroud, coupled with the wave of mysticism that the two expositions started, are crucial factors in explaining the way in which the events of 1931 and 1933 successfully brought about the mobilization of local society. Unfortunately, however, given the fragmentary nature of the available evidence, it is not possible at present to sketch an accurate profile of the pilgrims, nor to identify a gender or generational pattern amongst the believers

Mobilization and Impact on the Local Community

During the two expositions of the Holy Shroud, the Catholic Church – with the blessing of the House of Savoy and with the logistical support of many state forces – managed to mobilize an unprecedented number of people. First of all, it will be necessary to understand what was the meaning of a Catholic mobilization per se. Secondly, the underlying reasons that pushed the Catholic Church – both at a national and on a diocesan level – to organize such large events will

have to be discussed. This will be followed by an analysis of the way in which the Catholic Church mobilized its own organizations as well as state institutions in order to prepare the expositions. Only after this discussion will it be possible to look at the way in which the events impacted on the life of individuals and groups alike.

As John Horne has argued, the idea of a general cultural mobilization is usually developed in order to create a sense of unity and inclusiveness, and mass mobilization – like the kind of mobilization of Turinese society that occurred for the expositions of 1931 and 1933 – weakens sectoral (and even political) divisions in the pursuit of a common aim.⁵¹⁰ In terms of Catholic mobilization, Michael O’Sullivan has pointed out how Catholics in Nazi Germany ‘articulated dissatisfaction with the regime through public ritual’.⁵¹¹ This is a factor that undoubtedly played a role in many public manifestations of Catholic piety in Turin ever since the mid-1920s, as has already been discussed in the previous chapter, and which was also important during the expositions of the Holy Shroud.⁵¹²

It is also important to explain why, in the inter-war period, Catholics opted to overcome their anxieties through devotion (as also argued by O’Sullivan in relation to the Marian revival in Nazi Germany).⁵¹³ An answer to this question can be given by looking at the argument proposed by Annette Becker – chiefly in relation to the reality of the First World War – who has suggested that sacred practices offered an immediate response to the uncertainty of contemporary life during the war and highlighted how in periods of political volatility people empathized with holy figures who had been able to overcome their own personal limits and their own sufferings.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹⁰ John Horne, ‘Introduction: Mobilizing for “Total War”, 1914-1918’, John Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 9.

⁵¹¹ O’Sullivan, ‘An Eroding Milieu? Catholic Youth, Church Authority, and Popular Behavior in Northwest Germany during the Third Reich, 1933-1938’, *Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. XC, No. 2 (April 2004), p. 238.

⁵¹² ‘Il trionfo di Maria Consolatrice’, *Il Corriere*, May 25, 1926.

⁵¹³ Michael O’Sullivan, ‘West German Miracles’, p. 14.

⁵¹⁴ Becker, *War and Faith*, p. 23.

Catholic mobilization during the two expositions partially derived from the desire of the Church hierarchy ‘to stimulate and control ‘opinion’ and ‘morale’’.⁵¹⁵ Whilst the concept of social mobilization is generally associated with a war effort, the term can also be used to describe the way in which Turinese society was rallied in 1931 and 1933 in order to reassert – or to defend – Catholic and monarchic power in the city. Ever since the nineteenth century, the Vatican had been promoting the cult of the Virgin Mary, of the saints, and of the relics, in order to mobilize support against the growing secularization of Italy.⁵¹⁶ Imposing a framework upon these cults – in order to make them fully fall within the boundaries of the established doctrine – allowed the Catholic Church to reaffirm its power and its influence over pilgrims and believers.⁵¹⁷ In the case of the two expositions of the Shroud, the Turinese Catholic Church strongly encouraged the cult of the relic whilst keeping it within the established boundaries (thus maintaining the code of conduct of the nineteenth century even in the face of a medieval relic whose cult could have potentially escaped from the control of the Catholic hierarchy), but in doing so it used considerably mightier means than those available in the previous century: an impressive media campaign was, in fact, coupled with the full mobilization and use of clerical and state institutions.⁵¹⁸ In 1931, Pius XI was reportedly extremely impressed by the capacity of the Turinese Catholic Church to organize such ‘majestic’ events and to push members of the House of Savoy, just like civil authorities and organizations, to offer their help to a Catholic cause.⁵¹⁹ Also, the Vatican directly encouraged the cult, whilst reaffirming its own authority over it, by offering a plenary indulgence to all the pilgrims who took part in the exposition of 1931.⁵²⁰

The Turinese Catholic Church, therefore, promoted the cult of the Holy Shroud in order to further solidify its social power in the city, but it can also be argued that the Church acted

⁵¹⁵ Horne, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

⁵¹⁶ O’Sullivan, ‘West German Miracles’, p. 11.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵¹⁸ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Elenco Dei Membri del Comitato e del Comitato D’Onore per l’Ostensione della SS. Sindone.

⁵¹⁹ ASD, 14.14.93 – FF – CV – Letter from the Segretario di Stato Cardinal Pacelli, May 13, 1931.

⁵²⁰ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Appunti della Commissione sulla Ostensione del 1931, undated.

partially in order to re-establish Turin at the centre of national attention, even if for just a short period. As Jay Winter has argued, 'each city has a visceral identity, not merely a legal artefact'.⁵²¹ The exposition of the Shroud, therefore, can also be seen as an attempt to highlight the importance of the monarchic and Catholic traditions in the city and their role in Italian history. On the occasion of the exposition of 1931 *La Gazzetta del Popolo* reported that Turin was 'Degna cornice di solennità al quadro spettacoloso, compostosi ogni giorno e ogni notte nella Chiesa Metropolitana di Torino che fu testimone nei secoli dei più grandi eventi della nostra vita religiosa e fu sacro teatro delle ore di giubilo, di trepidanza e di speranza dei Principi e Re Sabaudi'.⁵²² The events enjoyed a large national recognition and mobilized Catholics worldwide, but the fact that the pope did not take part to either event indirectly highlighted their Turinese nature. As Blackbourn has pointed out, many historians have highlighted how pilgrimages to Lourdes and mobilization for particular Catholic movements, in general served the political aims of the Catholic Church, and pilgrimages to the Holy Shroud can fit into the same category, as did support for the cult of the Sacred Heart, for example.⁵²³ Blackbourn has also highlighted how many places that attracted pilgrims (in his case, after nineteenth century apparitions) were not as remote as they were often portrayed to be, but that 'Their problem was not that they were isolated, but that they were marginal. That is what fuelled the sense of being overshadowed by neighbours who were richer or more powerful'.⁵²⁴ This feeling of marginality had been present in Turin ever since the capital of the Kingdom of Italy was moved to Florence in 1864-5, and it had grown during the Fascist period, as the *Cult*

⁵²¹ Winter, 'Capital Cities at War', p. 7.

⁵²² 'Circa Due Milioni di Pellegrini – Preziosa Cooperazione del Principe di Piemonte alle Imponenti Manifestazioni di Fede', *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, May 26, 1931, p. 6, translated as 'fitting frame to the spectacular picture that was composed every day and every night in the Cathedral of Turin which had been witness over the centuries to the greatest events of our religious life and was holy theatre for the hours of jubilation, trepidation and hope of the Sabaudian Princes and Kings'.

⁵²³ Blackbourn, *Marpingen*, p. 6.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

of the *Romanità* gained in importance – on a national scale – over the Sabaudian roots of the country.⁵²⁵

For the organization of the two expositions, the Turinese Catholic Church successfully managed to mobilize a very large number of laymen as well as state and private institutions. In 1933, whilst the executive committee for the exposition was made up nearly entirely of prelates or hierarchs of the local Catholic institutions, many of the positions in the honorary committee – with a less crucial logistical role, but with a huge part in the promotion of the events – were given to Fascist authorities, military men, journalists and public figures with no formal link to the Catholic Church or the Holy Shroud.⁵²⁶ Good relations with Paolo Thaon di Revel (podestà of Turin until 1935) allowed the Turinese Church to use the help of the city's firefighters and municipal guards throughout the exposition of 1933 (help that was offered for free, despite the fact that Cardinal Fossati decided to give the groups who worked during the event a – relatively – small donation of 20.000 Italian Lira).⁵²⁷ Moreover, Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon, at the time still Italian ambassador at the Holy See, lobbied the Fascist government to ensure drastically reduced train fares for pilgrims both in 1931, when fares were reduced by 50 percent, and 1933, when the reduction was raised to an impressive 70 percent (whilst, by comparison, the train fares for the *Littoriali dello Sport* held in Turin in 1933 were reduced only by 50 percent).⁵²⁸ Cooperation with local authorities allowed the Archdiocese of Turin to find accommodation for all the pilgrims, a feat that was widely praised,

⁵²⁵ Valerio Castronovo, *Torino* (Bari: Laterza, 1987), p. 5, Romke Visser, 'Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romanità', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (January 1992), pp. 5-22, for a self-definition of "piemontesismo" as opposed to the *Cult of the Romanità*: Cesare Pavese, *Lettere 1926-1950*, Lorenzo Mondo and Italo Calvino (eds.) (Torino: Einaudi, 1966), letter to his sister Maria, July 15, 1935, p. 256

⁵²⁶ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Elenco dei Membri del Comitato per l'Ostensione della SS. Sindone, 1933, ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CS 1933 – Elenco dei Membri del Comitato d'Onore per l'Ostensione della SS. Sindone, 1933.

⁵²⁷ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Letter from the Podestà Paolo Thaon di Revel to Cardinal Fossati, October 21, 1933.

⁵²⁸ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Telegram from Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismom to Cardinal Fossati, No. 56099, 1931, ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Telegram from Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon to Cardinal Fossati, June 19, 1933, 'L'Imponente Stadio Mussolini', *La Stampa*, May 3, 1933, p. 6.

just like the exceptionally good behaviour of the flocks of believers.⁵²⁹ This cooperation between Church and state authorities points again to a considerable degree of overlap between the two institutions, with many Fascist hierarchs (and often their families) proving their loyalty not just to the government, but also to the Catholic Church.

Members of Catholic associations had a dual role in the events: they were a crucial part of the organization chart for the expositions, but they were also pilgrims in their own right. Many prepared for the event – spiritually and logistically – for weeks in advance and, as already mentioned, ended this process of preparation by visiting the princes as well as the exposition of the Shroud.⁵³⁰ The experience of the expositions, however, were more than a pilgrimage for many members of Catholic organizations (in particular for the young women that belonged to the ACI) as they were involved in managing, finding and providing accommodation for pilgrims, had to welcome the believers, and had to enlist new members for their organizations whilst also raising funds for their own activities.⁵³¹ The results of these campaigns were evident. Between 1931 and 1932, the *Unione Uomini* in Turin and its Archdiocese, for instance, saw its members increase by 18 percent, a number that was almost replicated between 1933 and 1934, when the organization grew by 15 percent (both figures were considerably higher than the average increase for the *Unione Uomini* for the interwar period).⁵³² From an economic point of view, moreover, in 1931 the Turinese Catholic Church managed to raise enough funds to complete substantial renovation works on the Cathedral, and in 1933 the proceedings from the exposition were close to a million Italian Lira.⁵³³

The expositions of the Holy Shroud also allowed the Turinese Church to mobilize sections of local society that otherwise would not have been particularly influenced by the

⁵²⁹ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Letter from Coronel G. M. De Albertis, June 20, 1931.

⁵³⁰ ASD, 14.14.79 – FF – ACI Femminile – Letter from the Contessina Balbiano di Torino, March 28, 1931.

⁵³¹ ASD, 14.14.79 – FF – ACI Femminile – Relazione Diocesana 1928-1932.

⁵³² ASD, 14.14.78 – FF – ACI Maschile – Busta Unione Uomini, Riepilogo Tesseramento Unione Uomini per il Quinquennio 1931-1935.

⁵³³ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi – Monografia Speciale ‘L’Ostensione dell’ Santa Sindone a Torino, 1931’, p. 32, ASD, 20.4.1 – Carte Varie – Corrispondenza Sindone 1933 – Rendiconto dell’Ostensione del 1933.

Catholic world. Becker and Blackbourn have highlighted some characteristics of Catholic mysticism between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that allowed the Church to mobilize considerable sections of society, and some of these can be applied to the case of the expositions of the Holy Shroud as well. Firstly, as in the case of Marpingen, the pilgrimages created a sense of community with new acquaintances, and they also had an almost ludic side to their nature, allowing believers to take a break from their normal everyday life.⁵³⁴ This was made possible because pilgrims were not just allowed to experience some extremely mystically charged moments, but they were also put in closer contact with Catholic organizations – that were actively recruiting during the expositions – and with the wide range of possibilities that these organizations offered to their members.⁵³⁵ Secondly, as Becker has pointed out, sacred practices and demonstrations as well as collective devotions could offer an immediate response to people’s insecurities at uncertain times.⁵³⁶ This can perhaps help to explain why the expositions had such remarkable success with the military division stationed in Turin (with soldiers being granted special access to the relic when off duty in 1931).⁵³⁷ Reaching out to all social classes, all the children of the elementary schools of the city – around thirty-four thousand from state and private schools – were taken to see the relic.⁵³⁸ Even groups that did not seem to have particularly strong links with the Catholic Church, like the scholars of the *Accademia delle Scienze* in 1931, gladly accepted the invitation to an exposition that had been described as ‘grandiosa e confortante’ and rejoiced at the idea of also celebrating the marriage of Prince Umberto with their pilgrimage, remembering the importance of the monarchy and of monarchic values in the long history of their association.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁴ Blackbourn, *Marpingen*, p. 401.

⁵³⁵ ASD, 14.14.79 – FF – ACI Femminile – Relazione Diocesana 1928-1932.

⁵³⁶ Becker, *War and Faith*, p. 3.

⁵³⁷ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Letter from the Division General Adriano Alberti to Cardinal Fossati, April 28, 1931.

⁵³⁸ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Appunti della Commissione sulla Ostensione del 1931, undated.

⁵³⁹ ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CSi 1933 – Letter from the President of the Accademia delle Scienze to Cardinal Fossati, June 1, 1931, translated as ‘grandiose and comforting’.

With the two expositions of the Holy Shroud, therefore, the Turinese Catholic Church (with the support of the Vatican) wanted to reaffirm its power over the local population. Being in firm control of the procedures of the cult of the relic allowed the local Church hierarchy to reassert traditional Catholic doctrine by modern means of social mobilization. Another aspect to this mobilization that should not be overlooked was the desire, within parts of the local Catholic and monarchic community alike, to re-establish Turin at the centre of national attention. Spiritual and temporal reasons therefore pushed the Church hierarchy to mobilize state and Catholic forces alike. A look at the mobilization of state forces, in particular, can lead to observations about the degree of overlap between Catholic and Fascist loyalties, with many Fascist authorities pledging their allegiance not just to the government but also to the Church. Catholic organizations – in particular those for the regimentation of young women – proved to be crucial in this process of mobilization, as their members were simultaneously pilgrims in their own right and key organizers of the events (although, unfortunately, it is impossible to offer further details on the individuals involved in this process since the Archivio Storico Diocesano holds no information on the individual members of Catholic organizations that were mobilized for the two expositions). In this way, the Turinese Catholic Church was able to set up a mighty organizational structure capable of mobilizing an entire city and attracting pilgrims from all over Europe. On both occasions the Turinese Church reached out to millions of people, including many that would have otherwise been nearly untouched by Catholic events. One last factor that deserves to be analyzed in order to understand the successful outcome of this mobilization process was the impressive media campaigns launched in 1931 and 1933, and this will be the subject of the next section of this chapter.

The Media Campaigns

Both in 1931 and in 1933 the expositions of the Holy Shroud were widely covered by contemporary media. This section will begin by looking at the media campaign that was specifically launched by the Turinese Church for both expositions (in the form of posters that were hung on the walls of the city and newspaper articles that were published in Catholic newspapers). In the second half of this section, attention will shift to how the two main newspapers of Turin – the bombastically Fascist *La Gazzetta del Popolo* and the more moderate *La Stampa* – depicted the expositions, in order to offer a discussion of the way in which the events were reported in non-Catholic newspapers.

The Turinese Catholic Church launched very strong media campaigns both in 1931 and in 1933. On both occasions, the walls of the city were covered with posters produced by the Archdiocese of Turin advertising the expositions. Despite the lack of available information on the decision-process in selecting designs (or on the names of the designers involved), some observations can be made by looking at two of these posters, one from 1931 and one from 1933, reproduced in appendices 4 and 5 of the thesis. If one compares the two designs, it is possible to notice how the first event was portrayed in a way that made it appear to be almost as much about the city as it was about the linen relic (with angels unwrapping the Holy Shroud over the skyline of Turin, dominated by the dome of the Chapel of the Shroud and by the Mole Antonelliana, originally envisaged as a Synagogue, with the Basilica of Superga, the burial site of the House of Savoy until the mid-nineteenth century, in the background). The poster for the second event, on the other hand, was a highly mystical image of Jesus Christ ascending to heaven whilst leaving his image on the Holy Shroud below him. The difference between the two posters was, clearly, not casual: the first exposition was ordered to celebrate the wedding of Prince Umberto, and so the poster portrayed the majesty of the city that was being mobilized for the Prince of Piedmont, whilst the second exposition was intended to celebrate

the Jubilee of 1933 and, whilst the monarchy still played a crucial role in the exposition, it was no longer openly advertised as a celebration of royal power.

Out of the Turinese newspapers that covered the expositions, the Catholic *La Voce dell'Operaio*, predictably, was the one that gave the highest importance to the spiritual and mystical side of the events. The Shroud was 'la reliquia delle reliquie' and articles openly talked about a 'prova del fuoco'.⁵⁴⁰ Believers were advised that they needed to remember the experience of their pilgrimage and to carry it with them in their daily life.⁵⁴¹ The mystical aspect of the negative photographs taken by Secondo Pia and Giuseppe Enrie was also highlighted, and the newspaper affirmed that these constituted another proof of the authenticity of the relic (as did the miraculous fact that the facial features of the Redeemer had been left untouched by the fires of Besançon and Chambéry).⁵⁴² The newspaper also pushed believers to go beyond their sensorial experiences in order to fully appreciate the significance of the event and of the relic itself.⁵⁴³ However, even *La Voce dell'Operaio* talked about the glorious past of the region and about the need to re-establish Piedmont at the centre of national attention. As it reported in 1931 'Quando nel vecchio Piemonte, il principe ereditario andava a nozze, la Sindone vedeva la luce come segno straordinario di giubileo e come atto di proposizione. Oggi che il piccolo Piemonte è diventato la grande Italia [...] la celebrazione dev'essere accolta e compiuta con tanto e maggiore significato'.⁵⁴⁴ By 1931, the Turinese Catholic Church was fully familiar with the most successful media techniques required to attract the attention of the population and to mobilize it and the media campaigns for the expositions benefitted greatly from this previous experience.

⁵⁴⁰ 'L'Ostensione della Santa Sindone', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, May 3, 1931, translated as 'the relic of relics' and as 'trial by fire'.

⁵⁴¹ 'L'Ultima Settimana dell'Ostensione della S. Sindone', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, May 17, 1931.

⁵⁴² 'La S. Sindone, la Più Insigne Reliquia della Passione, Nuove Prove sulla Sua Autenticità', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, September 10, 1933.

⁵⁴³ 'Editoriale', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, September 24, 1933.

⁵⁴⁴ 'L'Ostensione della Santa Sindone', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, May 3, 1931, translated as 'When, in the old Piedmont, the hereditary prince got married, the Shroud was exhibited as an extraordinary sign of jubilation and as an act of devoutness. As today the small Piedmont has become the great Italy [...] the celebration has to be welcomed and acknowledged as having an even more important significance'.

