Italian Senate

Handbook
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I. Rules of Procedure

A. General Rules

Rule 1: Scope

The Rules of Procedure of Koç University Model United Nations Conference (hereinafter referred to as “KUMUN” or “the Conference”) as they are provided in this document are applicable to the Italian Senate simulation of KUMUN 2016. Bound by the general principles of KUMUN and the Rules of Procedure for the Italian Senate, Secretary-General may prior to the conference issue special rules of procedure for any committee hosted. The Secretariat may also publish procedural handbooks for committees, which enjoy the same status of special rules. All rules are self-sufficient, except for modifications made by the Secretariat. Any modification will be announced by the Committee Board members or designated members of the Secretariat, and will be effective as soon as announced.

If a situation arises that is not addressed in neither these Rules of Procedure and special rules nor any of the fundamental procedural documents, the Committee Board Members will have final authority upon the matter, being bound by the general principles of KUMUN.

Rule 2: Arbitration

Interpretation of the rules shall be reserved exclusively to the Secretary-General or designated members of the Secretariat. Such interpretation shall be in accordance with the philosophy and principles of KUMUN and the body simulated, and in furtherance of the mission of KUMUN.

Rule 3: Language

English is the official written, spoken and working language of the conference.

Rule 4: Credentials

The credentials of all senators and other members have been accepted upon registration. Actions related to the modification of rights, privileges, or credentials of any member may not be initiated without the written consent of the Secretary-
General. Any representative whose admission raises an objection by another member will provisionally be seated with the same rights as other representatives, pending a decision from the Secretary-General.

Rule 5: Courtesy

Senators shall show courtesy and respect to other participants, Committee Board Members and the Secretariat, and show outstanding behavior towards the hosts. Either designated members of the Secretariat or Committee Board Members will immediately call to order any senator who fails to comply with this rule.

Rule 6: Dress Code

The official dress code of the conference is western business attire. The senators are allowed to dress in national or traditional attire only with permission from the Secretariat.

Rule 7: Electronics

Since this committee is a historical one, usage of electronic devices is strictly forbidden during the all committee proceedings, including unmoderated caucuses.

B. Committee Rules

Rule 8: General Powers of the Committee Directors

The Committee staff consists of the President and Vice-President of the Senate and responsible for managing the debates, they also have a voting right, and can contribute to the official debates. Committee Directors are responsible for the moderation of the committee with the powers granted to them by these rules.

In addition to exercising the powers conferred upon them elsewhere by these rules, the Board shall declare the opening and closure of the Committee sessions, direct the discussions, ensure the observance of the current Rules of Procedure, accord the right to speak, put motions to vote and announce decisions. The Board, subject to the current Rules of Procedure, shall have complete control of the Committee proceedings and over the maintenance of order at its meetings.
Committee Board also has the right to interrupt the Committee proceedings in order to make a presentation, or to bring in a guest speaker or an senator witness. Directors may transfer their duties to other members of the Board or members of the Secretariat. In the exercise of these functions, Committee Board will be at all times subject to these rules and the philosophy of the conference whilst being accountable to the Secretary-General.

Rule 9: Committee Staff

The Committee staff consists of the President and Vice-President of the Senate and responsible for managing the debates, they also have a voting right, and can contribute to the official debates. Also the Committee Staff shall include the Academic Team responsible namely, Under-Secretary-General responsible and Assistant Under-Secretary-General responsible for the Italian Senate.

Rule 10: Members

The committee shall consist of Senators as representatives of certain provinces of the Kingdom of Italy, and a President and Vice-President as the committee board.

Rule 11: Quorum

Quorum denotes the minimum number of senators needed to be present in order to start a session. Quorum is met if at least 1/3 of the registered senators are present in the committee. In case of a problem due to coherent reasons, the Committee Board shall make appropriate decisions to better the flow of the debate after informing the responsible Secretariat member(s).

Presence of one-third of the Senators is required for any decision on a substantive motion.

Committee Board should declare a committee session open by stating “Senate convened.” if the Quorum is met. Quorum will be assumed to be present unless specifically challenged and shown to be absent by a roll call during sessions, while it needs to be verified in the beginning of each session.