La Gazzetta del Popolo celebrated the two events with its usual pompous style, thus offering reports of the expositions that were subtly different from the more spiritual ones of *La Voce dell'Operaio* or the sterner ones of *La Stampa*. The style of the articles of *La Gazzetta del Popolo* on the expositions of the Holy Shroud was the usual, grandiloquent one of the philo-fascist newspaper. However – aside from stylistic considerations – Fascism was absent from the articles of *La Gazzetta del Popolo* on the Shroud displays, and in the newspaper's articles the House of Savoy was portrayed as the fulcrum of local identity and popular attention. According to the newspaper, the car of the newlywed couple could not even advance through the ecstatic crowd gathered for the exposition of 1931 as all the Turinese population wanted to catch a glimpse of the future King and Queen of Italy in all their glory.⁵⁴⁵ The association of Prince Umberto with the exposition of 1931 was acknowledged in the ostentatious titles of a number of the newspaper's articles, and his name was even put before that of the Cardinal (often not explicitly named but rather referred to as 'Pio Pastore') as the main organizer of the event.⁵⁴⁶ Again in 1933 the *Gazzetta del Popolo* maintained a similar register and, despite the fact that the House of Savoy was meant to be less central to the later exposition, it was possible for the newspaper to give Prince Umberto more importance than Cardinal Fossati.⁵⁴⁷

The House of Savoy was also very prominent in the articles of *La Stampa*, both in 1931 and in 1933. Whilst it cannot be said that, at least according to *La Stampa*, Prince Umberto stole the show from Cardinal Fossati, the newspaper seemed to portray the two as having the same kind of role and impact over a process of mobilization that led an "unreal" crowd of pilgrims to the Cathedral of Turin.⁵⁴⁸ In 1933 *La Stampa* also seemed to depict Prince Umberto (and the entire royal family), as a selfless benefactor since – even during the Catholic Jubilee –

⁵⁴⁵ 'Una Marea di Folla in Duomo', *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, May 15, 1931, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁶ 'Circa Due Milioni di Pellegrini – Preziosa Cooperazione del Principe di Piemonte alle Imponenti Manifestazioni di Fede', *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, May 26, 1931, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁷ 'L'Ostensione della Santa Sindone nel Duomo di Torino alla Presenza del Principe di Piemonte in Rappresentanza del Re', September 25, 1933, p. 1, 'Principi, Vescovi e Gran Folla di Popolo Hanno Solennizzato la Cerimonia di Chiusura', October 16, 1933, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁸ 'Torino Invasa da Inverosimile Folla', *La Stampa*, May 11, 1931, p. 6, 'Due Milioni di Persone Sono Passate dalla Sindone', *La Stampa*, May 26, 1931, p. 6.

it was the monarch (or a person delegated by him) who had to agree to the exposition of the Shroud, and a member of the royal family had to be present at all the ceremonies involving the Shroud.⁵⁴⁹ *La Stampa* also published commercial adverts featuring the Shroud, and these can be seen as manifestations of the way in which the expositions had become central features of Turinese life, but also of the way in which the city mobilized for (and benefitted from) the two displays. Stores would launch particular offers in conjunction with the expositions – and would also often provide a little map showing the store’s topological position in relation to the Cathedral – but some businesses were even ready to use the Holy Shroud as an even more direct marketing tool. For instance a popular commercial for the chain of shops “Alla Moda Italiana” advertised two simultaneous miracles: the exposition of 1933 and a tailor-made suit being sold for 100 Italian Lira.⁵⁵⁰

The media campaigns that surrounded the two expositions of the Shroud, therefore, played an essential role in the success of the events. Clearly, not all the newspapers focused on the same aspects of the expositions (nor did they do it with the same kind of journalistic style), yet it was probably this diversity of views and of tones that strengthened the media campaign. On both occasions, the population of Turin saw the walls of the city being covered by posters of the expositions: the first one, in 1931, seemed to highlight the importance of the city for the cult of the Shroud and vice versa, whilst the one created in 1933 was a graphic depiction of the highly spiritual event that the pilgrims were going to experience firsthand. The mystical character of the expositions was then highlighted by *La Voce dell’Operaio*, whilst *La Stampa* and *La Gazzetta del Popolo* made constant references to the important role played by the monarchy in the organization of both events and in the process of mobilization of the entire local population.

⁵⁴⁹ ‘L’Ostensione della SS. Sindone Concessa dal Re’, *La Stampa*, January 27, 1933, p. 6, ‘Il Principe alla Funzione di Apertura’, *La Stampa*, September 10, 1933, p. 6, ‘La Suggestiva e Fastosa Cerimonia alla Presenza dei Principi di Piemonte’, *La Stampa*, September 25, 1933, p. 1, ‘La Solenne Cerimonia di Chiusura della S. Sindone alla Presenza del Principe di Piemonte’, *La Stampa*, October 16, 1933, p. 2.

⁵⁵⁰ One example can be found for instance on *La Stampa*, October 16, 1933, p. 6, as pictured in Appendix 6.

Mussolini's visits and the Littorali dello Sport – A Comparison

To put the impact that the two expositions of the Holy Shroud had on the Turinese population in perspective, it is necessary to compare these with the – only – three visits to Turin made by Mussolini (in 1923, 1932, and 1939) and with the *Littorali dello Sport* of 1933, an event that saw the various sections of the Italian GUF (Gioventù Universitaria Fascista) compete against each other in the newly built Stadio Mussolini in Turin, generally recognized as a masterwork of rationalist architecture. The most obvious characteristic to be taken into account in this comparison will be the number of people participating in the events, but other factors cannot be discounted. Therefore, this section of the chapter will also look at the actual degree of emotional involvement of the people who took part in the events (the oral history works of Luisa Passerini will be particularly helpful in this case), at the impact that elaborate choreographies and scenographies had on the spectators who attended Mussolini's rallies, and also at the way in which both Fascists and Catholics had to pay homage to the House of Savoy.

The number of people attracted by Fascist events in Turin appears rather slim if compared with the number of pilgrims mobilized for the two expositions of the Holy Shroud. According to *La Stampa* (a particularly useful source since the newspaper covered all the events and used official estimates given by the Turinese *Questura*) more than one million pilgrims visited the exposition of the Holy Shroud both in 1931 and 1933 (and, as already mentioned, in 1933 pilgrims were only allowed one visit to the relic in order to reduce the total number of visitors, whilst there is no official information on a similar decision being taken for the exhibition of 1931).⁵⁵¹ By comparison, Mussolini's visit to the FIAT Lingotto factory in 1932 attracted twenty-five thousand workers (considerably less than the average number of daily pilgrims for either exposition of the Holy Shroud), and his visit to the new FIAT factory in

⁵⁵¹ 'La Solenne Cerimonia di Chiusura della S. Sindone alla Presenza del Principe di Piemonte', *La Stampa*, October 16, 1933, p. 2, ASD, 20.4.1 – CV – CS 1933 – Letter from Cardinal Fossati to Pious XI, July 22, 1933.

Mirafiori in 1939 attracted fifty thousand workers (but this was an event that also marked the official inauguration of the new factory).⁵⁵² In both cases, no official estimates of the number of people that listened to Mussolini's speeches in 1932 (in Piazza Castello) and in 1939 (in Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II and later at the Mussolini Stadium) were offered.⁵⁵³ On the occasion of the *Littoriali dello Sport* in 1933, seventy thousand people were said to have attended the opening ceremony (which, again, also marked the inauguration of the Mussolini Stadium). However, no official figure was given for the number of people actually attending the ensuing competitions and, by admission of *La Stampa*, the maximum capacity of the Mussolini Stadium was actually sixty-five thousand spectators (thus suggesting that the estimates might have been exaggerated).⁵⁵⁴

Simply comparing the number of people involved in Fascist events with the number of pilgrims who participated in the expositions of the Holy Shroud, however, raises three main problems. Firstly, as already stated, official figures were not released for all events. Secondly, as Paul Corner has pointed out, the Italian population was often forced to take part in the *adunate oceaniche* organized by the regime; they were essentially given a part to "act out" and those who did not intend to attend the events were threatened with "'fines", "disciplinary proceedings" and "serious sanctions"'.⁵⁵⁵ Thirdly, as highlighted by Christopher Duggan, the regime brought people from outside of Turin – in particular women and blackshirts charged with leading the crowds' applause – for Mussolini's 1939 visit.⁵⁵⁶ Attendance figures, therefore, do not offer much information on the actual degree of emotional involvement of the people who attended Fascist events.

⁵⁵² 'La Commovente ed Appassionata Manifestazione di Venticinquemila Lavoratori della Fiat', *La Stampa della Sera*, October 24, 1932, p. 1, 'Un Esercito di Tecnici e Operai', *La Stampa*, May 16, 1939, p. 2.

⁵⁵³ 'Tra la Innumere Folla Sotto una Pioggia di Fiori', *La Stampa*, October 24, 1932, p. 2, 'Allo Stadio Mussolini', *La Stampa*, May 15, 1939, p. 4.

⁵⁵⁴ 'Allo Stadio Mussolini', *La Stampa*, May 15, 1933, p. 2.

⁵⁵⁵ Paul Corner, 'Italian Fascism: Organization, Enthusiasm, Opinion', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 15, Issue 3, (2010), p. 381.

⁵⁵⁶ Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices – an Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy*, (London: Bodley Head, 2012), p. 330.

The most crucial issue for comparison, therefore, is the actual degree of popular participation and the impact that Fascist events had on the local population. This entire chapter has dealt with the mobilization of large parts of the Turinese population for the two expositions of the Holy Shroud, and has highlighted how the events managed to set in motion a new wave of mysticism in Turin. By contrast, Mussolini's three visits seem to have been welcomed with lukewarm feelings by the Turinese population (despite the triumphant description of events given by the semi-fascistized *La Stampa* in 1932 and 1939).⁵⁵⁷ In 1923, Piero Gobetti described Mussolini's visit as an attempt to "March on Turin", a city won over by the Fascist regime to a very small extent.⁵⁵⁸ *La Stampa* reported a particularly dry speech by Giovanni Agnelli on the occasion of Mussolini's first visit (considerably far from the triumphantly Fascist speeches that the newspaper reported in 1932 and 1939). The very fact that Mussolini paid homage to Agnelli every time the *Duce* visited Turin is also a reflection of Mussolini's awareness of the power enjoyed by the entrepreneur in the city. Moreover, during Mussolini's visit in 1923, the Commissario Prefettizio Lorenzo La Via di Sant'Agrippina (who had replaced the former mayor of Turin) asked Mussolini to defend the House of Savoy and reminded everyone of the role of Turin as the first Italian capital.⁵⁵⁹

The oral history accounts collected by Luisa Passerini in her *Fascism in Popular Memory* are extremely helpful when describing popular participation in Mussolini's visits, in particular during the visit to Mirafiori in 1939. What the people interviewed by Passerini recollect is very distant from the great enthusiasm described by *La Stampa*.⁵⁶⁰ The accounts of the 1939 visit presented by Passerini – despite not necessarily being fully reliable since they were first published almost forty years after the fall of Fascism – describe an astonishingly quiet crowd that almost "confronted" Mussolini, a crowd that refused to clap when ordered to do so, and

⁵⁵⁷ 'Il Discorso del Senatore Agnelli', *La Stampa della Sera*, October 24, 1932, p. 2, 'Il Duce tra i Camerati Operai', *La Stampa Della Sera*, May 15, 1939.

⁵⁵⁸ Piero Gobetti, 'La Città Futura', *Il Lavoro*, November 3, 1923.

⁵⁵⁹ 'Torino in Attesa di Mussolini', *La Stampa*, October 24, 1923, p. 4, 'Mussolini dal Re, tra gli Operai, e tra gli Ufficiali', *La Stampa*, October 26, 1923, p. 4.

⁵⁶⁰ 'Il Duce tra i Camerati Operai', *La Stampa Della Sera*, May 15, 1939, p. 1.

one that was persuaded that Agnelli's opening speech was nothing more than half-hearted lip-service to the regime.⁵⁶¹ This reception in 1939 came roughly at the time in which Galeazzo Ciano, the Fascist foreign minister and Mussolini's son in law, recorded in his diaries that the monarchy, the Church, and Italian youth did not take the regime seriously.⁵⁶² According to Passerini, FIAT workers did not resent Agnelli for his tacit acceptance of Fascism because his staunchly Piedmontese background endeared him to the local population.⁵⁶³ The coldness with which Mussolini was welcomed in 1939 is best expressed by Passerini herself:

*The silence of the response in Mirafiori represents continuity with the past and an identity shaped in the united opposition to all turncoats (with Mussolini at their head). But, above all, it points to something not even whistles and cat-calls could have expressed with such vigour; namely an estrangement from Fascism greater in scope and depth than the political dissent for which it prepared the ground and helped establish.*⁵⁶⁴

The expositions of the Holy Shroud, however, could not match the choreographical and architectural impact of the Fascist events held in Turin in the 1930s. The clearest example of the architectural impact of one such event was the creation of the Mussolini Stadium for the *Littoriali dello Sport*. The Stadium was to host the largest sporting event held in Turin throughout the Fascist period and its rapid construction was said to have represented both a record and 'una specie di sogno tradotto in realtà'.⁵⁶⁵ A similar use of choreographed spectacle was used during Mussolini's visits in 1932 and 1939, when the *Duce* addressed the FIAT workers from behind a large anvil (symbolically referring to the dictator's supposed closeness to the workers) whilst being protected by tall *fasci littori* in the background.⁵⁶⁶ This impressive

⁵⁶¹ Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: the Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 185.

⁵⁶² Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario 1939-1940*, (Milano: Rizzoli, 1950), p. 37, also quoted in Denis Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 277.

⁵⁶³ Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*, p. 195.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 198, for another discussion of the silence of the people of Turin during Fascist events, Simona Colarizi, *L'Italia Antifascista dal 1922 al 1940*, (Bari: Laterza, 1976), p.433.

⁵⁶⁵ 'L'Imponente Stadio Mussolini', *La Stampa*, May 3, 1933, p. 6, translated as 'a kind of dream that has become reality'.

⁵⁶⁶ 'Il Duce fra i Lavoratori, nelle Officine, nei Cantieri', *La Stampa*, October 25, 1932, p. 2, 'Il Duce tra i Camerati Operai', *La Stampa Della Sera*, May 15, 1939, p. 1. A picture of Mussolini and the anvil has been inserted in the appendix (7).

podium profoundly impacted upon the audience, with people still identifying Mussolini's visits with the looming presence of the anvil even decades after the fall of Fascism.⁵⁶⁷ Also, for Mussolini's 1939 visit, the event organizers prepared a show held at the Mussolini Stadium that included performances from 'motociclisti, ciclisti, sciatori, rematori, pugili, schermidori, ginnasti, atleti, coristi, bandisti'.⁵⁶⁸ Fascist events in the 1930s, therefore, demonstrated the extraordinary – and unparalleled, at least in Italy – capacity of the regime to put together impressive collective choreographies. The Turinese Catholic Church, on the other hand, could not compete with the regime's capacity to offer visually impressive displays of strength: most events related to the expositions of the Holy Shroud were in fact held in the austere Cathedral of Turin.

A noticeable similarity between Mussolini's visits and the expositions of the Holy Shroud was the need – for Fascist and Catholic hierarchs alike – to prove their allegiance to the House of Savoy. In the case of the expositions of the Shroud, this allegiance was demonstrated by making Prince Umberto and his wife Maria José the two central figures of the exposition of 1931, and the importance of the House of Savoy was again highlighted in 1933, with Prince Umberto personally opening and closing the relic's shrine. Similarly, even Mussolini's official visits highlighted the importance of the monarchy in Turin. In many of the speeches that characterized the three visits (as reported in *La Stampa*), Turin was praised for being "Sabaudian and Fascist" and "royal".⁵⁶⁹ Both in 1923 and in 1932, moreover, the *Duce* had to make a slight detour during his visits in order to meet – almost as if paying tribute – first the king (in 1923) and then Prince Umberto (in 1932) in their country palace in Racconigi.⁵⁷⁰ In 1939, Mussolini was not reported to have had interactions with members of the House of Savoy during his visit to the city of Turin. Nonetheless, the *Duce* made an extremely important

⁵⁶⁷ Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*, p. 183.

⁵⁶⁸ 'Allo Stadio Mussolini', *La Stampa*, May 15, 1939, p. 4, translated as 'motorcyclists, cyclists, skiers, rowers, boxers, fencers, gymnasts, athletes, choir singers, brass musicians'.

⁵⁶⁹ 'Il Podestà Esprime al Duce la Riconoscenza di Torino', *La Stampa*, May 18, 1939, p. 4, 'Storia di un Monumento', *La Stampa*, December 26, 1932, p. 6.

⁵⁷⁰ 'Mussolini dal Re, tra gli Operai, e tra gli Ufficiali', *La Stampa*, October 26, 1923, p. 4.

pilgrimage during that visit to Piedmont as he visited the grave of Cavour, one of the very rare instances in which Mussolini was publicly seen as recognizing the importance of a figure – in particular one so clearly identified with Piedmont – of the Italian Risorgimento.⁵⁷¹

The fact that a larger number of people reportedly mobilized for the two expositions of the Holy Shroud than for any Fascist event in the 1930s is only one factor that highlights the haphazardness of the process of fascistization of Turin. Exact figures and official estimates, after all, were not always disclosed to the public and in any case they could easily be manipulated. What is more important is the way in which Fascist and Catholic events impacted upon the local population. If, on the one hand, the expositions of the Holy Shroud showed a more heartfelt participation by the local population, on the other hand it is essential to remember that the two exhibitions could not match the impressiveness of the choreographies prepared for Mussolini's visits or the unprecedented size of the Mussolini Stadium. Fascist events were often a physical manifestation of the aspirations of totalitarian control of the Fascist regime in Turin, but the expositions of the Holy Shroud were a clear display of the power of the Catholic Church in the city. All these events, however, also testified to the strength of the social power of the House of Savoy in the city, with Fascist and Catholic hierarchs alike having to manifest their allegiance to the ruling family.

Conclusion

The two expositions of the Holy Shroud in 1931 and 1933 were unparalleled successes in the history of Turin and their size and degree of organization far exceeded that of the previous exposition of the Shroud (dating back to 1898), or that of events organized by the local Fascist

⁵⁷¹ 'Dalle Mirabili Esercitazioni dei Cavalieri di Pinerolo al Solenne Omaggio alla Tomba di Santena', *La Stampa*, May 17, 1939, p. 2.

authorities.⁵⁷² The Holy Shroud was a relic with a strong symbolic value: not only was it seen as a proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it was also a symbol of its owner – the House of Savoy – and an instrumental means in the process of sacralization of the monarchy. The two expositions revitalized the mysticism of the city thanks to the rhetorical language used to describe the relic (particularly useful in this case was the idea of a “trial by fire” for the linen cloth), thanks to the pictures of Secondo Pia and Giuseppe Enrie, and thanks to rituals that had been carefully planned by the entourages of Cardinal Fossati and Prince Umberto in order to ensure the maximum degree of suggestiveness. The Catholic Church and the House of Savoy fully mobilized local society for the two expositions. Catholic organizations played a crucial role in the organization and management of the two expositions, but so did local Fascist hierarchs, either thanks to their own powers or thanks to their capacity to lobby the Fascist government in order to receive help for the events.

Two factors discussed in this chapter are crucial for a discussion of the social power of the Fascist regime in Turin: firstly, it is essential to notice that Turinese society, despite being relatively secularized, was still highly susceptible to Catholic mysticism independent from Fascist mysticism; secondly it is crucial to appreciate the capacity of the Catholic Church and of the House of Savoy to mobilize massive forces – even Fascist ones – in order to pursue their own goals.

Throughout the chapter the role of mysticism and spiritualism during the two events has been constantly highlighted. The two are key concepts for Emilio Gentile who, in *Il Culto del Littorio*, has explained how the decline of traditional religion and the secularization of society allowed the Fascist state to earn a holy aura often at the expense of the Catholic Church.⁵⁷³ The popularity of the expositions of the Holy Shroud, coupled with the fact that

⁵⁷² For a description of Mussolini’s visit in 1932: ‘Il Pranzo Offerto dai Principi’, *La Stampa*, October 25, 1932, p. 4, ‘Il Discorso del Senatore Agnelli’, *La Stampa della Sera*, October 24, 1932, p. 2, ‘Il Duce fra i Lavoratori, nelle Officine, nei Cantieri’, *La Stampa*, October 25, 1932, p. 2. For a description of the events of the *Littoriali dello Sport*: *La Stampa*, May 10-May 17 1933, typically on pages 5-8.

⁵⁷³ Gentile, *Culto del Littorio*, p. 301.

these two seemed to revitalize local interest in the linen relic and Catholic mysticism for years to come, seem to point in the opposite direction in the case of Turin. Similarly, Gentile has argued that the myth of Rome and that of the *Duce* became the most pervasive mythological beliefs of Fascist Italy.⁵⁷⁴ Whilst such statement might hold true for other Italian cities and regions, in the case of Turin and Piedmont it seems as if the most pervasive myth was actually that of the glorious past of Turin and of the capacity of the small Piedmont to bring about the creation of the great Italy (as was stated in *La Voce dell'Operaio*), and the exhibitions of the Shroud, also thanks to much of the rhetoric that surrounded them, strongly supported this myth.⁵⁷⁵ Moreover, whilst Gentile has highlighted how the *Duce* was seen as a messiah capable of giving graces to the masses, it is essential to remember that in Turin people still experienced graces after seeing the Holy Shroud and that the expositions – unlike the extremely rare visits of Mussolini – attracted thousands of seriously ill and elderly people (categories that, at least in Piedmont, never seemed particularly dear to the *Duce* and to Fascist hierarchs in general).⁵⁷⁶

The two expositions of the Holy Shroud were remarkable displays of the capacity of the Turinese Catholic Church and of the monarchy to fully mobilize local society. Two broad observations are crucial in this case. Firstly, the size of the mobilizations was unprecedented and Fascist events organized in the city in the same years could not be compared to the two expositions: whilst the expositions attracted more than one million of people on each occasion, the *Littoriali dello Sport* of 1933 attracted less than one hundred thousand people, and Mussolini's visit to the FIAT Mirafiori factory in 1932 was greeted by a crowd of twenty-five thousand people.⁵⁷⁷ Secondly, with the expositions of the Holy Shroud, the Turinese Catholic Church and the monarchy proved their ability to mobilize third institutions, like the

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁵⁷⁵ 'L'Ostensione della Santa Sindone', *La Voce dell'Operaio*, May 3, 1931.

⁵⁷⁶ 'Gli Ammalati Dinanzi alla Sindone – Uno Spettacolo di Profonda Commozione', *La Stampa*, May 16, 1931, p. 8, Gentile, *Culto del Littorio*, p. 287.

⁵⁷⁷ For a description of Mussolini's visit in 1932: 'Il Pranzo Offerto dai Principi', *La Stampa*, October 25, 1932, p. 4, 'Il Discorso del Senatore Agnelli', *La Stampa della Sera*, October 24, 1932, p. 2, 'Il Duce fra i Lavoratori, nelle Officine, nei Cantieri', *La Stampa*, October 25, 1932, p. 2. For a description of the events of the *Littoriali dello Sport*: *La Stampa*, May 10-May 17 1933, typically on pages 5-8.

army, but most of all they proved their ability to mobilize local and national Fascist hierarchies and the groups they controlled. This represented, in itself, a demonstration of the social power of the Catholic Church and of the House of Savoy in Turin (even over Turinese Fascism), but also of the fact that Fascist authority over the Turinese population was limited – if not undermined – by Catholic or monarchic allegiances and that even Fascist hierarchs had ‘più di una fede nel cuore’,⁵⁷⁸ something that was condemned by the young-hardliners of the Fascist university newspaper *Vent’Anni*.

⁵⁷⁸ Risposta a “La Tribuna”, *Vent’Anni*, December 15-30, 1935, p. 11, translated as ‘more than one faith in the heart’.

5. Breaking Resisting Networks: Hostile Groups and the Process of Fascistization of Local Society

The litmus test for a government based on revolutionary rhetoric and an open desire to crush all forms of opposition is its capacity to break pre-existing networks that could undermine its power. In the case of Turin during the Fascist period, the local working-class and the local intelligentsia were made up of a large number of smaller networks (very cohesive in the case of the intellectual community, more scattered in the case of the working-class) that were often openly hostile to the regime. Both kinds of groups had solid roots in the city, were generally seen as driven by progressive forces, had strong transnational links with similar groups in other countries (in particular in France), and had a number of bases in the city that ranged from relatively ill-reputed working-class bars to the rooms of the University of Turin. Borrowing from the works of Peter Michael Blau, it is possible to see these Turinese networks as the product of the members' calculation of the extrinsic advantages involved in being part of such groups (for instance the protection of legal or underground trade union for the workers, or the pursuit of intellectual freedom for the intelligentsia) and the intrinsic affection felt for the other members of these networks.⁵⁷⁹ Moreover, as Blau has highlighted, social networks like the ones taken in consideration in this chapter can often successfully oppose oppressive dictatorships: punishment is in fact a poor reinforcer of (in this case Fascist) norms and beliefs, and 'the unfair exercise of power tends to evoke anger and a desire to retaliate for the exploitation suffered'.⁵⁸⁰ Therefore, the aim of this chapter will be to assess the extent to which the Fascist regime successfully managed to break these networks in order to solidify its social power, something that in turn will be crucial in determining the success of the Fascist totalitarian project in Turin and the degree to which the regime managed to change local society.

⁵⁷⁹ Peter Michael Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, (New York: Wiley, 1964), p. 112.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 224, 229.

Both kinds of networks have been the subject of much historiographical research, although no satisfactory comparison of the experience of the two has been produced. In the case of the Turinese working-class, two edited collections of essays have been of great help for the writing of this chapter. The first one is Aldo Agosti and Gian Mario Bravo's collection entitled *Storia del Movimento Operaio, del Socialismo e delle Lotte Sociali in Piemonte*, first published in 1980 by De Donato Editore.⁵⁸¹ Its size and declared scope still make it an essential work on the history of the city. However, both the method and the presentation of many of its essays can be criticized. Firstly, many of the essays in Agosti and Bravo's collection fail to deal with the way in which the local working-class experienced the Fascist regime on a daily basis: they in fact tend to focus on associations and union fights without really looking at the changes brought about by the enforcement of Fascist party membership, or the way in which Fascist organizations and values managed to penetrate – or not – amongst the workers. Related to this issue is the second problem of this multi-volume collection: most of the essays focus on the period before 1926-7. That is, they focus on the period before the Fascist regime had any real claim of fully controlling the state-system, let alone of having created a well-oiled totalitarian apparatus. The third problem relates to the sources used: most of the essays rely too heavily (or, in some cases, solely) on published primary sources – whether newspapers of the time or published diaries and memoirs of communist and socialist leaders. This problem is two-fold: on the one hand, it is clear that an enormous wealth of archival material (held either at the Archivio Centrale di Stato in Rome or at the Archivio di Stato in Turin) has been left unexplored whilst, on the other hand, it also means that most essays adopt a top-down approach that appears excessive, giving importance above all to great leaders and large organizations whilst almost forgetting about the individuals who made up these organizations.

Only the last two essays of the third volume of Agosti and Bravo's collection – these by Giulio Sapelli and Luisa Passerini – have a breadth that allows them to overcome these

⁵⁸¹ Aldo Agosti, and Gian Mario Bravo (eds.), *Storia del Movimento Operaio, del Socialismo e delle Lotte Sociali in Piemonte*, vol. 1-4, (Bari: De Donato, 1979-1980).

problems encountered by the other authors.⁵⁸² Sapelli's essay would have benefited from an increased use of archival sources, but his work has to be considered an important step towards the creation of a social and cultural history of the Turinese working-class community. Passerini's essay, on the other hand, can be seen as the prologue to her masterpiece *Fascism in Popular Memory: the Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* and as an attempt to direct the Italian historiography of the 1980s towards the use of oral sources in order to discuss issues of culture and memory.⁵⁸³

The second collection of essays that has to be acknowledged as an influence upon this chapter is the multi-volume *Storia di Torino* published by Einaudi in 1998 (in particular, clearly, the eighth volume of the series, edited by Nicola Tranfaglia and dedicated to the period between the First World War and the end of the Second World War). The two essays from this collection that have been most important for the development of this chapter are those written by Brunello Mantelli and Stefano Musso.⁵⁸⁴ The first presents a clear account of the formation – and subsequent dismantlement – of a number of anti-fascist organizations in Turin, whilst the latter is an attempt to develop a social history of the city in the Fascist era. Both essays have been a great source of inspiration. However, both presented gaps which need to be filled. Firstly, the sporadic use of references (in particular to archival material) is a shortcoming that needs to be addressed. Secondly, Mantelli's relatively traditional political history and Musso's chiefly demographic history ultimately do not paint a clear enough picture of the perceptions and the mental images that the Turinese working-class had of the Fascist regime. The main problem in Mantelli's work is his desire to only deal with organized anti-

⁵⁸² Giulio Sapelli, 'Partecipazione Politica e Coscienza di Classe nel Movimento Operaio Torinese durante il Fascismo', in Aldo Agosti and Gian Mario Bravo (eds.), *Storia del Movimento Operaio, del Socialismo e delle Lotte Sociali in Piemonte, vol. 3*, (Bari: De Donato, 1979-1980), pp. 401-451, Luisa Passerini, 'Fonti Orali e Storia della Classe Operaia in Regime Fascista', in Aldo Agosti and Gian Mario Bravo (eds.), *Storia del Movimento Operaio, del Socialismo e delle Lotte Sociali in Piemonte, vol. 3*, (Bari: De Donato, 1979-1980), pp. 453-499.

⁵⁸³ Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: the Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁵⁸⁴ Brunello Mantelli, 'L'Antifascismo a Torino', in Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino – vol. VIII – Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1915-1945)*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), pp. 265-312, Stefano Musso 'La Società Industriale nel Ventennio Fascista', in Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino – vol. VIII – Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1915-1945)*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), pp. 315-423.

fascist groups, thus essentially only looking at the tip of the iceberg without analyzing the way in which passive – and independent – resistance among the local working-class hampered the regime’s efforts to create a totalitarian system. By looking at a wide array of small incidents and minor denunciations, this chapter will attempt to offer a more nuanced description and explanation of the hostility of large sections of the Turinese working-class towards the regime without replicating Mantelli’s work on organized anti-fascism. Musso’s chapter, on the other hand, offers some ideas about the success (or lack thereof) of Fascist policies implemented in Turin, but also about the problematic applicability of some Fascist traditionalist concepts (in particular related to family life) to a city that had been characterized by social and economic dynamism ever since the beginning of the 20th century.⁵⁸⁵ This chapter, therefore, seeks to substantiate some of the points raised by Musso by adding qualitative evidence to his chiefly quantitative data.

The above collections of essays are of course not the only historiography on this subject: much has also been written about the activities – legal or underground – of a number of individual Turinese anti-Fascist intellectuals throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Arguably, these intellectuals constitute the Turinese social group that has attracted the most attention from Italian historians ever since the end of the Second World War (largely owing to the wealth of available published primary sources and to the important role that many of these intellectuals played in the establishment of the Republic of Italy). Despite the historiographical interest generated by this social group, however, a number of crucial issues have remained underexplored. For instance, with the exception of Angelo D’Orsi and his work, most historians have tended to focus on the figure of one particular intellectual – be it Antonio Gramsci for Giancarlo Bergami, Piero Gobetti for Ersilia Alessandrone Perona, or the philosopher Norberto Bobbio for Piero Polito – without really discussing the reasons why Turinese intellectuals formed such a tightly knit group throughout the Fascist period and without trying to explain the impressive degree of continuity (both in terms of intellectual and political activity)

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

between the generation of Gramsci, Gobetti, and Senator Luigi Einaudi, and that of Leone Ginzburg and Giulio Einaudi (son of the senator).⁵⁸⁶ Another issue that has been largely ignored by historians is the extent to which Turinese intellectuals interacted with – and inspired – other groups in the city, and this is something of extreme importance for an analysis of the social power of the Fascist regime in Turin.

The concepts of resistance and dissent will be at the core of this chapter. Whilst many of the actions of the Turinese intellectuals that will be analyzed (such as opposing the regime in the classrooms, publishing and distributing anti-fascist works, or refusing to swear loyalty to the dictatorship) are generally considered as clear acts of resistance, in the case of the working-class, this chapter will focus less on the often studied organized resisting groups and more on smaller and improvised daily manifestations of rejection of the regime and its policies (therefore, the chapter will focus more on a broad working-class “culture of dissent” rather than organized resistance). Acts similar to the ones that will be discussed have been at the core of the discussion of anti-fascist resistance in France in the works of Jean-Pierre Azéma and Harry Roderick Kedward. Azéma, in fact, pointed out that the French Resistance was not solely made up of those actively fighting the regime, but also of those who were prepared to protect them, host them, and feed them.⁵⁸⁷ Kedward, on the other hand, highlighted the fact that ‘Being a resister was often living an ordinary life and working in a conventional job, but doing both in such a way as to favour the cause of Resistance and disadvantage the cause of Vichy and the Germans’.⁵⁸⁸ Unfortunately, Italian historiography continues to present a picture that is considerably less nuanced than the one that Kedward and Azéma have painted in the case of France: the works of Luisa Passerini and the way in which she comes to consider even small

⁵⁸⁶ Giancarlo Bergami, ‘Gramsci e i Lineamenti Ideali del Socialismo Torinese’, in Aldo Agosti and Gian Mario Bravo (eds.), *Storia del Movimento Operaio, del Socialismo e delle Lotte Sociali in Piemonte, vol. 3*, (Bari: De Donato, 1979-1980), pp. 293-347, Giancarlo Bergami, *Il Giovane Gramsci e il Marxismo, 1911-1918* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1977), Ersilia Alessandrone Perona (ed.), *Piero Gobetti, Carteggio 1918-1922*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2003), Ersilia Alessandrone Perona, ‘L’Uomo Gobetti e la sua Formazione’, in Valentina Pazè (ed.), *Cent’anni – Piero Gobetti nella storia d’Italia* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2004), pp. 19-43.

⁵⁸⁷ Jean-Pierre Azéma, *From Munich to the Liberation – 1938-1944*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 103.

⁵⁸⁸ Harry Roderick Kedward, *Occupied France – Collaboration and Resistance 1940-1944*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), p. 55.

and often impromptu manifestations of dissent or apathy towards the regime (like refusing to participate in Fascist campaigns, or mocking the regime, or again carrying on with one's job without getting involved in Fascist life)⁵⁸⁹ as acts of resistance did not spark a debate in a historiography that instead remains mostly focused on Manichean conceptions of Fascism and anti-fascism.

This chapter will rely on the aforementioned works – coupled with archival sources – in order to produce a detailed comparison between the experiences of the intellectual and working-class networks under the Fascist regime. The first factor that will have to be taken into account is the limited success of the dictatorship in its efforts to control local culture. In this case, local working-class and intellectual networks highlighted the shortcomings of the regime in two different, but tightly linked, areas: the problems encountered by the regime in replacing former official working-class associations with Fascist ones reflected the difficulties that the dictatorship faced in imposing its own kind of approved cultural recreational activities and organizations, whilst the Fascist problems with the control of the school system at all levels were a clear display of the limitations of the regime in its efforts to change the very cultural process that formed young intellectuals. In other words, controlling the cultural formation of the local intelligentsia was problematic because the regime could not fully revolutionize the educational system, whereas directing the cultural growth of the local working-class proved hard for the regime because it was not fully capable of controlling the workers' free-time. The second issue that will need to be taken into account will be the degree of continuity in the lives of the two kinds of networks: the continuity of anti-fascist networks can in fact be seen as a clear sign of the relative failure of some of the revolutionary claims made by the regime. This chapter will assess the degree of continuity of the working-class and intellectual experience between the end of the First World War (and the working-class strikes of August 1917 over bread shortages)⁵⁹⁰ and the supposed "years of consensus" for the Fascist regime in the late

⁵⁸⁹ Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*.

⁵⁹⁰ Roger Absalom, *Italy since 1800, a Nation in the Balance?* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 93.

1920s and early 1930s, as well as the extent to which this continuity was broken or halted under the dictatorship. A third factor that deserves attention is the series of attempts – successful or not – by the Fascist police to end resistance by the two kinds of networks, in particular in the 1930s. After this third section, the chapter’s focus will move to an examination of the actual physical spaces used by these networks to resist the process of fascistization, coupled with an analysis of the private dimensions of these networks’ anti-fascism in order to determine the extent to which the Fascist regime managed to change and affect workers’ and intellectuals’ daily lives. Lastly, the chapter will look at transnational links and the ways in which these helped intellectual and working-class networks either directly (by offering protection) or indirectly (by inspiring the Turinese groups).

Intellectuals’ Education and Workers’ Free-time – Fascist Attempts at Shaping the Cultural Development of the Turinese People

The first issue that needs to be taken into account in order to understand the extent to which the regime managed to break local anti-fascist networks is the dictatorship’s capacity to control culture. A common local culture was not just the glue that held together the Turinese intellectual groups, but, interpreted in its broader sense and taken as incorporating traditions and recreational activities, it had also been one of the defining characteristics of the life of the local working-class ever since the end of the 19th century.⁵⁹¹ Clearly, the regime’s attempts at changing and controlling the school system had a direct impact particularly on the intellectual elite, whereas Fascist attempts at reorganizing the recreational activities of the Turinese population were particularly targeted at the local working-class and its traditionally very active and independent organizations. In light of this, this section of the chapter will look at the

⁵⁹¹ Giordina Levi, ‘L’Associazionismo Operaio a Torino e in Piemonte (1890-1926)’, in Aldo Agosti and Gian Mario Bravo (eds.), *Storia del Movimento Operaio, del Socialismo e delle Lotte Sociali in Piemonte*, vol. 2, (Bari: De Donato, 1979-1980), pp. 481-550.

effects of the 1923 school reforms by Giovanni Gentile – the Fascist Minister of Education, but also a philosopher and former student of the liberal Benedetto Croce – before moving onto a discussion of the successes and failures of the Fascist attempts at dismantling old working-class organizations and imposing membership to their Fascist counterparts.

To control the Italian intelligentsia, Fascism needed firstly to fully control the country's education system – both from an administrative and from a pedagogical point of view. The 1923 reforms of the newly appointed Minister of Education Giovanni Gentile were initially seen by Mussolini as the “Riforme Fascistissime”, however, their pitfalls would soon become evident. What Gentile seemed to have wanted was the creation of a class of Fascist teachers capable of widening the horizons of students who, in turn, would opt to support Fascism and the Fascist state, in his opinion the only true dispenser of liberty.⁵⁹² Gentile's reform was one that was aimed at moulding a new Fascist elite through the Italian schools, one that aimed at creating an hierarchical system in which only the best and brightest students could advance to higher education. In fact, only students who had attended the *liceo classico* were allowed to apply to all university courses, thus requiring students and their families to make potentially life-defining decision when the students were thirteen or fourteen years old.⁵⁹³ In Gentile's mind, the syllabus of the *liceo classico* (with a strong emphasis on ancient Latin and Greek, Italian literature, history, and philosophy) was the one that would best prepare the future elite to rule Italy as it successfully highlighted the importance of classical subjects in a modern – and Fascist – nation that portrayed itself as the natural heir of imperial Rome.⁵⁹⁴

However, the impossibility of truly establishing, at least in the short run, a stricter control of the ideological formation of teachers and professors, coupled with Gentile's blunder of endorsing critical thinking amongst the Italian student population, generally led to poor

⁵⁹² ‘Al Consiglio Superiore della Pubblica Istruzione il Ministro Gentile Difende la Sua Riforma’, *La Stampa*, November 16, 1923, p. 3.

⁵⁹³ Bruno Bongiovanni, and Fabio Levi, *L'Università di Torino durante il Fascismo – Le Facoltà Umanistiche e il Politecnico* (Torino: Giappichelli, 1976), pp. 9-13.

⁵⁹⁴ L. Minio-Paluello, *Education in Fascist Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 72.

results for the regime: at the University of Turin professors like Luigi Einaudi, Francesco Ruffini, and Gioele Solari contributed greatly to shaping a new elite of leaders for Italy, but not for Fascist Italy.⁵⁹⁵ This trend was also evident at the *Liceo Classico Massimo D’Azeglio*, whose students were taught by anti-fascist teachers Augusto Monti and, until 1926, by Umberto Cosmo (after that year, Cosmo was forbidden to teach formally, but kept on tutoring young members of the Turinese intelligentsia). Cosmo himself highlighted the seriousness of his teaching method to Fascist authorities in 1929: ‘Ho per quasi trent’anni educato in Torino, al Liceo ed all’Università, migliaia di giovani; ho per anni fatto tribuna del mio pensiero il più grande più diffuso e più autorevole organo del liberalismo piemontese; qui doveva essere cercata la notizia sicura dell’essere mio. I giovani educai al culto di ogni idealità patria ed umana e alla saldezza dei propositi nell’ora del cimento’.⁵⁹⁶

Of all the Turinese intellectuals, Augusto Monti was arguably the one who had the clearest understanding of the dynamics of the reforms and was the one who was most likely to influence local intellectual opinion on the issue. Monti’s impact on local intellectuals at the time of Gentile’s reforms was twofold: he regularly wrote on the theme of education for the *Corriere della Sera* between 1923 and 1924 and, more importantly, he had taught countless promising young students either at the public *Liceo D’Azeglio* (where he taught Leone Ginzburg, Vittorio Foa, Giancarlo Pajetta, and Cesare Pavese among others) or privately. During the Fascist era he was a private tutor to Giulio Einaudi, son of Senator – and future President of the Italian Republic – Luigi Einaudi, and he also tutored the young members of the Agnelli family.⁵⁹⁷ Giovanni Agnelli reportedly welcomed Monti’s anti-fascist beliefs, and the teacher played an essential role in the personal and intellectual growth of the industrialist’s

⁵⁹⁵ Bobbio, *La mia Italia*, (Firenze: Passigli, 2002), p. 379.

⁵⁹⁶ ASC, MI – DGPS – Ufficio Confino Politico – Fascicoli Personali – Busta 290 – Umberto Cosmo, Ricorso alla Commissione d’Appello per l’Assegnazione “al Confino di Polizia”, July 8, 1929, translated as ‘for nearly thirty years I have taught thousands of young students in Turin, whether at high-school or university level; for years I’ve used the most authoritative and widely circulated organ of Piedmontese liberalism [the schools] to showcase my thought; here is to be found my true self. I have educated youth to the cult of every patriotic and human ideal and to the steadfastness of their purposes at the time of studying’.

⁵⁹⁷ Augusto Monti, *“I miei Conti con la Scuola” – Cronaca Scolastica Italiana del Secolo XX* (Torino: Einaudi, 1965), p. 223.

grandchildren just as he had done in the education of the sons and daughters of many Turinese socialist and liberal intellectuals.⁵⁹⁸ Monti's popularity amongst the local economic and intellectual elite was, in itself, a demonstration of the solidity of those well-established local personal ties and networks in Turin that the Fascist regime was bound to have problems destroying.

Monti did not condemn the liberal points in Gentile's reforms, only the Fascist ones, but many of his articles on the first page of the *Corriere della Sera* were vehemently critical of these attempts at "fascistizing" the Italian educational system. In April 1924 he wrote about the 'freedom to study' that had been granted to Italian students under the reforms, an apparently genuinely liberal idea, but he said that this had to be coupled with the 'liberty not to study' for the students: 'la libertà di far quel che si vuole, di far dell'altro, di legger per sé'.⁵⁹⁹ Independent reading had always been one of the cornerstones of Monti's teaching method in high-school.⁶⁰⁰ In the same way, independent reading had been one of the cornerstones of the academic career of many Turinese students who were inspired, once again, by Augusto Monti to break the shackles of the regime by reflecting on the pages (and by drawing inspiration from the lives) of Ernest Hemingway and Thomas Mann (whose books they could only buy at the bookshops near the train station of Porta Nuova, as local booksellers thought they could only be of interest for foreign tourists), as well as Dante (with the prophecy of the greyhound in his *Inferno*⁶⁰¹).⁶⁰² Moreover, in July 1924, Monti also denounced the reforms because they were

⁵⁹⁸ Valerio Castronovo, *Giovanni Agnelli*, (Torino: UTET, 2003), p. 398.

⁵⁹⁹ Augusto Monti, 'Libertà', *Corriere della Sera*, April 5, 1924, p.1, translated as 'the liberty to do whatever you want, to do other things, to read for one's own enjoyment'.

⁶⁰⁰ Monti, "I miei Conti", p. 221

⁶⁰¹ In the prophecy, the greyhound is depicted as coming to save Italy from a she-wolf representing greed (although it is important to remember that a she-wolf is also the symbol of Rome). 'Infin che'l veltro - verrà, che la farà morir con doglia. - Questi non ciberà terra né peltro, - ma sapienza, amore e virtute, - e sua nazione sarà tra feltro e feltro' (Dante, *Inferno*, I 101-105), translated as 'until the greyhound – will come and will kill [the she-wolf] – and it won't need land or money – but it will live on knowledge, love, and virtue – and it will have humble origins'.

⁶⁰² Massimo Mila, 'La Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia Torinese negli Anni Intorno al 1930', *In Memoria di Augusto Rostagni – Accademia delle Scienze di Torino – Torino, 20 Aprile 1971* (Torino: Università di Torino, 1971), pp. 21-2, Bruno Bongiovanni, 'L'Età del Fascismo', in Italo Lana (ed.), *Storia delle Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Torino* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2000), p. 154, for an overview of the foreign literature popular among some students Cesare Pavese, *Lettere 1926-1950*, Lorenzo Mondo,

difficult to implement in practice. Gentile's were abstract reforms thought-out by a philosopher, detached from the reality of Italian schools and universities of the early 20th century with their strong middle-class component and an increasing number of female students (two groups who initially appeared as potential victims of the reform). Monti argued that Gentile's reforms were destined to be 'violently distorted' when they entered into contact with the realities of the different Italian cities – yet another manifestation of the problems inherent in the process of Fascist centralization of the regionally diverse Italian state.⁶⁰³

Turin was a city where this 'violent distortion' of the reforms was particularly evident. Student numbers had been rising in all schools between 1911 and 1921, and therefore cutting the number of students enrolled by the University of Turin every year, as the reforms suggested, in particular in the humanities, quickly proved impossible.⁶⁰⁴ Moreover, the implementation of the reforms at high-school level was left to the principal of the *Liceo Classico Vittorio Alfieri*, a man who was known as a good administrator but not as a fervent Fascist, who made sure that the *licei classici*, the only high-schools whose graduates could enter every university, would only be affected by the liberal aspects of Gentile's reforms, but not by the Fascist ones.⁶⁰⁵ As *La Stampa* reported, when Gentile visited Turin for a conference in May 1924, he was loudly booed by groups of university students: they were very aware of the general, more Fascist, aims of his reforms, yet, generally, they only had first-hand experience of the liberal aspects of them, and this was a potentially extremely dangerous combination.⁶⁰⁶ Gentile's reforms, therefore, represented the first crack in the Fascist machinery for the control of culture, and this was destined to be crucial in allowing many Turinese intellectuals to escape – at least partially – the control and the restrictions of the

and Italo Calvino (eds.) (Torino: Einaudi, 1966) Letter to Antonio Chiuminatto, January 12, 1930, pp. 96-102.

⁶⁰³ Augusto Monti, 'Riforma della riforma Gentile', *Corriere della Sera*, July 23, 1924, p.1.

⁶⁰⁴ F.A. Repaci, 'Gli Iscritti nelle Scuole Medie e Superiori in Torino (1911-12, 1922-23)', *Bollettino Mensile dell'Ufficio del Lavoro e della Statistica*, III (1923), n.11-12, pp.269-291.

⁶⁰⁵ Bongiovanni and Levi, *L'Università di Torino durante il Fascismo*, pp. 9-13.

⁶⁰⁶ 'La Giornata Torinese del Ministro Gentile', *La Stampa*, May 21, 1924.

Fascist regime. It was because of these failures that the Segretario Federale Piero Gazzotti wrote to Achille Starace in 1937:

*Nell'ambiente studentesco esiste tra i giovani scetticismo e cinismo, critica demolitrice dei valori morali e sociali e una forma spiccata di avversione al Fascismo. Parlando con giovani laureati di recente si ha la conferma che tali umori sono più diffusi di quanto si possa credere e si ignora quale possa essere l'origine di uno stato d'animo, assolutamente inesplicabile in giovani allevati in pieno Regime fascista e in un'atmosfera che dovrebbe essere permeata di idee e di principi ben diversi.*⁶⁰⁷

Thus, it appears as if Fascist efforts to control the cultural development of young Turinese intellectuals were marred by Gentile's own idealism and by the impracticality of the reforms when the regime tried to implement them on the ground. Gentile's reforms, clearly, did not affect the experience of the local working-class to the same extent. However, the regime's attempts to shape workers' culture by means of increasingly compulsory membership of both the party and its organizations can be seen as another side of the same coin. Both, in fact, were intended as the crucial means of achieving the fascistization of local society by changing the cultural habits of the population.

Before analyzing the way in which the Fascist regime tried to change and control the culture of the Turinese working-class, it is essential to look at what were the cornerstones of local working-class culture in the early twentieth century in the first place. As Giorgina Levi has argued, the strength of the working-class associations to which the majority of the Turinese workers belonged lay in the remarkably wide range of activities (not just political) that they offered to both men and women.⁶⁰⁸ Before the Fascist seizure of power, local working-class associations had set up their own newspapers, libraries, conferences, theatre shows and even

⁶⁰⁷ ACS, Archivi Fascisti - PNF - Direttorio Nazionale - Segreteria Politica - Situazione Politica Nelle Provincie - Busta 25 – Torino – Letter from Piero Gazzotti to Achille Starace, June 22, 1937, translated as 'cynicism and skepticism are present amongst student circles, critical attitudes capable of destroying moral and social values and a particularly vehement form of aversion to Fascism. Speaking to new graduates one has the confirmation that these feelings are more widespread than is usually believed and the origin of these is absolutely inexplicable amongst young people raised under the Fascist Regime and in an atmosphere that should be permeated by different ideas and principles'.

⁶⁰⁸ Levi, 'Associazionismo Operaio', p. 502.

their own evening schools (all run by local workers).⁶⁰⁹ After the March on Rome, these carefully organized associations, predictably, started to be perceived as a strong menace by the dictatorship, and Fascism tried to crush them (and destroy their heritage) in a variety of ways (often relying on blackshirts coming from outside of Turin, where the number of members of the blackshirts of the *Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale* – MVSN – was still insufficient) as it will be discussed in this section.⁶¹⁰

According to Sapelli, the life of the Turinese working-class under the Fascist regime can be divided into three distinct periods: a first one (until 1927) of open conflict despite the many serious blows given by the regime – both physically and metaphorically – to the Turinese workers and their associations, a second one (until 1934) in which the focus shifted among the working class to the protection of working-class heritage, and a final one (that lasted until the end of the war) during which the Turinese largely anti-fascist working-class came to accept the formal superiority of the regime and thus started to infiltrate Fascist organizations in order to destabilize the system from within.⁶¹¹ The first half of this chapter aims at analyzing the preservation of a working-class “culture of dissent” during Sapelli’s second period: much has in fact been written about formal and open anti-fascist fights both before 1927 and after the beginning of the Ethiopian War, but informal and improvised manifestations of discontent with the dictatorship between 1927 and 1934 – supposedly the “years of consensus” – have been largely overlooked. A closer look at the working-class experience in the period between 1927 and 1934 will not just fill an historiographical gap, but it will also lead to a better understanding of the way in which Turinese anti-fascist working-class networks managed to survive in this period and how this, in turn, allowed them to regenerate and strengthen themselves in the latter half of the 1930s.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 519.

⁶¹⁰ Mantelli, ‘Antifascismo a Torino’, p. 267.

⁶¹¹ Sapelli, ‘Partecipazione Politica’, p. 437.

Before the *Leggi Eccezionali* formally outlawed all forms of opposition to the regime, many of the associations and organizations of the Turinese working-class were characterized by a remarkable cultural (and not just political) activism. This was the case, for instance, for the activities of the communist group of *L'Ordine Nuovo*, led by Antonio Gramsci, Palmiro Togliatti, Angelo Tasca, and Umberto Terracini: the four leaders in fact did not just talk about politics, but they discussed philosophy, economics, and literature with local working-class members of the Communist movement.⁶¹² This, in turn, contributed to make the Turinese section of the Partito Comunista D'Italia the one with the highest percentage of working-class members in the country and to bridge the gap between party leaders and party members.⁶¹³

After 1926, the vast majority of the Turinese working-class associations and organizations were either forcibly closed (when they had political aims that openly contrasted with the regime's directives) or absorbed by Fascist organizations (when they had a chiefly recreational purpose). This is not to say that organized anti-fascism completely disappeared: as both Aldo Agosti and Bruno Mantelli have pointed out, anti-fascist organized working-class resisting networks (in particular of communist tendencies) had a remarkable capacity to regenerate themselves underground and to keep on holding meetings, distribute propaganda material, and create new dissident cells.⁶¹⁴ For instance, in the first three months of 1931, 2540 copies of anti-fascist publications were circulated amongst the 3000 ironworkers of the Ferriere di Torino (almost a copy for every worker).⁶¹⁵ Working-class anti-fascism, therefore, remained alive even during the years of consensus (before manifesting its full strength again in the latter half of the 1930s). The crucial issue at this point – and also the aim of the first half of this chapter – is to understand how it was possible for the local working-class to keep its anti-fascist heritage alive: Simona Lunadei and Giulio Sapelli have hinted at possible explanations

⁶¹² Paolo Spriano, *Storia di Torino Operaia e Socialista*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1972), p. 240.

⁶¹³ Aldo Agosti, 'Il Partito Comunista a Torino dalla Fondazione alle Leggi Eccezionali', in Aldo Agosti and Gian Mario Bravo (eds.), *Storia del Movimento Operaio, del Socialismo e delle Lotte Sociali in Piemonte*, vol. 3, (Bari: De Donato, 1979-1980), p. 21.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., p. 69, Mantelli, 'Antifascismo a Torino', pp. 289-98.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., p. 289.

(Lunadei has mentioned working-class passivity as an actual manifestation of discontent in its own right, whilst Sapelli has briefly discussed personal and family ties as means to protect the Turinese working-class anti-fascist heritage) but both their arguments need to be supported by more archival materials (a shortcoming that this chapter aims to overcome).⁶¹⁶

The initial attempts by the Fascist state to mould the political ideals of the local workers, predictably, encountered limited success. The organizations set up between 1925 and 1926 by the Fascist government aimed at the regimentation of the working-class paled in their impact in comparison to their independent and worker-led predecessors, as was openly acknowledged by the Prefetto Raffaele de Vita in 1927 (who also appeared rightfully sceptical of the belief in the apparent apathy of the Turinese working-class, an issue already addressed when this dissertation compared the expositions of the Holy Shroud in the city to Mussolini's visits):

Gli operai lamenterebbero la difettosa preparazione tecnica e lo scarso interessamento degli organizzatori sindacali delle corporazioni, mettendoli a confronto con quelli delle disciolte organizzazioni rosse e a tali commenti si manterrebbero relativamente indifferenti i sostenitori del Regime, che in passato ribattevano con calore le affermazioni dei simpatizzanti sovversivi.

Il silenzio delle masse operaie, di fronte ai sensibili licenziamenti che purtroppo si vanno iniziando specie in seno alla Fiat, non deve darci l'illusione che questa dura condizione di cose sia da esse supinamente accolta con rassegnazione e senza rancori.

*Il silenzio, in casi del genere, può invece essere talora sintomo di sinistri propositi, che non mancano di trovare alimento nella sotterranea propaganda sovversiva che, mi risulta, si sta esercitando in questi giorni per opera di abili e ben preparati organizzatori.*⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁶ Simona Lunadei, 'Partito Comunista e Lotte Operaie a Torino negli Anni '30', in Aldo Agosti and Gian Mario Bravo (eds.), *Storia del Movimento Operaio, del Socialismo e delle Lotte Sociali in Piemonte, vol. 3*, (Bari: De Donato, 1979-1980), pp. 283-4, Sapelli, 'Partecipazione Politica', pp. 430-1.

⁶¹⁷ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1927 – Busta 137 – Movimento Sovversivo Torino, Letter from the Prefetto Raffaele de Vita to the Ministry of Interior, July 28, 1927, translated as 'The workers complain about the lack of technical preparation and the little interest shown by the unionist leaders of the corporations, comparing these with the organizers of the disbanded red organizations. Even the supporters of the regime remain indifferent when faced with these comments, whilst in the past they used to vehemently attack the claims of the subversives. The silence of the working masses, in response to the many rounds of redundancy that have started in particular at FIAT, should not give us the false impression that these harsh conditions are passively accepted with apathy and with no resentment. Silence, in similar cases, can actually be a symptom of sinister intentions that find fertile ground in the underground subversive propaganda that as far as I know is currently being organized by able and well-prepared leaders'.

The situation did not improve in the 1930s, and by 1933, according to the Segretario Federale Andrea Gastaldi 'Delle migliaia di Fascisti solo poche centinaia conoscono la loro sede nel senso di ritrovo e di centro in cui la propria fede trova alimento spirituale e nelle cui attività si rafforza l'attaccamento e la miglior comprensione del Fascismo'.⁶¹⁸ And the newest members of the party were again openly criticized by his successor as Segretario Federale, Piero Gazzotti, who wrote that 'Viene deplorato nell'ambiente fascista il grave assenteismo che si lamenta soprattutto nei camerati di recente iscrizione, i quali, sordi ad ogni appello o richiamo se ne vivono appartati dalla vite delle proprie sedi'.⁶¹⁹ The faith of the workers in regime institutions also fell short because of their faith in the former mutual aid organizations.⁶²⁰ An example of this is the resentment towards the Ente Comunale Assistenza (an institution that was supposed to help large working-class families) where 'non sempre le persone che, bisognose di aiuto, si rivolgono agli sportelli dei Vostri Uffici, sono trattate con quella civiltà ed umanità che, se sono stretto dovere di ogni Amministrazione che ha contatto col pubblico, devono essere una massima inderogabile per gli organi che hanno un compito di assistenza'.⁶²¹

Local workers opposed Fascist attempts to alter the social and economic habits of Turinese working-class families. One such instance, for example, was the attempt – designed by the regime – to institute a voucher system for FIAT workers in 1932: FIAT employees could fight the recession by buying vouchers to be spent in outlets run by the Fascist state. The

⁶¹⁸ ACS, Archivi Fascisti - PNF - Direttorio Nazionale - Segreteria Politica - Situazione Politica Nelle Provincie - Busta 25 – Torino, Letter from the Segretario Federale Andrea Gastaldi to the Fascist Party Secretariat, July 6, 1933: 'Of the thousands of Fascists only a few hundred know their branch, in the sense of a meeting place and centre where their own faith finds spiritual fulfillment and in whose activities a better comprehension of Fascism and the attachment to the regime is reached'.

⁶¹⁹ ACS, Archivi Fascisti - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Letter from the Segretario Federale Piero Gazzotti to the Fascist Party Secretariat, April 15, 1935, translated as 'In Fascist circles we condemn the absenteeism which we find above all among the most recent comrades, who do not respond to our calls and live isolated from their own headquarters'.

⁶²⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945* (London: UCL Press, 1995), pp. 106-7.

⁶²¹ AST – PR – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 557 – Politica Demografica, 1928-1945, Letter from the President of the Unione Fascista Famiglie Numerose al Dirigente dell'Ente Comunale Assistenza, April 18, 1940, translated as 'the people in need who come to your offices, are not always treated with the kindness that is a duty of every administration that is in contact with the population and that is a binding principle for institutions offering aid'.

scheme was successful amongst white-collar employees, but workers kept on buying their groceries at their local shops (where owners were keen on helping those in financial troubles), as recorded by Prefetto Umberto Ricci:

buoni, in buona parte acquistati da Capi e Impiegati. Per quanto il servizio sia appena all'inizio, si ha tuttavia l'impressione che gli operai non sono in generale troppo propensi ad acquistare i buoni ... Una delle cause determinanti il successo finora scarso dell'iniziativa sia da attribuirsi alla preferenza che gli operai danno agli esercenti privati, di cui sono abituali clienti, e dai quali hanno sempre ottenuto e tuttora ottengono notevoli facilitazioni nei pagamenti.⁶²²

The failure of this Fascist campaign is one example of the regime's inability to actually alter the working class's habits, traditions, and family values, as would also happen with the Fascist campaign to increase the birth rate (a battle that – despite its constant rhetoric – saw Turin as one of the least prolific provinces in Italy).⁶²³

While Fascist political organizations and campaigns did not attract the interest of the Turinese working-class, supposedly a-political associations set up by the regime with recreational (and only covertly political) purposes – such as the *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (National Recreational Club), whose various branches were open to the entire population but were particularly targeted towards the working-class and the workers' free-time – enjoyed remarkable success. Arguably, this was the case because, with the dismantling of its left-wing counterparts by the regime, after its institution in 1925 the *Dopolavoro* had soon managed to establish itself as the association most capable of organizing social and cultural events for the local working-class, and its a-political drive propelled what has been defined by Marco Palla as

⁶²² ACS, MI, DGPS – 1932 – Sez II – Busta 52 – Movimento Sovversivo Torino, Letter from the Prefetto Umberto Ricci to the Ministry of Corporations and to the Ministry of Interior, March 11, 1932, translated as 'vouchers, to a large extent acquired by managers and white-collar employees. Despite the fact that the service has just started, there is the impression that the workers are not excessively keen on buying the vouchers ... One of the determining causes of the limited success of the initiative is the worker's preference for private shops, of which they are customary customers, and from which they have always obtained – and they still obtain – big facilitations in terms of payments'.

⁶²³ AST – PR – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 557 – PD, 1928-1945, Letter from the Unione Fascista Famiglie Numerose to the Podestà and the Prefetto, December 11, 1940.

the 'tenue volontarismo' of the workers.⁶²⁴ Very often the branches of the *Dopolavoro* were simply successful pre-existent autonomous and non-political organizations that had been absorbed and renamed by the regime, but that had kept the same locations, employees, and the activities they offered (thus also defusing the potential as a tool for indoctrination of an institution that, despite not being openly political, remained a creation of the Fascist state).⁶²⁵ The contrast between the limited achievements of political Fascist organizations and the success of the more recreational *Dopolavoro* was clearly pointed out in a 1931 note for Party Secretary Achille Starace

*L'atteggiamento di molti operai e gente del popolo, che appare improntato a sentimenti poco favorevoli per il Regime, appare dovuto più che altro alle privazioni, incertezze e preoccupazioni economiche, mentre invece si nota un più deciso orientamento verso le istituzioni dopolavoristiche del Regime e verso iniziative che incontrano la simpatia popolare, con una partecipazione spontanea e naturale, quale non si è verificata per il passato.*⁶²⁶

Despite the numerical success of many regime organizations, the lack of an active political commitment to the Fascist cause of large sections of the Turinese working-class, even during those years that were meant to be the "years of consensus", represented only the surface of the problem for the dictatorship. The regime was in fact well-aware of the fact that legal and supposedly a-political Turinese working-class organizations were actually pursuing subversive aims and, even more worrying, that by the 1930s many left-wing activists had started to infiltrate Fascist organizations in order to destabilize the state machine from within. After the regime clampdown on left-wing Turinese organizations in 1927, local workers found a number of temporary solutions in order to keep on antagonizing the dictatorship. One of the

⁶²⁴ Marco Palla, 'Lo Stato-Partito', in Marco Palla (ed.) *Lo Stato Fascista*, (Milano: La Nuova Italia, 2001), p. 24, translated as 'feeble volunteering'.

⁶²⁵ AST, Prefettura di Torino – Gabinetto – Primo Versamento – Busta 646-7 – Scioglimento Circoli e Associazioni.

⁶²⁶ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP – Busta 25 – Torino, Note for Achille Starace, August 8, 1931, translated as 'the attitude of many workers and commoners, apparently conducive to feelings not too favourable towards the regime, seems to stem mostly from privations, uncertainty and economic worries, whilst it is possible to see a stronger interest in the recreational institutions of the Regime and their initiatives. These encounter popular sympathy, with a spontaneous and natural participation to a degree that has not been seen before'.

most immediate ways to oppose the regime was to establish a-political associations – for instance a sports club – at whose meetings actually ‘si stabilirebbero accordi, si consegnerebbero libri e circolari di carattere sovversivo’.⁶²⁷ Yet, the most effective way of opposing the regime for left-wing activists was to use the dictatorship’s apparent strength to the subversives’ own advantage. This meant illegally using the names of Fascist organizations in order to publish pamphlets and distribute flyers that discredited the regime, but also actually infiltrating Fascist organizations in order to use their own headquarters to launch subversive propaganda and to increase the fear of a fifth column in the minds of local and national party hierarchs.

According to police reports, left-wing Turinese activists distributed pamphlets and flyers using the names of Fascist groups as a cover. These actions had a two-fold agenda: on the one hand, they were intended to push Fascist hierarchs to question the homogeneity of their own party whilst, on the other hand, they were also aimed at planting a seed of doubt in the minds of many local Fascists by highlighting the shortcomings of the regime and by pointing out the promises that the Fascist government did not manage to fulfil. An example of this kind of approach was when a number of posters highlighting the hypocrisy of the regime and its betrayal of the working-class were hung on the walls of Turinese factories in 1926, allegedly by a group of Fascists ‘of the first hour’ (but, accordingly to police investigations, by anti-fascist workers who had never seen the regime favourably):

La Marcia su Roma ha segnato invece l’inizio del cambiamento del carattere del Fascismo che da repubblicano è diventato monarchico, da rivoluzionario è diventato conservatore.

CAMERATI FASCISTI,

Le parole rivoluzionarie non contano; contano i fatti!

Guardate quello che avviene qui a Torino! E’ di ieri un manifesto del fascio che riafferma la fedeltà del Fascismo alla monarchia, sono di ieri le nomine della

⁶²⁷ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1927 – Busta 137 – Movimento Sovversivo Torino, Letter from the Head of Police in Milan to the Ministry of Interior, December 10, 1927, translated as ‘agreements are reached, and books, subversive pamphlets and circulars are exchanged’.

*cariche che sono state tutte assegnate a dei nobili, a dei commendatori, a dei vecchi con i quali nulla noi possiamo e vogliamo avere in comune.*⁶²⁸

Another great problem for the regime, as already mentioned, was the gradual establishment of a fifth column of left-wing activists inside the ranks of Fascist organizations. This was true both for the local working-class and the intellectual groups. Whilst anti-fascist workers often participated in the activities of the *Dopolavoro*, young anti-fascist intellectuals took part in the *Littoriali della Cultura e dell'Arte* (essay writing competitions organized by the regime for Italian university students), where they received prizes for essays on pivotal topics related to Fascism and its problems.⁶²⁹ In this way, left-wing activists could use the tools of the Fascist state in order to oppose it and this, predictably, triggered a wave of paranoia among Fascist hierarchs, worried that this pattern was rapidly spiralling out of control.⁶³⁰ As reported in a letter sent from the Turinese *Questura* to the Special Court:

*Il partito comunista, secondo le istruzioni date dalla segreteria dell'Internazionale, mentre continuava ad operare illegalmente decideva di portare la sua attività in seno alle istituzioni Fasciste, (Sindacati, Dopolavoro, Associazioni Sportive, Fasci Giovanili di Combattimento) ... Integrava cioè l'azione illegale, con quella pseudo legale, la quale ultima offriva agli aderenti un campo vastissimo di lavoro ed una sicurezza quasi assoluta, permettendo di stabilire i collegamenti e di avere contatti in seno alle organizzazioni Fasciste, con probabilità quindi di sottrarsi più facilmente alla vigilanza e alle sorprese della Polizia.*⁶³¹

⁶²⁸ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1926 - Busta 122 - Partito Comunista Torino, Manifesto Anti-Fascista signed “Un Gruppo di Fascisti Diciannovisti”, translated as ‘The March on Rome has marked the beginning of the change in character of Fascism, which has turned from republican to monarchist, from revolutionary to conservative. FASCIST COMRADES, revolutionary words do not matter, facts matter! Look at what is happening here in Turin! Yesterday a Fascist manifesto reiterated the loyalty of Fascism to the monarchy, yesterday new positions have all been given to nobles and *commendatori*, to old people with whom we cannot and we do not want to have anything in common’.

⁶²⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1935 – Busta 33D - Movimento Comunista Torino, Letter from the Questura di Torino to the Special Court, November 27, 1935, Thompson, *State Control*, pp. 32, 53.

⁶³⁰ Thompson, *State Control*, p. 114.

⁶³¹ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1935 – Busta 33D - Movimento Comunista Torino, Letter from the Questura di Torino to the Special Court, November 27, 1935, translated as ‘The Communist Party, following the instructions given by the secretariat of the International, while still operating illegally, has brought its activity inside Fascist institutions (Unions, Dopolavoro, Sports Teams, Youth Groups) ... It thus integrated illegal activities with pseudo legal ones, granting them a very wide field of action and almost absolute immunity, allowing them to establish links and to have contacts inside Fascist organizations, with the ensuing possibility of an easier escape from surveillance and surprise by the Police’.

It is also important to remember that anti-fascist workers used the power and the authority of the Fascist banner (and very often of the Fascist party card) for personal reasons. From the 1930s onwards, it became evident to party hierarchs that people were using party membership with the 'evidente scopo di mascherare ... aversione al Fascismo'.⁶³² Workers would also become party members only to save their own jobs.⁶³³ As often happened throughout the Fascist period, at times workers felt free to express their feelings in the inexpensive restaurants of the city, often after a few glasses of wine, as in the case of Oreste Risso in 1940. Risso, in fact, according to a police report, said to an Italian soldier that he was a member of the Fascist party but 'Lo era per scopi solo a lui noti ma che se tutti fossero stati delle sue idee le cose sarebbero andate meglio. L'Italia di fronte agli altri Stati non val nulla e noi italiani non siamo degni neppure di pulire i c... agli stranieri [...] Se c'è un elemento da togliere perché sovversivo, quello sono io'.⁶³⁴ Of all the memorable reports found in the Public Security sections of the Archivio Centrale di Stato in Rome, however, probably the most interesting is that of the arrest of Giovanni Battagliotti, a discharged Italian Army captain, who reportedly said (amongst dozens of other things):

- b) *Che il DUCE ha gettato l'Italia nella miseria ed ha tradito la causa dell'operaio, rialzando il capitalismo e dimenticandosi di essere figlio di un fabbro ex comunista*
- ...
- d) *Che basterebbero 200 uomini decisi che si impossessassero di una caserma e delle armi ivi esistenti per sconvolgere e dare una clamorosa sconfitta all'attuale Governo, formato di uomini incapaci e che pensano solo a loro stessi ed ai loro portafogli*
- ...
- e) *Che s'era iscritto al Partito per pura convenienza, ma che la tessera non poteva modificare i suoi sentimenti*
- ...

⁶³² ACS, MI, DGPS – 1933 - Sezione I - Busta 9 - Movimento Sovversivo Antifascista – Torino, letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, December 16, 1933, translated as 'evident aim to hide ... aversion to Fascism'.

⁶³³ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1935 – Busta 33D – Movimento Comunista Torino – Report against Giuseppe Cornaglia by Luigi Cavallero and Centurion Giorgio Bassoli.

⁶³⁴ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1940 – Busta 18 – Torino, report from the prefettura to the Ministry of Interior, March 20, 1940, translated as 'he was for reasons known only to him, but if all shared his ideas things would run more smoothly. In front of the other states Italy is worth nothing and us Italians are not even worthy to clean the a.. of foreigners ... If there is someone to eliminate because he is subversive, that one is me'.

l) *Che tutti gli ufficiali dell'Esercito sono contrari al Regime Fascista*⁶³⁵

Whether this report was fully truthful or only contained elements of truth, it undeniably touches upon many elements crucial to this dissertation: Fascism's ultimate disregard for the workers' cause, the lack of loyalty towards the regime from other state institutions (like the Army, in this case) and, lastly and more importantly, the fact that party membership could not change a person's feelings and ideals.

It is thus evident that the Fascist regime only encountered limited success in its efforts to dismantle what had been a really tight network of working-class organizations and individuals. The dictatorship was ultimately successful in formally destroying anti-fascist organizations by 1926-7 and it was largely successful in its attempts to establish its own recreational associations (first amongst them being the *Dopolavoro*). Where the regime was not completely successful, however, was in breaking-up the informal family and personal ties that linked local workers. The Fascist regime, therefore, failed to disturb the continuity of the Turinese working-class experience and the passing down of the workers' traditions and habits, and neither could it manage to stop left-wing activists from maintaining links with expatriates and foreign anti-fascists and from infiltrating Fascist organizations, both issues that will be discussed in greater depth later in the chapter.

Intellectuals and workers, therefore, were both targeted by the regime's attempts to control the population's culture. Depending on the targeted social group, Fascism attempted to achieve its aim in different ways: on the one hand, the dictatorship wanted to impose its control on high-schools and universities in order to mould young intellectuals, on the other

⁶³⁵ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1933 - Sezione I – Busta 33 – Movimento Comunista Torino, letter from the Segretario Federale Andrea Gastaldi to Party Secretary Achille Starace, August 29, 1933, translated as 'b) that the DUCE has thrown Italy into misery and that he has betrayed the worker's cause, lifting capitalism up and forgetting about being the son of an ex-communist blacksmith ... d) that it would be enough to have 200 committed men to seize a barrack and its weapons in order to shake and clamorously defeat the Government, formed by incompetent men who only think about themselves and their wallets ... e) that he joined the Party because of convenience, but that the party card could not change his feelings ... l) that all the Army officers are against the Fascist Regime'.

hand, it aimed at organizing the free-time of the population in order to have greater influence on the culture of the working-classes. Both processes, however, encountered problems and a degree of resistance from Turinese groups: the liberal inspirations of Gentile's reforms enabled young students to voice their concerns, whilst the Turinese working-class, despite its adherence to associations like the *Dopolavoro*, gave the regime and its attempts at a political indoctrination a cold shoulder (and in the 1930s even came to use membership of Fascist organizations in order to pursue anti-Fascist objectives).

Challenges to the Networks' Continuity in the early 1930s

Forcing independent and hostile networks to break with their past is essential for a dictatorship that claims to be revolutionizing society. This section of the chapter will focus on events that could have broken the continuity of both the intellectual and the working-class networks between the late 1920s and the early 1930s. Initially, the focus will be on Fascist attempts to break the continuity of the life of the intellectual groups. Afterwards, the attention will move to the kind of challenges faced by the Turinese working-class networks in preserving continuity. Some of these challenges, like the effects of global recession or internal immigration from the Southern (and to a lesser extent Eastern) Italian regions, were not solely caused by the Fascist regime. However, these problems contributed to increase the working class' discontent with the system, and this discontent in turn strengthened the basis for the continuous resistance of the Turinese workers to the regime.

The enforced closure of Piero Gobetti's and Antonio Gramsci's newspapers in 1925 – which was successful in reducing the number of medium-scale and openly anti-fascist publications in circulation, but which did not reduce the impact of the intellectual heritage left by the two editors – has already been looked at in the first chapter of this thesis. Another

attempt to break the continuity of the anti-fascist Turinese intellectual groups was the imposition of the Fascist loyalty oath upon university professors in 1931. The number of professors who opted to take the oath was staggering, allowing the regime to rightfully claim a major propaganda victory, however the extent to which this imposition contributed to the fascistization of the University of Turin, as will be later demonstrated, is questionable.

The near absolute unanimity – both on a national and on a local level – with which academics swore loyalty to the regime allowed Fascism to claim a major propaganda victory over anti-fascist intellectuals; however, this imposition did not necessarily stop resistance to the regime by the Turinese intelligentsia. On the one hand, professors who took the oath like senator Luigi Einaudi, Giuseppe Levi, and Gioele Solari kept on teaching and criticizing the regime in both their classes and their journal articles in much the same way as they had done previously.⁶³⁶ Luigi Einaudi, in particular, had advised his colleagues to swear loyalty in order to be allowed to keep on educating the younger generations (and, obviously, to keep their jobs), whilst the pages of his *La Riforma Sociale* (until its closure in 1935) and *Rivista di Storia Economica* (from its foundation in 1936) remained, in the words of the philosopher and student at the University of Turin Norberto Bobbio, a ‘porto franco’ for ‘autentica cultura’ in Fascist Italy.⁶³⁷ On the other hand, the impact of the declarations of those professors who refused to swear loyalty (12 within the whole Italian territory, 3 of whom – Francesco Ruffini, Mario Carrara, and Lionello Venturi – were teaching at the University of Turin in 1931 in addition to another 5 who had once been members of the University of Turin) had a huge influence upon the formation of young local intellectuals (although probably a rather negligible effect upon the Turinese population as a whole).

The letters written by the three Turinese professors who refused the oath to explain the reasons that inspired them not to swear are strong demonstrations of intellectual rigour.

⁶³⁶ ASUT – XIV. B – Affari ordinati per classe 2-1- Professori – 1931.

⁶³⁷ Norberto Bobbio, *Trent'Anni di Storia della Cultura a Torino, 1920 -1950* (Torino: Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, 1977), p. 30, translated as ‘free port’ and ‘authentic culture’.

Lionello Venturi wrote that it was impossible for him to ‘impegnarmi a “formare cittadini devoti al regime Fascista” perché le premesse ideali della mia disciplina non mi consentono di far propaganda nella scuola per alcun regime politico’.⁶³⁸ Francesco Ruffini had declared since 1925 that to him liberty not only represented ‘il supremo dei miei ideali di cittadino, ma quasi la stella polare a cui si è indirizzata sempre qualunque mia attività didattica e scientifica’.⁶³⁹ Mario Carrara claimed that the political commitments that were demanded were ‘al tutto estranei alla materia esclusivamente tecnica del mio insegnamento; almeno quale ho impartito ormai per lunghi anni e con risultati, che non sta a me valutare, ma di cui la mia coscienza è paga’.⁶⁴⁰

Carrara also managed to take his own fight against the oath beyond Italy’s borders, sending a letter of protest to the League of Nations and publishing it in two Swiss newspapers in early December 1931 before seeing it also published in Spain, France, Scotland, England, Sweden, and in the United States.⁶⁴¹ As a result, by December 26th of the same year, *The Economist* was praising the ideals of liberty and intellectual honesty that underpinned the professors’ decision not to take the oath.⁶⁴² In his letter Carrara argued that ‘poiché le dottrine politiche non sono meno opinabili e sottoponibili a revisione di tutte le altre dottrine questo giuramento appare ai sottoscritti come una coercizione intellettuale e morale incompatibile con i doveri più elevati dell’uomo di scienza’.⁶⁴³ This was clearly one of the occasions in which the transnational links of the Turinese intellectuals helped the local intelligentsia in its

⁶³⁸ Alessandro Galante Garrone, *I Miei Maggiori*, (Milano: Garzanti, 1984), pp. 36-7, translated as ‘to commit to “forming citizens devoted to the Fascist regime” because the ideological premises of my discipline do not allow me to do political propaganda in the school for any political regime’.

⁶³⁹ Alessandro Galante Garrone, *Padri e Figli* (Torino: Albert Meynier, 1986), p. 45, translated as ‘the supreme ideal as a citizen, but almost the guiding star to which all my academic and scientific activity was addressed’.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37, translated as ‘totally extraneous to the subject, exclusively technical, of my teaching; at least of the teaching that I have been imparting for many long years, with results that it is not up to me to assess, but that satisfy my conscience’

⁶⁴¹ Giorgio Boatti, *Preferirei di No: le Storie dei Dodici Professori che si Opposero a Mussolini* (Torino: Einaudi, 2001), p. 316.

⁶⁴² *The Economist*, December 26th, 1931.

⁶⁴³ Letter published in French in the *Journal de Genève* on the 8th of December, 1931, published in Italian in *Libera Stampa*, in Lugano, on the 10th of December, 1931, translated as ‘since political doctrines are no less questionable and revisable than any other doctrine, this oath appears as unacceptable moral and intellectual coercion, incompatible with the highest duties of the man of science’.

resistance to the process of fascistization, something that will be analyzed in greater depth later in this chapter.

According to Norberto Bobbio the refusal of these professors served to inspire those local intellectuals who, because of fear, timing, or just coincidence, had not yet professed their opposition to the regime.⁶⁴⁴ Whilst the professors who refused the oath were forced to leave their posts, their intellectual inheritance remained strong both inside the University and amongst the intellectual circles. Their actions served to inspire a generation of students. Amongst them one of the best examples was that of Leonardo Cocito, who, after being appointed as a high-school teacher in Alba (a town in Southern Piedmont) mocked the regime alongside fellow anti-fascist Piero Chiodi by publicly asking the headmaster if swearing loyalty to Fascism was really that necessary in order to receive his salary.⁶⁴⁵ Later, at the moment of reading the oath aloud, Cocito decided to read everything that was written on the circular handed to him, including its protocol numbers, headers and the fine print.⁶⁴⁶ Imposing an oath, therefore, was sufficient to award the regime a major propaganda success, but not necessarily enough to ultimately defeat intellectual resistance and to force academics who were not aligned to the regime to leave their posts. In order to inflict a stronger (albeit not necessarily decisive) blow upon the Turinese anti-fascist intelligentsia, the regime needed to start arresting and condemning intellectuals, as the following section will argue.

Whilst the regime adopted measures – like the imposition of the loyalty oath upon professors analyzed above, or a supposedly tighter censorship of the press as argued in the first chapter – in order to break the continuity of the anti-fascist intellectual networks in the early 1930s, the biggest challenges to the continuity of the Turinese working-class networks in the same period were relatively independent from the regime’s directives (although the regime’s apparent inability to solve these challenges did not increase its popularity amongst

⁶⁴⁴ Various Authors, ‘Funzione Civile di un Insegnamento Universitario’, *Il ponte*, V, 1949, pp. 1124-1131 (fasc. spec. “Piemonte”).

⁶⁴⁵ Pietro Chiodi, *Banditi*, (Cuneo: Panfilo, 1961), October 23rd, 1940

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

local workers). The internal waves of immigration to Turin (chiefly from the Italian North-East and the Southern regions) allowed the local community to grow at an average rate of 10-15.000 people per year throughout the Fascist period, but created problems and resentment amongst the local population once the recession of the early 1930s hit home.⁶⁴⁷ In this period, denunciation letters – often anonymous – that were sent either directly to Mussolini or to Fascist hierarchs and state-run employment agencies called for the protection of the jobs of the Piedmontese people who perceived themselves as under threat from *terroni* and *forestieri* (strangers). These letters reveal – often using poor grammar and syntax – negative attitudes to migrants in the city: ‘di lavoro ce ne fin troppo, è solo quei impiegati della bass’Italia che non ci lasciano lavorare’.⁶⁴⁸ However, these letters also highlight how, by the 1930s, local workers could come to see the regime as a port of call when they perceived it as the only institution capable of solving an intricate problem. One letter to Mussolini, acknowledging the power and the superiority of the *Duce* in these matters, stated ‘se fa il piacere di dare il lavoro a noi qui del piemonte di Torino che noi siamo tutti a spasso e i forestieri lavorano tutti’.⁶⁴⁹ Immigration from other Italian regions (usually in the range of 20,000 to 30,000 people per year) had been the one factor that had allowed the population of the city to grow ever since the end of the First World War.⁶⁵⁰ These letters not only show the way in which Turinese workers appealed to Fascist authorities in an attempt to restore the old order, but also show a local civic culture that remained much more Piedmontese than Italian (with people from other regions considered as strangers and foreigners).

⁶⁴⁷ Musso, ‘Società Industriale’, p. 317, 388.

⁶⁴⁸ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1930-1 – Busta 332 - Torino, Anonymous Letter to the Employment Office, March 21, 1931, translated as ‘there is even too much work, it is just that those workers from the Italian South do not let us work’.

⁶⁴⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1930-1 – Busta 332 - Torino, Anonymous Letter to Mussolini, ‘if you could do us the favour of giving work to us here from Piedmont as we are all idling about and the strangers are all working’.

⁶⁵⁰ Nicola Tranfaglia, ‘Una Città Sempre Più “Nazionale”’, in Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino – vol. VIII – Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1915-1945)*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), p. XXIX, Paride Rugafiori, ‘Nella Grande Guerra’, in Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino – vol. VIII – Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1915-1945)*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), p. 23, Sgambati, ‘Il Regime Fascista’, 233, Musso ‘Società Industriale’, 316.

Other more daring letters attacked not only workers coming from outside, but also local party hierarchs coming from other regions: 'A Torino ci sono troppi meridionali e veneti il piemonte non è più libero. Via lo straniero dal piemonte ... I segretari del fascismo anche loro forestieri'.⁶⁵¹ Complaints against local party hierarchs who did not have a Piedmontese background and who did not follow traditional Piedmontese values were also raised by war veterans (who were often grouped within the same organization – the Associazione Nazionale Combattenti D'Italia – despite having fought in the different wars in which Italy was involved in the late 19th and early 20th centuries). The scorn for those hierarchs who did not defend Piedmontese values remained strong throughout the Fascist period, as testified by commander A. Pugno (who fought in Abyssinia whilst professing his loyalty first and foremost to the king rather than to Mussolini), who argued that 'I Piemontesi mal sopportano tutti quei gerarchi (e sono maggioranza) che hanno un passato civilmente NON cristallino ... non basta fregiarsi di nastri: occorre moralità ed onestà'.⁶⁵²

Party informers directly writing to the Secretary of the PNF in Rome, openly referred to the economic problems of the local working-class: 'Nella massa lavoratrice si riscontra sempre un ambiente decisamente avverso alle Istituzioni del Regime. Fanno capire che nelle condizioni di vita attuale, non si può più andare avanti, cioè, è impossibile far fronte ai bisogni più necessari, specie in questa stagione invernale'.⁶⁵³ The recession pushed one anonymous person to write to the Prefetto in August 1930, a couple of months before a planned visit by Mussolini that ultimately never happened 'A Lei che giunge fresco fresco a Torino a rimpinzarsi le tasche coi denari dei contribuenti tartassati in ogni modo ... L'avvisiamo che in occasione

⁶⁵¹ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Anonymous Letter to Mussolini, translated as 'in Turin there are too many southerners and people from Veneto [and] Piedmont is no longer free. Away with the foreigner from Piedmont ... Even party secretaries all foreigners'.

⁶⁵² ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Letter from Commander A. Pugno to Party Secretary Ettore Muti, undated (1939 or 1940), translated as 'the Piedmontese people do not like all those hierarchs (and they are the majority) who have a civilian past that is NOT crystal clear ... it is not enough to show medals: what is needed is morality and honesty'.

⁶⁵³ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Note for Party Secretary Achille Starace, December 11, 1937, translated as 'Among the working masses one continually finds an environment that is decidedly hostile to the regime institutions. They say that in the present conditions it is impossible to survive, that it is impossible to provide for the most necessary needs, especially in this winter season'.

dell'imminente arrivo in Settembre del ladrone che si è stabilito a Roma ma che dovrebbe trovarsi alle nuove!!! Torino preparerà un'accoglienza degna del regime di strozzinaggio stabilito'.⁶⁵⁴ Economics struggles, therefore, appear to have reinforced anti-fascist feelings among some working-class networks.

Local Fascists, however, also believed the effects of the recession were exacerbated by the lack of Fascist faith of many Turinese industrialists. As recorded by one of the local leaders of the Black Shirts: 'La disoccupazione, le difficili condizioni economiche e sopra tutto il fatto tante volte segnalato, di una mancata assistenza ai fascisti da parte degli industriali, producono un senso di indolenza nella massa fascista'.⁶⁵⁵ As economic problems increased in the early 1930s, so too did the humanitarian and charity work of the Agnelli family, but, whilst this work often rhetorically defended "Fascist" causes (supporting numerous families or helping workers in need), it was done in the family's – and not in the regime's – name, thus fostering the social power of the Agnellis.⁶⁵⁶ The fact that Agnelli was openly against the Fascist push for autarky has already been discussed in the first chapter, but he was not the only industrialist to have doubts about the regime's economic policies. Even the entrepreneur Giuseppe Mazzini, a former liberal who later joined the Fascist cause and was a member of the committee for the 1941 *Biennale dell'Autarchia*, wrote of Fascist economists 'Ma devo confessare che ho trovato in tutte queste persone una completa incertezza su tali problemi che evidentemente non

⁶⁵⁴ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 486 – Presidente del Consiglio, 1926-1933, anonymous letter to the Prefetto, August 6, 1930, translated as 'to you freshly arrived in Turin in order to fill your pockets with the money of contributors squeezed in every possible way ... we warn you that for the imminent arrival in September of the thief that has established himself in Rome but who should be at the Nuove [Turin's jail]!!! Turin will prepare a welcome worthy of the shark regime that has been created'.

⁶⁵⁵ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Letter from Consul Carlo Spelta to the Political Offices in Rome, December 22, 1930, translated as 'unemployment, the difficult economic conditions, and most of all the fact, already highlighted many times, that the industrialists do not help the fascists, have led to a sense of indifference among the fascist mass'.

⁶⁵⁶ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 3 – Famiglia Reale, Poi Presidenza della Repubblica, 1925-1940, Letter from the Presidency of "Il Faro" [Charity led by Virginia Agnelli] to the Podestà Cesare Giovara, October 3, 1934.

possono essere risolti se non si ha una indicazione, sia pure generica, su quelle che sono le direttive del nostro governo'.⁶⁵⁷

Economic problems, however, were common to many other regions in the 1930s (although the lack of sympathy for the regime from so many industrialists was a particularly Piedmontese characteristic). What is more peculiar is the fact that many local Fascist leaders were not welcomed by the population because they did not represent true Piedmontese values. The difficult task of appointing appropriate party hierarchs was highlighted in a note to Party Secretary Giovanni Giuriati in 1930

*A Torino, perché il partito possa essere creduto, occorre sia impersonato dalla modestia, dalla dirittura assoluta, e dalla autentica attività, quella che produce e che non si discute mai: il tutto non disgiunto da una coltura, da una educazione e da un senso di fraternità fascista che nel difficile ambiente torinese consentano di rappresentare degnamente il Partito tanto in una delle Cinque Corti dei Savoia come in una adunata sindacale-operaia, come in una riunione di rappresentanti del tecnicismo industriale o dell'intellettualismo sempre vivo a Torino.*⁶⁵⁸

Even local Fascists complained against those who made 'ridicolo e odioso il Partito' because 'i Piemontesi sono gente seria, operosa, e non possono soffrire i ciarlatani; sono sempre pronti a ubbidire, ma solamente a quelli che sono degni di comandarli'.⁶⁵⁹ To a large extent the authorities also realized that these problems were also 'una conseguenza delle beghe che funestarono il Partito e la Milizia locale e portarono anche alla sfiducia nell'animo dei

⁶⁵⁷ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 569 – Cultura, Turismo, e Attività Sportive, letter from Giuseppe Mazzini to Augusto Venturi, 1940, translated as 'I have to admit that I found in all those people a total uncertainty about problems that cannot be resolved unless there is an indication, even if only a generic one, of the directives of our government'.

⁶⁵⁸ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Note for Party Secretary Giovanni Giuriati, October 15, 1930, translated as 'In Turin, in order for the party to be believed in, it needs to be represented by those who embody absolute modesty and moral integrity, and by authentic activism, the kind that is productive and is never challenged: this needs to be linked with a sense of culture, an education and a sense of fascist brotherhood that allows for the dignified representation of the party in the difficult Turinese environment, as effective in one of the Five Courts of the House of Savoy, as in a union meeting, or at a gathering of industrial technicians or of the, always lively, Turinese intellectuals'.

⁶⁵⁹ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Note for Party Secretary Giovanni Giuriati, September 21, 1931, translated as 'the party ridiculous and detestable' and 'the Piedmontese people are serious, hard-working, and cannot bear charlatans; they are always ready to obey, but only those who are worthy of commanding them'.

Giovani'.⁶⁶⁰ Despite the fact that Rome was acutely aware of the problems that the regime was encountering in Turin, very little could be done, and by 1940 the tone of Party informers grew even more gloomy: 'Udendo i discorsi che qui si fanno dovunque, si ha la sensazione di trovarsi in una città che non è fascista. Torino è sempre stata ed è sabauda e liberale nella grande maggioranza della popolazione e ancora oggi il suo sentimento è questo'.⁶⁶¹

Until the early 1930s, the challenges that Turinese anti-fascist networks had had to overcome, therefore, were not enough to cause the disappearance of these groups. The regime – as will be discussed in the next section – thus needed to adopt harsher repressive methods in the following years in order to make considerable progress in its fight against resisting social groups. The challenges faced by Turinese anti-fascist groups up to the early 1930s, in fact, either led to no actual significant changes on the ground (as in the case of the many anti-fascist intellectuals who kept on teaching at the University of Turin despite the imposition of the loyalty oath, or the relatively independent newspapers that were still published despite a theoretically harsher censorship) or the discontent that they caused strengthened the basis for resistance to a regime guilty of not solving the economic problems of the region, whilst also leading to a re-emphasis of Piedmontese values (in sharp contrast with what locals perceived to be the values of immigrants from other regions and of Fascist hierarchs).

⁶⁶⁰ AST, PT – Gabinetto – PV – Busta 628 – Cerimoniale 1927-1948 – letter from the Party Secretary of Rivarolo Canavese to the Prefetto, May 30, 1930, translated as 'a consequence of the internal fights within the local sections of the Party and the Militia and that also led to the lack of confidence [in the party] amongst the young people'.

⁶⁶¹ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Note for Party Secretary Ettore Muti, January 23, 1940, translated as 'Listening to the comments that are made everywhere, one has the feeling that we are in a city that is not fascist. Turin has always been and still is Sabaudian and liberal for the vast majority of the population and the feeling is still the same today'.

Policing Anti-Fascist Networks in the 1930s

In the 1930s, it became increasingly clear that Fascism was unlikely to win over, or even to peacefully silence, the many resisting voices in Turin. In order to counter the threat that these represented, therefore, the regime turned to increasingly repressive methods. In the case of the local intellectual networks, arrests and harsh sentences proved extremely successful in containing the anti-fascist menace posed by the local intelligentsia. In the case of the working-class networks, however, owing to the size of the anti-fascist worker population in Turin and to the very way in which its anti-fascism manifested itself (with a series of small actions often of an improvised nature), the repression arguably proved less effective.

As if acknowledging its inability to turn anti-fascist intellectuals into good Fascist citizens, the regime opted for a much more successful policy of repression from 1933. The year 1933 marked the beginning of what has been defined by Joel Blatt as the “Battle of Turin”: the gradual attacks by the Fascist police (OVRA) against Turinese intellectuals belonging to *Giustizia e Libertà*, the anti-fascist association founded in France in 1929 by the Italian expats Carlo and Nello Rosselli.⁶⁶² Between 1934 and 1936, thanks in no small part to the work of Fascist spies, most of the openly anti-fascist Turinese intellectuals were arrested and either imprisoned or sent into internal exile.⁶⁶³

Some of the reports written after the arrests shed light on both the modus operandi of *Giustizia e Libertà* in Turin and on the extent to which the regime knew of the activities of the Turinese anti-fascist intellectuals. By 1935, the regime had in fact gathered considerable evidence against the cultural circles that gravitated around the publisher Giulio Einaudi and his magazine *La Cultura*, but that also met ‘nei locali pubblici di Torino, nei convegni nelle

⁶⁶² Joel Blatt, ‘The Battle of Turin, 1933-1936: Carlo Rosselli, *Giustizia e Libertà*, OVRA and the Origins of Mussolini’s Anti-Semitic Campaign’, *Journal Of Modern Italian Studies*, vol. I, no. I (1995), pp. 22-57.

⁶⁶³ Domenico Vecchioni, *Le Spie del Fascismo: Uomini, Apparati e Operazioni di Intelligence nell’Italia del Duce*, (Firenze: Olimpia, 2005).

abitazioni dell'uno o dell'altro dei pervenuti, nei preordinati interventi o intrattenimenti o ricevimenti'.⁶⁶⁴ Some of the intellectuals that the regime persecuted in those years (with 33 arrests amongst the small community in 1935 alone) admitted that at those gatherings 'non era escluso lo scopo politico'⁶⁶⁵, highlighting how cultural and anti-fascist events often merged and were two key components of the lives of the local intelligentsia and how one stimulated the other. The reports also highlight how anti-fascism had remained strong amongst students and young academics in the early 1930s, emphasizing a 'Cospirazione politica da parte dei maggiori responsabili [...] e la subdola azione di traviamiento politico della gioventù studiosa che si compiva nell'ambito antifascista della "Cultura"'.⁶⁶⁶ The opening line of the 1935 police report following the arrest of Franco Antonicelli, Remo Garosci, Alberto Levi, Carlo Levi, Giulio Muggia, Cesare Pavese, and Bruno Maffi provides a further demonstration of the fear that this small but particularly united group provoked in local and national party hierarchs: 'Chiaramente si evince il grado di pericolosità per l'ordine nazionale da attribuire ai pervenuti in esame, anche ed essenzialmente in considerazione dei loro precedenti politici'.⁶⁶⁷ These arrests were then followed by very harsh sentences (that in many cases were later reduced): 15 years of imprisonment for Foa and Michele Giua, 7 years of imprisonment for Massimo Mila, 5 years of imprisonment for Monti, 5 years of internal exile for Antonicelli and Carlo Levi, 3 years of internal exile for Pavese, Maffi, Muggia and Remo Garosci, and 2 years of internal exile for Alberto Levi. Whilst, as argued by Blatt, the "battle of Turin" did not lead to the full defeat of the anti-fascist intellectual networks, it is undeniable that it constituted an extremely serious blow to both their numerical strength and their commitment to active anti-fascism.

⁶⁶⁴ DGPS – UCP – FP – Busta 565 - Denuncia per l'assegnazione al confino di polizia di: Antonicelli Franco di Donato; Garosci Remo di Antonio; Levi Alberto di Giuseppe; Levi Carlo di Ettore; Muggia Giulio di Giuseppe; Pavese Cesare di Eugenio residenti a Torino e Maffi Bruno di Fabio residente a Milano; Roma, July 11th, 1935, translated as 'in public places, at conferences and in the houses of one or another of the people who were arrested for attending these kind of events or receptions'.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., translated as 'the political was not excluded' (underlined in the original).

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., translated as 'political conspiracy of majority of those in positions of responsibility [...] and the devious action of political deception of the intellectual youth that was carried out in the anti-fascist environment of 'La Cultura''.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., translated as 'clearly it is possible to see the danger represented by the arrested people for the national order, also, and above all, if one considers their political precedents'.

Policing anti-fascist working-class networks in the 1930s, on the other hand, proved considerably less effective, both because of the networks' size and because of their traditions and unity. This section of the chapter will briefly explore the policing of the more organized sections of the Turinese working-class (usually linked to the reborn and reorganized underground Communist Party, and masterfully analyzed by Mantelli) which has already been the subject of much historiographical attention and it will focus chiefly on small scale – and in particular ordinary everyday – manifestations of opposition to the regime.⁶⁶⁸ This section of the chapter, therefore, will try to demonstrate, with the help of a large number of police reports, how a long list of different activities can be considered as acts of opposition to the regime and, in turn, as obstructing (often on a daily basis) the establishment of a fully totalitarian state.

Even during the years of consensus, the Fascist regime could not manage to create a stable power-base amongst the Turinese working-class. Despite the pleas and requests of local party hierarchs, there was little that the party secretariat in Rome could do to improve a situation that appeared at best very difficult (when presented by Fascist authorities in Turin) and at worst dramatic (when presented by party informers). These different approaches to the situation can be seen in a number of letters sent to Rome throughout the 1930s and they can be – at least to an extent – attributed to the fact that local party hierarchs were heavily criticized by the Turinese population and had to try to protect themselves and their position. The outspoken letters of party informers, in contrast, often talk about open anti-fascism, as in the case of this note written in 1931

I commenti di coloro che si trovano a tu per tu sono in genere chiaramente antifascisti. L'antifascismo ha buon gioco in un ambiente che è saturo di dubbi e di gente già a priori mal disposta e dove il concetto ed il pensiero di larghe zone si immedesima in contrarietà al Regime, a volte per ragioni

⁶⁶⁸ Mantelli, 'Antifascismo a Torino', pp. 285-315.

*strettamente politiche suggerite da nostalgie o velleità impotenti, più frequentemente ancora per effetto di difficoltà quotidiane e personali.*⁶⁶⁹

Predictably, on the other hand, Fascist authorities in Turin painted a better picture when reporting to Rome, but they could not fully deny the problematic situation of a population that continued 'a conservare il suo contegno passivo e apatico'.⁶⁷⁰ Similarly, even the Segretario Federale Andrea Gastaldi described a situation that was superficially calm but actually dangerous: 'A Torino si ha la sensazione che lo stato d'animo dei torinesi non sia perfettamente sincero. Apparentemente nulla darebbe ad addivedere il malumore che è latente in ogni campo, ma all'osservatore attento non può sfuggire lo stato di disagio della popolazione [...] Sono impressioni che si deducono da mezze frasi e da atteggiamenti guardinghi.'⁶⁷¹ The incapacity of the regime to establish a solid power-base among the Turinese working-classes led to a marked degree of general resentment among many local workers which was channeled towards both the Fascist State and the Fascist Party. Frequently, in the 1930s, people were arrested for claiming that 'si stava meglio quando si stava peggio'⁶⁷², or, as the war approached, that 'siamo degli illusi nessuno osa parlare e qui ci pigliano in giro'.⁶⁷³

⁶⁶⁹ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Note for Party Secretary Achille Starace, July 20, 1931, translated as 'The comments when the people gather together are usually clearly anti-fascist. Anti-fascism can easily grow in an environment that is full of doubts and of people that are badly disposed to it *a priori* and where the concepts and the thoughts of large sections are against the Regime, at times due to strictly political reasons determined by nostalgia or powerless ambitions, or even more frequently due to their daily personal difficulties'.

⁶⁷⁰ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Letter from the Headquarters of the MVSN to the Political Office in Rome, October 6, 1931, translated as 'to keep its passive and apathetic demeanour'.

⁶⁷¹ ACS, AF - PNF - DN - SP - SPNP - Busta 25 – Torino, Letter from the Segretario Federale Andrea Gastaldi to Achille Starace, May 9, 1934, translated as 'in Turin the feeling is that the mood of the Turinese people is not fully sincere. Ostensibly nothing reveals the discontent that is latent in every field, but a careful observer can notice the state of uneasiness of the population ... These are impressions obtained from broken sentences and guarded behaviour'.

⁶⁷² ACS, MI, DGPS –1937 – Busta 9 – Movimento Sovversivo Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, November 3, 1937, translated as 'it was better when it was worse'.

⁶⁷³ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1939 – Busta 16 – Affari Generali Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, March 31, 1939, translated as 'we are delusional, nobody dares to speak up and they are pulling our legs'.

Anti-fascist members of the Turinese working-class were often persecuted for trying to defend their symbols and traditions. One of the most immediate ways of preserving the leftist traditions of the former Turinese trade unions and associations – and one that Bosworth specifically highlighted in his article ‘Everyday Mussolinism’ – was the passing down of communist and socialist anthems. The most widely known such anthem was undoubtedly *Bandiera Rossa*, and its popularity throughout the 1930s and 1940s (and the fact that even non-communists knew its words) also points to the exceptionally high degree of continuity in local life from the pre-Fascist period.⁶⁷⁴ The anthem was often sung in private, but its performance in public – in particular if it happened after a few glasses of wine in a cheap *osteria* – could often lead to problems (and led to dozens of arrests every year).⁶⁷⁵ Even in these cases, Turinese workers who were persecuted for singing socialist and communist anthems would often highlight the superiority of France in matters of political liberty, or, in other cases, resort to the use of the French language in order not to be understood by members of the Turinese sections of the Fascist party or by policemen coming from other Italian regions (and, therefore, supposedly less exposed to French culture and less fluent in French).⁶⁷⁶ The sense of loyalty demonstrated by many Turinese people to their own symbols and to the ideals these represented would often lead to clashes with Fascist authorities, as in the case of a Vincenzo Mussa who was arrested in 1939 for wearing a red tie. He stated that he: ‘non avrebbe mai cambiato il colore della sua cravatta di cui ne teneva in casa sei esemplari e che anzi questo era il momento di indossare la cravatta rossa perchè tutti ne avevano pieni i c...’.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷⁴ RJB Bosworth, ‘Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy’, *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 14, No.1, (2005), pp. 24-5.

⁶⁷⁵ Police Reports can be found in the section DGPS of the archives of the MI at the Archivio Centrale di Stato in Rome in the folders dedicated either to the *Movimento Sovversivo* or to the *Movimento Comunista*.

⁶⁷⁶ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1936 – Busta 3E – Movimento Sovversivo Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, November 8th, 1936.

⁶⁷⁷ ACS, MI, DGPS –1939 – Busta 16 – Affari Generali Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, October 11, 1939, translated as ‘would have never changed the colour of his tie – of which he

However, Turinese people were also ready to defend personal, rather than just political, symbols from Fascist attacks. One such example was that of the wedding rings that were meant to be donated to the State in 1935 as part of *Oro alla Patria*, an event – already mentioned in the chapter on Turinese monarchism – in which married couples would receive “Fascist” iron rings in exchange for the donation of their golden wedding rings (the great limitations of this campaign have been masterfully analyzed by Paul Corner).⁶⁷⁸ Out of the many people who refused to donate their rings (or donated a fake one) a man named Carlo Bosetti was arrested for affirming that he had kept his ring because ‘la patria a me non ha dato mai niente, per me essere italiano tedesco o spagnolo è la stessa cosa: io sono dalla parte di chi mi dà a mangiare’.⁶⁷⁹

As already highlighted by Luisa Passerini, jokes and humour were also a way for the Turinese working-class to break the Fascist “language of totalitarianism”.⁶⁸⁰ Anti-fascist jokes represented a cross-class way of challenging the regime in Turin that linked intellectuals (as reported by Natalia Ginzburg in her *Lessico Familiare*) to workers (interestingly enough, often even those who were members of the Fascist party).⁶⁸¹ Examples of anti-fascist humour in working-class bars in Turin in the 1930s ranged from more or less elaborate jokes not infrequently told by members of the Fascist party or of the Fascist youth organizations (‘Il Duce è il più grande musicista d’Italia perchè contemporaneamente dirige I Pagliacci a Roma e la Boheme in Italia’)⁶⁸² to ironic comments that revealed the lack of respect for Mussolini’s figure, and in some cases even the hope that still rested with the king: ‘Una volta al fianco del

had six at home – and this was actually the right moment to wear the red tie because everyone had his b... full of all this’.

⁶⁷⁸ Paul Corner, ‘Italian Fascism: Organization, Enthusiasm, Opinion’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 15, Issue 3, (2010), pp. 378-89.

⁶⁷⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS –1936 – Busta 3E – Movimento Sovversivo Torino – September 17, 1936, translated as ‘the motherland has never given me anything, to me being Italian, German or Spanish is the same thing: I am on the side of whoever feeds me’.

⁶⁸⁰ Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*, pp. 84-93.

⁶⁸¹ Natalia Ginzburg, *Lessico Familiare*, (Milano: La Repubblica, 2003), p. 35.

⁶⁸² ACS, MI, DGPS –1933 – Sezione I – Busta 9 – Movimento Sovversivo Antifascista Torino – Report Against Francesco Foderaro from Centurion Nicola Galassi, September 14, 1933, translated as ‘The Duce is the best musician in Italy since he is simultaneously conducting I Pagliacci [the Clowns] in Rome and the Boheme in Italy’.

Re vi era la Regina, ora vi è Mussolini e si guardano in cagnesco⁶⁸³ to the drunken banter after the end of long factory shifts.⁶⁸⁴ All of these forms of humour were not tolerated by the regime, and people were persecuted for labeling the *Duce* a blockhead⁶⁸⁵, or for saying – ironically also commenting on the devaluation of the Italian Lira – ‘Franco vale una lira e una lira vale zero’⁶⁸⁶ or for claiming that it was ‘meglio servire la m---- che la patria’.⁶⁸⁷ Unfortunately, despite the many incidents that were reported in the period, the nature of the evidence is scattered, police reports are often incomplete and the sentences imposed upon anti-fascist workers are often not clear or not reported at all. This, obviously, does not allow the historian to gain a better understanding of the background of the people persecuted or to identify in which parts of the city these incidents took place most frequently. The one pattern that can be identified, however, is that the majority of the offenders were relatively young men either precariously employed or unemployed, arguably because they were both the people with more reasons to criticize the system and less to lose and because they were at the fringes of the working-class networks discussed in this chapter.⁶⁸⁸

Fascist attempts at policing intellectual and working-class networks in the 1930s, therefore, produced mixed results. If, on the one hand, the waves of mass arrests of local anti-fascist intellectuals proved effective in weakening their opposition and their strength, arrests of anti-fascist workers in the same period proved less effective as members of the local working-class kept on manifesting their dissatisfaction with the regime well into the 1940s (chiefly owing to the fact that their manifestations of anti-fascism were usually small and of an

⁶⁸³ ACS, MI, DGPS –1942 – Busta 27 – Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, January 4, 1942, translated as ‘once upon a time there was the queen beside the king, now there is Mussolini, and they look daggers at each other’.

⁶⁸⁴ ACS, MI, DGPS –1938 – Busta 29B – Movimento Comunista Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, May 12, 1938.

⁶⁸⁵ ACS, MI, DGPS –1935 – Busta 7 – Torino – Letter from the Prefetto Cesare Giovara to the Ministry of interior, November 29, 1935.

⁶⁸⁶ ACS, MI, DGPS –1942 – Busta 27 – Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, December 2, 1939 (wrongly archived), translated as ‘Franco is worth a Lira and a Lira is worth zero’.

⁶⁸⁷ ACS, MI, DGPS –1936 – Busta 3E – Movimento Sovversivo Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Minsitry of Interior, translated as ‘It is better to serve s--- than the motherland’.

⁶⁸⁸ Pattern identifiable by analyzing the evidence present in the DGPS folders of the Archivio Centrale di Stato in Rome.

improvised nature). To the regime, however, the workers' capacity to carry on fighting despite the increased repressive measures must not have come as a complete surprise: the dictatorship, in fact, had been aware of the capacity of the Turinese anti-fascist working-class networks to regenerate themselves in formal or informal ways ever since the crackdown on communist groups in 1927, as described by the *Questore* of Turin in a letter to the Ministry of the Interior detailing the activities of the local sections of the Communist Party:

I numerosi arresti eseguiti lo scorso anno in questa città, e la scoperta della sede centrale del partito giovanile comunista e della tipografia per la stampa clandestina portarono lo scompiglio nelle fila del partito e la interruzione di ogni attività. Ma a poco a poco, elementi non conosciuti vennero qui trasferiti dalla centrale del partito, altri, perché già individuati, allontanati, ed i collegamenti ripresi.

Di modo che il partito, in pochi mesi, fu nella possibilità di funzionare nuovamente, tanto è vero che non tralasciò occasione per diffondere nelle fabbriche fogli volanti commemoranti or l'uno or l'altro avvenimento, ed incitanti le masse ad agire, e specialmente ad opporsi a ogni riduzione di salario.⁶⁸⁹

The Private Dimension of Intellectual Anti-Fascism

Intellectual anti-fascism not only included public displays of opposition to the regime in university rooms and publishing houses: it also had a private dimension that the regime had to struggle with. In the case of the Turinese intellectuals, many of them criticized the regime in private gatherings in their houses. This constituted a serious blow to the social power of the regime, as it proved its inability to break resisting informal networks and to revolutionize individuals' private lives. In this case, private homes could give the Turinese intellectuals more

⁶⁸⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1928 – Busta 211 – Movimento Comunista Torino, Letter from the Questura of Turin to the Ministry of Interior, May 28th, 1928, translated as 'The many arrests that took place last year in this city, together with the discovery of the headquarters of the youth section of the Communist Party and the typography for subversive printing led to chaos in the [Communist] party and to the interruption of every activity. However, little by little, unknown elements have been transferred here from the party headquarters, whilst others, having already been identified, have been moved, and the contacts have been restored. In this way the party, in a few months, has been able to function again, so much so that it has seized every opportunity to spread flyers commemorating this or that event in the factories, aimed at inspiring the masses to act, in particular in opposition to any salary cut'.

protection than university rooms. Yet, this private dimension of intellectual anti-fascism was also less threatening for the political power of the Fascist regime: the Turinese intelligentsia, in fact, could not reach out to particularly wide audiences from private homes, and its anti-fascist message could spread much more widely when launched from the powerful platforms of university rooms and publishing houses.

Gobetti's house in Via Fabro had been one of the meeting points of the anti-fascist intellectual elite of Turin ever since his years as a student at the University in the early 1920s (years that coincided with his first steps in the publishing sector). There, people would meet, read Kant or discuss current affairs, and the house's doors would always be open to young and promising musicians and artists (the most famous among them being Felice Casorati) in order to establish contact with 'quei letterati e uomini d'arte e di cultura che sono vicini a noi per formazione intellettuale'.⁶⁹⁰ In the city, the visual arts were dominated by the *Sei di Torino* – 'the Turin six', whose name in Italian was a direct reference not only to their number, but also to their *being* real or honorary "Torinesi", such as the previously mentioned Carlo Levi, or the English painter Jessie Boswell. Their art was far from the Fascist artistic canon imposed in the 1920s by the futurists: they represented an alternative to the dominant artistic and political trends, while trying to expand the limited horizons of the people of Piedmont and Italy.⁶⁹¹ In 1923, only one year after graduating, Gobetti reunited many of his former professors for a series of lectures and seminars inside the *Mole Antonelliana*, the architectural symbol of Turin. Those lectures and seminars were given by experts on the topics of their studies or on current affairs more generally. They also attracted brilliant intellectuals from outside of Turin, as in the case of Gaetano Salvemini.⁶⁹²

⁶⁹⁰ Gobetti, *Carteggio*, Alessandrone Perona (ed.), LIV, translated as 'those writers and men of art and culture that are close to us in terms of intellectual formation'.

⁶⁹¹ For a review of the *Sei di Torino*: Istituto Piemontese per la Storia della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea, Fondo Aldo Garosci, Scritti, C-AG-55-1246, *Lionello Venturi e i sei di Torino*, Angelo D'Orsi, *La Vita Culturale e i Gruppi Intellettuali*, in Tranfaglia, Nicola (ed.), *Storia di Torino – VIII – Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1915-1945)* (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), pp. 588-90.

⁶⁹² Barbara Allason, 'Ricordo di Piero Gobetti', in Franco Antonicelli (ed.), *Trent'Anni di Storia Italiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1961), p. 131.

Gobetti's house, however, was not the only private place where the local intelligentsia could meet. Those intellectuals who would be arrested in 1935 for their roles in the organization of the Turin branch of *Giustizia e Libertà*, had all been meeting regularly since the late 1920s and early 1930s, often either in the flat of the German literature professor Barbara Allason, in the hills of Turin, or in Professor Mario Carrara's house.⁶⁹³ Meetings of groups of particularly high-profile students and professors had been a constant at the University of Turin since the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, when the house of Cesare Lombroso had become the location for an impressive number of intellectual and philosophical discussions.⁶⁹⁴ Alongside generational divides, gender ones were also overcome by the Turinese intelligentsia. In the houses just mentioned, female intellectuals like Barbara Allason, but also Amalia Guglielminetti, Sibilla Aleramo, Maria Bosio and Rina Maria Pierazzi could present their work, their ideas, and organize their campaigns (forcefully stopped by the regime between 1925 and 1926) for universal suffrage.⁶⁹⁵ As Barbara Allason wrote, intellectuals' houses became real centres 'di antifascismo: non nel senso che ci raccogliesse precisamente per "lavorare", ma quanti erano stati perseguitati o invidiati al fascismo erano certi di esservi accolti come amici'.⁶⁹⁶

It is thus evident that the Fascist regime encountered major problems in changing the private lives of those local intellectuals who resisted it. Given the small size of the Turinese intellectual networks, however, this was less of a problem than the dictatorship's inability to stop their more active public demonstrations of anti-fascism until the mid-1930s. Nevertheless, the importance of private forms of resistance to a dictatorship attempting to revolutionize society should in no way be dismissed. Self-confined and private forms of

⁶⁹³ Leone Ginzburg, 'Ricordo di Mario Carrara', pp. 414-5, Barbara Allason, *Memorie di una Antifascista, 1919-1940* (Milano: Avanti!, 1961), p. 163.

⁶⁹⁴ Angelo D'Orsi, *Allievi e Maestri: l'Università di Torino nell'Otto-Novecento* (Torino: CELID, 2002), p. 19.

⁶⁹⁵ ACS, MI – DGPS – 1925 – busta 88 – Ordine Pubblico – Torino, letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, May 6, 1925.

⁶⁹⁶ Allason, *Memorie di una Antifascista*, p. 163, translated as 'of anti-fascism: not in the sense that we met there in order to "work", but because those who were or had been persecuted by Fascism were sure to be welcomed as friends there'.

resistance were far less threatening for (and repressed by) the regime, as long as they did not overflow publicly. Yet, the regime's inability to silence private forms of opposition highlights how it is usually possible, even under a dictatorship based on violence and coercion, to preserve some form of freedom and to escape from a regime's attempts to totally control one's life.

Transnational Anti-fascism and the Role of France

The traditional Piedmontese links with France also played a crucial role in the anti-fascist resistance of local working-class and intellectual networks. Turinese intellectuals either fled to France (like Piero Gobetti or Aldo Garosci) or travelled to and from the transalpine country in order to solidify their resistance network (like Massimo Mila or the intellectuals of *Giustizia e Libertà*).⁶⁹⁷ Turinese anti-fascist intellectuals could inform expatriates of the latest movements in Italy and better organize their resistance from France, before crossing the Alps again in order to bring the orders back to Turin (clearly seen as a bridgehead into Italy by the leaders of *Giustizia e Libertà*).⁶⁹⁸ France, thus, helped strengthen the anti-fascist resistance of the Turinese intellectuals in a practical way by allowing them to carefully plan their actions from outside of Italy. However, it was the working-class anti-fascist networks in Turin that were most inspired by the policies of the French government and by the battles of the French left.

As already hinted above, resistance to the totalitarian aspirations of the regime in Turin was also made possible by the city's links to France and Switzerland and the expatriate Italian communities in those countries. The Turinese police and Fascist hierarchs were well aware of the fact that, ever since the mid-1920s, groups of dissidents – many of whom were

⁶⁹⁷ Bobbio, *La mia Italia*, p. 317.

⁶⁹⁸ ACS, MI, DGPS – UCP – FP – Busta 565 - Denuncia per l'assegnazione al confino di polizia di: Antonicelli Franco di Donato; Garosci Remo di Antonio; Levi Alberto di Giuseppe; Levi Carlo di Ettore; Muggia Giulio di Giuseppe; Pavese Cesare di Eugenio residenti a Torino e Maffi Bruno di Fabio residente a Milano; Roma, July 11th, 1935.

Piedmontese – were holding frequent meetings in the French city of Modane, little more than a hundred kilometres away from Turin.⁶⁹⁹ With the arrests of communist leaders in 1927 the links between the Turinese left-wing activists and the expatriate community became manifest again, but there was little that the Fascist state could do to counter anti-fascist activity outside the Italian borders.⁷⁰⁰ Fascist authorities were well aware of the dangers coming from abroad and of the fact that Turin was considered as a bridgehead into Italy for foreign subversives and expatriates.⁷⁰¹ International links were not only established with France: the permeability of the Franco-Swiss border created further problems for the Fascist attempts to understand and fight subversive networks abroad. As was reported in a telegram sent to the Turinese Prefetto in 1928 by the Foreign Ministry: 'la frontiera franco-basilese si presta benissimo a qualunque traffico, specialmente a quello politico perché la sorveglianza di polizia dal lato svizzero è presso che nulla ed il confine – che è aperto – facile a varcarsi'.⁷⁰² The anti-fascist struggle of many Turinese people was also sustained from beyond the borders in a variety of different ways, ranging from a number of instances in which anti-fascist graffiti was discovered on trains arriving in Turin from France, to the accounts, in left-wing newspapers published both in Switzerland and France and later smuggled back into Turin, of those strikes and protests by the Turinese workers that were not reported by the Italian newspapers.⁷⁰³

Also worthy of attention is the almost paradisiacal view of France which was widespread among the local working-class population; France was a country which Turinese

⁶⁹⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1925 – Busta 97 – Movimento Sovversivo Torino, Letter from Amigoni to the Interior Ministry, July 15, 1925.

⁷⁰⁰ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1927 – Busta 175 – Movimento Comunista Torino, Letter from the Prefetto Raffaele de Vita to the Interior Ministry, August 7, 1927.

⁷⁰¹ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1928 – Busta 211 – Movimento Comunista Torino, Nota della Divisione Polizia Politica

⁷⁰² ACS, MI, DGPS – 1928 – Busta 211 – Movimento Comunista Torino, Letter from the Foreign Ministry to the Prefetti, June 23, 1928, translated as 'the Franco-Swiss border near Basel perfectly lends itself to any traffic, especially the political one since police surveillance on the Swiss side is almost totally absent and the border – which is open – is easy to cross'.

⁷⁰³ Examples of these foreign newspapers include *Le Soleil* and *Le Petit Provençal* published in Marseilles and *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and *Libera Stampa* published in Switzerland, for an account of those strikes: Giancarlo Carcano, *Torino Antifascista: Vent'Anni di Opposizione* (Roma: ANPPIA, 1993), p. 83, and Aquarone, Alberto, *L'Organizzazione dello Stato Totalitario* (Torino: Einaudi, 1995), pp. 541-5.

people claimed to be ready to move to ‘anche in ginocchio’⁷⁰⁴ if only they were allowed. The links between Piedmont and France had always been strong, but the local working-class population seemed particularly drawn to France between 1936 and 1938, when the Popular Front French government of Léon Blum introduced new labour laws. Whilst in France people were said to be living good lives and earning solid amounts, in Italy ‘stanno ancora bene quelli che rubano’.⁷⁰⁵ French people were seen as better than the Italians, who were considered as a ‘popolo ... stupido e non sa ribellarsi ... in Italia siamo degli schiavi, nessuno parla, si tira la cinghia e tutti hanno fame’.⁷⁰⁶ However, it was not just France that was praised, but also its empire and the loyalty of the “overseas French” (to whom Libyan and Abyssinian people were compared unfavourably).⁷⁰⁷ The idealized mental images of France shared by many Turinese people, just like the complaints against party hierarchs coming from other regions and not representing true Piedmontese values, were all reflections of a civic culture that remained first and foremost linked to local, rather than to national, realities.

Other incidents in which working-class links with France manifested themselves strongly include the case of a man named Antonio Vottero Prina who, in 1936, after singing a song that celebrated the anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti told a Fascist who had commanded him to stop that ‘lo canto quell che mi pare, anche bandiera rossa, come si fa in Francia’.⁷⁰⁸ Again, in the same year, there was the case of a Domenico Bartalotto, who started singing French songs mocking the regime and was later arrested by the police.⁷⁰⁹ This event, in itself, raises a couple of issues: Bartalotto’s decision to sing in French reveals the typically Piedmontese

⁷⁰⁴ ACS, MI, DGPS –1937 – Busta 9 – Movimento Sovversivo Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, November 3, 1937, translated as ‘even on their knees’.

⁷⁰⁵ ACS, MI, DGPS –1937 – Busta 9 – Movimento Sovversivo Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, June 17, 1937, translated as ‘those who steal are still living well’.

⁷⁰⁶ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1939 – Busta 16 – Affari Generali Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, March 31, 1939, translated as ‘people ... stupid and unable to revolt ... In Italy we are slaves, nobody speaks up, we tighten our belts and everyone is hungry’.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ ACS, MI, DGPS –1936 – Busta 3E – Movimento Sovversivo Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, December 30, 1936, translated as ‘I sing whatever I want, even *bandiera rossa*, as they do in France’.

⁷⁰⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS –1936 – Busta 3E – Movimento Sovversivo Torino – Letter from the Prefetto to the Ministry of Interior, November 8, 1936.

emotional (as well as the physical) link to France, but even more interesting is the fact that Bartalotto decided to sing in French in order not to be understood by the police (according to the report, the policemen did not understand the meaning of the songs, but just their mocking nature). Unfortunately, the report was not signed, but it seems very plausible that the policemen were not originally from Piedmont – as the similarities between the local dialect and the French language would have more than likely allowed the policemen to understand the song. France and the French people, therefore, were not just seen as welcoming Italian expatriates, but were also instrumental in inspiring Turinese networks of resistance in an array of different ways.

Conclusion

The Fascist regime was aware of the challenges that Turinese networks of resistance represented for the social power of the dictatorship. The limited success that Fascism encountered in its efforts to dismantle working-class and intellectual networks in the city (throughout the 1920s and 1930s in the case of the workers, and at least until the mass arrests of 1934-5 in the case of the intelligentsia) is a demonstration of the limitations of the regime and of its inability to infiltrate a highly fragmented local society with particularly united social groups. The nature of the two networks analyzed in this chapter was evidently different: a small and united group, usually acting together, in the case of the intelligentsia, and, in the case of the local working-class, the largest social group in the city that could act as a whole during strikes but whose daily manifestations of opposition to the regime were often improvised by individuals. However, despite this, the regime often tried to initially win over, then silence, and lastly repress their dissident voices in similar ways.

Fascism tried to impose its control upon the cultural formation and development of intellectuals and workers alike. Admittedly, it did so in two distinct ways, by trying to revolutionize the educational system to allow the Italian schools to produce a new generation of Fascist intellectual leaders and by promoting recreational organizations in a bid to also indoctrinate workers in the process. These two different methods of changing the culture of the networks of resistance encountered limited success in Turin as local schools and the University of Turin were not fully fascistized and as workers, despite often making the most of their *Dopolavoro* memberships, proved remarkably difficult to indoctrinate. These two networks were then able to overcome further challenges between the late 1920s and the early 1930s, like the closure of Gobetti and Gramsci's newspapers or the imposition of the loyalty oath upon university professors in the case of the intellectuals, or the effects of the recession and of internal immigration in the case of the workers. The one challenge that affected the life of the two networks to different extents was the increasing repression of the mid-1930s: whilst this severely weakened the small group of intellectuals and their organizations, it did not damage the workers to the same extent, owing both to their number and to the improvised nature of many of their manifestations of opposition to the regime. In both cases, the networks' resistance to the dictatorship also had a private sphere: whilst this was not an insurmountable problem for the regime in its dealings with the intellectuals (who were considerably less dangerous at private gatherings in their houses than they were in university and high-school classrooms), it constituted a major problem in its relationship with the working-class, since it meant that Fascism could not change the workers' lives. Lastly, both networks benefitted extensively from their links with France: the intellectuals in a more practical way by organizing their resistance across the border together with anti-fascist expatriates, the workers in a more ideological way by being inspired by the transalpine working-class fights and by the policies of the Popular Front government.

Conclusion

After openly opposing the regime in its early stages, many Turinese social groups gave a cold shoulder to the dictatorship after it solidified its hold on power on a national level between 1925 and 1927. The vehement anti-fascist opposition of the early 1920s gave way to a quieter (although by no means less dangerous) culture of dissent for local workers and intellectuals. In other cases, traditional institutions like the House of Savoy or the Catholic Church appeared to many locals (also including many Piedmontese members of the Fascist party) as capable of defending and upholding those conservative Piedmontese values that the regime seemed to struggle to come to terms with. Whilst it is true that open opposition to the regime manifested itself far more sporadically in the late 1920s and 1930s than it did in the early 1920s, it would be a dramatic mistake to think that this meant that the city of Turin fully embraced Fascism, or that it even came to tacitly accept it. As Prefetto Raffaele de Vita noted in 1927 during an epistolary discussion on the local working-class 'Il silenzio [...] non deve darci l'illusione che questa dura condizione di cose sia da esse supinamente accolta con rassegnazione e senza rancori'.⁷¹⁰ From the late 1920s, Turinese social groups attempted to protect their heritage from Fascist attacks regardless of their socio-political background. In a way, many Turinese social groups followed a rationale similar to that of George Orwell's Winston Smith in the first part of 1984 'It was not by making yourself heard but by staying sane that you carried on the human heritage'.⁷¹¹ In Turin, the Fascist dictatorship remained very much an authoritarian one, still needing to resort to violence and mass arrests well into the 1930s, rather than a totalitarian one capable of establishing and steadily controlling consensus. Moreover, the city of Turin in itself not only acted as a limiting agent for Fascism's totalitarian ambitions, but as a

⁷¹⁰ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1927 – Busta 137 – Movimento Sovversivo Torino, Letter from the Prefetto Raffaele de Vita to the Ministry of Interior, July 28, 1927, translated as 'The silence [...] should not give us the false impression that these harsh conditions are passively accepted with apathy and with no resentment. '.

⁷¹¹ George Orwell, 1984, Part I, Chapter 2, (London: Penguin, 2000).

case-study it is a clear demonstration of how the process of totalitarization of any kind of society cannot ever be fully completed as individuals can always find ways to preserve their (however small) niches of freedom.⁷¹²

At first sight, a study entirely focused on a single city might appear narrow and self-confined. This thesis, however, has demonstrated how an urban environment can allow local resistance to a dictatorship to grow, and how a city can defend and protect traditional social groups and their values from the attempts by a central government to change local social dynamics. Moreover, a city study like this constitutes a further proof of the accuracy of Jay Winter's claim that urban environments are not "imagined communities" like Benedict Anderson's nations, but rather they constitute "experienced communities" with strong ties and a certain local culture that can often go beyond social and political divides.⁷¹³ This thesis could be criticized for not focusing sufficiently on the socio-political successes of the Fascist regime. Had that been done to a larger extent, the already large-scale project of a comprehensive study of the limiting agents for the Fascist totalitarian ambitions would have run the risk of becoming entirely unmanageable. Instead, as highlighted since the introduction, this thesis has focused on those institutions and social groups that resisted more or less openly to the pressure of the Fascist government, and Fascist successes, as in the case of the impressive displays of force on the occasion of Mussolini's visits and the *Littoriali dello Sport* of 1933, or the highly successful wave of arrests between 1934 and 1936, have been studied in comparison to – or in light of their impact on – those institutions and groups that hampered the process of fascistization of local society.

⁷¹² Riccardo Maffei, *Introduzione al Fascismo: Aspetti e Momenti del Totalitarismo Italiano*, (Brescia: La Scuola, 2010), pp. 94-7.

⁷¹³ Jay Winter, 'Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919: Capital Cities at War', in Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War – Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919, vol. I*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 4.

The Nature of Fascist Rule in Turin

The findings of this thesis clearly contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate on the nature of the Fascist dictatorship. This thesis also constitutes a study of the local and regional allegiances mentioned by both Paul Corner and Richard Bosworth as limiting agents for the totalitarian aspirations of the Fascist regime (something that Emilio Gentile in his *La Via Italiana al Totalitarismo* seems to downplay to an excessive extent).⁷¹⁴ This dissertation, however, is not just a study on Italian regionalism before the Second World War (a topic that also still needs to be further explored): throughout this work a number of potentially interesting findings for the wider study of dictatorial governments have been presented. In the first chapter, for instance, this thesis has shown how a sufficiently mighty dictatorship can come to determine the content of the political pages of major newspapers, but also how hard it is to ensure a full censorship of the press (owing to the difficulty of reducing the number of small publications and bulletins and controlling the cultural and economic pages of major newspapers). The chapters dedicated to the Catholic Church and the House of Savoy, moreover, have demonstrated how traditional institutions with no political power (or with a political power that has been considerably reduced, in the case of the monarchy) can still command the loyalty of the population and, therefore, reduce – or even rival and undermine – the popularity of a dictatorship. The section dedicated to the Holy Shroud showed how, even when a dictatorship borrows heavily from religious rituals and rhetoric (as rightfully argued by Emilio Gentile in *Il Culto del Littorio*), pre-existing religious beliefs do not vanish, nor are they necessarily weakened (on the contrary, in the case of Turin, the Catholic Church managed to mobilize an unprecedented number of people for the two expositions of the relic held in the

⁷¹⁴ RJB Bosworth, 'Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 14, No.1 (2005), pp. 37-8, R.J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy – Life Under the Dictatorship – 1915-1945*, (London: Allen Lane, 2005), Paul Corner, 'Fascist Italy in the 1930s: Popular Opinion in the Provinces', in Paul Corner (ed.), *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes: Fascism, Nazism, Communism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 134, 140, Emilio Gentile, *La Via Italiana al Totalitarismo – Il Partito e lo Stato nel Regime Fascista*, 3rd edition (Roma: Carocci, 2008), p. 311.

1930s).⁷¹⁵ Lastly, the chapter on intellectual and working-class networks has demonstrated how difficult it is for an alien government to infiltrate – let alone coerce and control – social groups with a clearly defined and hostile identity without having to resort to displays of force and violence (and how even these displays do not necessarily yield the expected results). This thesis paints Turin as a city that could not be integrated into the totalitarian project because of local peculiarities. Whilst it is true that Italy was still the country of the *cento città*, each with its own characteristics, it is undeniable that Turin probably constituted one of the least fertile terrains that Fascism could find. In order to make definitive claims about the nature of Fascist power on a national level, therefore, more city-studies like this one are still needed.

On a national level the Fascist dictatorship was, arguably, as much that of Mussolini himself as it was of the Fascist Party. The regime relied heavily on the cult of the personality of the *Duce*, with his quotes and pictures replicated innumerable times in the Italian streets and squares, and with impressively choreographed events aimed at highlighting the virtues of the dictator. Yet, in Turin, this cult of personality encountered only limited success. The dictator only visited the city three times – a number that was undoubtedly low for the fifth most populous city in Italy – and was acutely aware of his lack of popularity in the Piedmontese capital. The limits of the Mussolinian cult of personality in the city of Turin can be fundamentally ascribed to three factors: the incompatibility of the pillars of Mussolinism and Piedmontese values and traditions, the presence in the city of other people (and institutions) that commanded popular loyalty, and the scarce appeal of the palingenetic Mussolinian myth in a city that often saw no need for a spiritual rebirth.⁷¹⁶ Mussolini's aura was based on his desire to defend the values of *romanità*, on his quest to Italianize the nation's population, and on his determination to restore Italy's "place in the sun" and to turn Fascist Italy into a worthy heir to the Roman Empire. All this clashed not just with local Piedmontese values – which often

⁷¹⁵ Emilio Gentile, *Il Culto del Littorio*, (Roma: Laterza, 1993), pp. 147, 287, 301-6.

⁷¹⁶ For a discussion of the importance of the palingenetic myth in the success of Fascism: Roger Griffin, 'Pre-conditions for Fascism's Success', in Aristotle A. Kallis (ed.), *The Fascism Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 137, also in Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter, 1991), p. 208.

diverged from those of *romanità* – but also with local traditions and culture (a culture that remained fundamentally focused on the locality rather than the nation, and one that was characterized by a hint of nostalgia for the former small and protected Kingdom of Piedmont and Sardinia). In Turin, there were other personalities who enjoyed the loyalty of large sections of the population: the royal family, with its constant presence in the city, was still particularly dear to many Turinese people, the Catholic Church – personified in the figures of Cardinals Gamba and Fossati – was still very strong, and industrialist Giovanni Agnelli was highly respected – if not always loved – by locals. Moreover, the popularity of the Mussolinian myth – the myth of the “uomo della provvidenza” capable of solving age-long Italian problems, of finally unifying the country, and of leading it on the world stage – was bound to encounter limited success in a city where the most powerful local myth was that of Turin itself, of its centrality in Italian history, and of the legitimacy – as testified by the Sabaudian history – of local values. Moreover, the fact that the city had prospered long before the advent of the *Duce* also reduced the dictator’s appeal and the strength of his palingenetic message.

Turinese Institutions and Their Challenge to Fascist Social Power

Fascism’s formal political success, even in Turin, should not be underestimated (yet, one should not judge a regime’s social power based on its political strength).⁷¹⁷ The dictatorship, after all, rapidly managed to defeat organized and public political opposition. One of the things that the regime did not manage to defeat in Turin, however, was the social power enjoyed by other conservative institutions. By the late 1920s, the Catholic Church could no longer count on a political party like the Partito Popolare Italiano (whose relationship with the Vatican had been tense ever since the rise of Fascism), and even newspapers like *La Voce dell’Operaio* changed their political stance to appease the regime, but the social power enjoyed by the

⁷¹⁷ Sabino Cassese, *Lo Stato Fascista*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), p. 81.

Church in Turin still constituted a serious blow to the totalitarian ambitions of the Fascist Party. Whilst it is true that the social aims of the Catholic Church and of the Fascist Party frequently overlapped, often this was a coincidental occurrence (for instance, both hoped for a Francoist victory in Spain, opposed communism, tried to push local families to be fecund and local women to uphold traditional values, but the reasons why these positions were taken by the two institutions were radically different, as shown in the third chapter of this thesis). And when the social aims of Church and Fascism did not overlap, displays indicating the popularity of the Catholic Church (like parades, summer camps, or simply the numerical success of Catholic youth organizations) were not particularly welcome to the dictatorship. Also, Catholic piety remained a characteristic of many local Fascist party members (and hierarchs), thus undermining the position of local hardliners like the young journalists of *Vent'Anni*. The same can also be said of the monarchy, by the late 1920s stripped of most of its political power on a national level, but still an essential institution in the city from a social point of view and still commanding the loyalty of a number of locals and even of prominent Fascist party members. Moreover, the city of Turin throughout the Fascist period also remained very much a *fiefdom* of the unaligned industrialist Giovanni Agnelli: not only did his FIAT group employ tens of thousands of Turinese people, but Agnelli also owned the most widely read local newspaper (*La Stampa*) and his son Edoardo was the president of the most successful football team of the time, *Juventus FC*, capable of winning five straight league titles in the early 1930s and of becoming the first Italian sports team with a true cult following. Fascism, therefore, successfully managed to conquer the Turinese political arena, but other independent institutions – and the people who symbolized these institutions – managed to retain an impressive degree of social power.

A key concept throughout this thesis has been that of social mobilization. The capacity of non-Fascist independent institutions to mobilize not just their own forces, but often the forces of the entire city (including Fascist ones) is an issue of the utmost importance for an analysis of Fascist social power at the local level. The implications of this capacity to mobilize

are multifaceted. The ability of Catholic and monarchic groups to mobilize Fascist forces to pursue their own ends, for instance, highlights the multiple allegiances of local Fascist hierarchs like Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon (and, therefore, the idea of a Fascist party where key members, even when generally seen as staunch defenders of the regime's doctrine, had 'più di una fede nel cuore')⁷¹⁸. Simultaneously, the fact that Catholic and monarchic groups could join forces in order to bring to Turin more than a million pilgrims for each of the two expositions of the Holy Shroud is in itself a demonstration of the social power and the strength still possessed by local traditionalist institutions. Yet, openly anti-fascist networks also proved their capacity to mobilize considerable forces in the 1930s. Local Turinese intellectuals, for instance, successfully built the bridgehead into Italy for Carlo Rosselli's *Giustizia e Libertà*, and the Fascist regime had to launch a full attack – even referred to as the “Battle of Turin” – in order to defeat them. Even more than that, local working-class networks proved their strength and their ability to resist the Fascist regime in the 1930s. This ability to resist and mobilize did not just manifest itself in the workers' strikes against rising unemployment of the early 1930s or in the cold shoulder given to Mussolini during his visits to the FIAT factory, but also in the workers' capacity to defend their private sphere and to mutually help each other during particularly hard times (an example of this came, for instance, when local workers resisted the regime's attempts to institute a state-sponsored voucher system for the workers' grocery shopping because of the 'preferenza che gli operai danno agli esercenti privati, di cui sono abituali clienti, e dai quali hanno sempre ottenuto e tuttora ottengono notevoli facilitazioni nei pagamenti').⁷¹⁹

Linked to the capacity of independent institutions to mobilize their forces, and to the multiple allegiances of the local population (and even of local Fascists) is the finding that

⁷¹⁸ Risposta a “La Tribuna”, *Vent'Anni*, December 15-30, 1935, p. 11, translated as ‘more than one faith in the heart’.

⁷¹⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS – 1932 – Sez II – Busta 52 – Movimento Sovversivo Torino, Letter from the Prefetto Umberto Ricci to the Ministry of Corporations and to the Ministry of Interior, March 11, 1932, translated as ‘worker's preference for private shops, of which they are customary customers, and from which they have always obtained – and they still obtain – big facilitations in terms of payments’.

Fascism had to reach a number of compromises in order to stabilize and solidify its power in Turin. In the case of the monarchy, for example, the necessity for the regime to formally share its hold on power with Victor Emmanuel III was particularly evident in Turin, where the monarchy still had to be remembered and celebrated even during public events and displays which were centred around Fascist might (so much so that, even during Mussolini's visits, Turin was often referred to as first Sabaudian and then Fascist).⁷²⁰ Looking at local economic elites, it is possible to see how Fascism could not afford to silence the critical voice of Giovanni Agnelli and the strong positions taken by his *La Stampa* against Fascist economic reforms. Similarly, the regime also had to reach a compromise with the local Catholic Church both regarding the rivalry between Catholic and Fascist youth associations (and the use of Catholic badges and symbols by civilians) and the protection offered by local high prelates to the Turinese Jewish community after 1938. In some cases, the regime also had to reach a compromise with openly anti-Fascist intellectuals, as happened with Senator Luigi Einaudi, who was frequently allowed to oppose the dictatorship on the pages of his academic journals (*La Riforma Sociale* and *Rivista di Storia Economica*) as well as in the Senate (as on the occasion of his open disagreement with the regime's decision to attack Ethiopia in 1935).

Values, Myth, and Continuity

Throughout this thesis the idea of a set of Piedmontese values shared in large part by the local population has frequently been mentioned. These values (including, but not limited to, an impressive dedication to hard work, displays of seriousness that verged upon stubbornness, the glorification of the Risorgimento, and the nostalgic desire for the quieter past of a smaller nation), coupled with a local dialect still generally spoken by the population and considerably closer to French than to Italian, were shared to varying extents by the different social groups

⁷²⁰ 'Il Podestà Esprime al Duce la Riconoscenza di Torino', *La Stampa*, May 18, 1939.

analyzed in this thesis and constituted a basis for interaction and understanding between these various groups. A common set of Piedmontese values, therefore, made these social networks harder to infiltrate for an alien dictatorship based in Rome. Clearly, however, different networks had different identities according to the social, cultural, and political background of their members. The dynamics of the urban environment, therefore, led to the creation of a fragmented local society with a number of groups with well-established and independent identities based upon those shared values. Beginning with the chapter on the press, with its analysis of the newspapers that belonged to each of these networks, the various Turinese social groups have been represented and assessed in this thesis. This fragmented local society created a complex social jigsaw within which Fascism constantly struggled to fit. Piedmontese values, as understood at the time, were openly in contrast with Fascism, its loud parades, its ostentatious displays of strength, its coercive methods, and its cult of imperial Rome. Moreover, the fact that certain facets of Piedmontese culture were so tightly linked to French culture also highlight how some aspects of Italian history are not completely unique and, therefore, are open to a transnational approach. Regarding the links between Turin and France, it is also interesting to see how these particularly affected some of the Turinese social groups more than others (the working-class and the intellectuals above all) and how these moulded some people's mental maps in a particular way (in the case of the local working-class, for instance, individuals remained chiefly worried by local problems, but they did often draw inspiration for their fights from the developments in France, in particular under the Popular Front government).

Linked to the idea of a shared set of Piedmontese values is that of local tradition and continuity, and this is crucial for an analysis of the way in which the Fascist regime managed to change (or not) local society and its habits. Even during the most repressive years of the Fascist dictatorship, the press in Turin remained extremely lively, continuing a trend that had started in the early years of the 20th century and that contributed to make the city one of the most important cultural centres of the country. Continuity with the past was also important for the

House of Savoy and for monarchism as a whole, with the monarchist feelings of the old aristocratic elites remaining strong throughout the Fascist period (also owing to the constant presence of members of the royal family in Turin) and with their steadfast defence of the heritage of the Risorgimento and of its centrality in Italian history (something that was perceived as being threatened by the regime). In the case of the Catholic Church, century-old traditions were revived, first amongst them the cult of the Holy Shroud, and this was in open contrast with the idea of a Fascist reactionary modernism. Also anti-fascist networks relied heavily on the continuity of their traditions dating back to the liberal period: the younger generations of intellectuals felt inspired by those who had made Turin one of the main Italian cultural centres in the early 20th century and constantly honoured the inheritance of editor and journalist Piero Gobetti, whilst the working-class kept on looking back to the organizations that had contributed to unify local workers before the Fascist seizure of power and drew inspiration for their strikes against unemployment in the 1930s from the ones against bread shortages that had hit the city in 1917. In some cases, this continuity and the importance that different groups gave to tradition and its preservation contributed to the creation of local myths, like that of the centrality of the monarchy in Italian history or that of the strength and cohesiveness of the local working-class, and this could often push sections of the Turinese society to resist (to varying extents) a regime that could be seen as either challenging, disregarding, or openly opposing these myths. Above all, as this thesis has shown, Turin remained a complex site of fragmented rejections of the regime.

Appendix

1. Ring, 'Redazioni', *Vent'Anni*, March 1, 1935, p. 7:

Material removed for copyright reasons

2. Results of the 1946 Referendum in the Piedmontese Provinces

Material removed for copyright reasons

3. The Holy Shroud is shown to the pilgrims gathered in the churchyard one last time before being sealed again in 1933

Material removed for copyright reasons

4. The poster for the exposition of 1931

The dome of the Chapel of the Shroud is in the foreground, whilst the skyline of the city is dominated by the Mole Antonelliana and, in the distance, it is possible to see the Basilica di Superga

Material removed for copyright reasons

5. The poster for the exposition of 1933

Material removed for copyright reasons

6. Commercial from the Chain of Shops "Alla Moda Italiana" during the 1933 Exposition of the Shroud

Material removed for copyright reasons

7. Mussolini addressing the crowd at FIAT Mirafiori on May 14th 1939

Material removed for copyright reasons

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