Rule 12: Appeal
An senator can appeal only against procedural matters unless it is explicitly specified as non-appealable by the current Rules of Procedure. Senators can only appeal a ruling immediately after it has been made. The Director may speak briefly in defence of the ruling. The appeal shall then be put to a procedural vote, and the decision of the Committee Director shall stand unless overruled by at least two-thirds of the senators present. A “Yes” vote indicates support of the Committee Director’s ruling whilst a “No” vote indicates opposition to that ruling.

**Rule 13: Communication**

During committee proceedings Senators may engage in communication via message papers to be delivered by the Administrative Staff.

Communication can only be in English, no other language is allowed.

Communication can be between Senators, Senators and Committee board, and between Committee board members.

No direct communication with Secretariat is allowed.

**C. Rules Governing the Agenda**

**Rule 14: Attendance**

At the beginning of each session, Committee Board will call on senators in an order decided explicitly by them, which is called the “roll call” procedure, and the senators are expected to indicate their status of presence as “present”.

**Rule 15: Agenda**

Senators are entitled to discuss issues on: constitutional affairs, home affairs, judiciary, foreign affairs and immigration, defense, economic planning, finance and treasury, education, cultural property, scientific research, agriculture, trade, industry, tourism, labor and social security, and health. Yet, the ultimate decision maker on these issues is the King, and his representative the Prime Minister. They have the veto power at all times. Italian Senate has open agenda and therefore, shall not set an agenda but entertain any information coming from the Committee Staff.
Rule 16: Oaths

At the beginning of the first session of KUMUN 2016 all senators have to take the following oath:

“I, as the senator from the region...as the President of the Senate/as the Vice-President of the Senate, pledge upon my honor to be loyal to the King, to loyally observe the Statute and the laws of the State, and to exercise their functions with the sole aim of the inseparable good of the King and of the nation.”

D. Rules Governing Debate

Rule 17: Debate

After the declaration of the start of Senate session, committee shall move on with the Opening Speeches and then with the following types of debate, which require simple majority of the committee to pass. Italian Senate will not have the General Speaker’s List:

i. *Moderated Caucus* – In this caucus, the members of the Italian Senate will be expected to engage in a formal debate on a particular issue for a specified period of time. In this form of debate, the senators are not permitted to cross talk and must only enter the discussion when the President and Vice-President of the Senate recognize them.

ii. *Unmoderated Caucus* - This caucus will allow the senators to lobby with each other in an informal manner. More importantly, members should use the unmoderated caucus to draft any documents that are required for the committee. Unmoderated caucuses have a specified time limit.

iii. *Private Sittings* - All the sittings of the Senate are in public. On extra-ordinary circumstances such as matters regarding the national sovereignty, defense, and wartime decisions if the 1/10th of the Senate submits a written request to the President, the Senate may convey a Private sitting.

There is no maximum time limit for the caucuses. However, the Committee Board has the right to alter the time of a caucus if they deem necessary.
When the time allocated for an unmoderated caucus, motions for extensions shall be in order. Motion for an extension shall be given right after a caucus has lapsed.

The extension shall never exceed the time determined for the original caucus.

Committee Board has the right to terminate a caucus and this decision is non-appealable.

Rule 18: Suspension and Adjournment of the Debate

Suspension of the meeting means postponement of all Committee functions until the next session, whereas adjournment of the meeting means the postponement of all Committee functions for the duration of the Conference.

An senator may raise a motion to suspend the meeting when the floor is open. The Committee Board can overrule this motion, and cannot be appealed. If any such motion is entertained, the house will vote on the motion immediately, without entertaining any for or against speeches. A simple majority is required to suspend the meeting. If the motion is approved Committee Board shall declare “Senate suspended” before suspending the session.

An senator may raise a motion to adjourn the meeting only after there is no the next session, whereas adjournment of the meeting means the postponement of all Committee functions for the duration of the Conference. Committee Board can overrule this motion, and cannot be appealed. If any such motion is entertained, the house will vote on the motion immediately, without entertaining any for or against speeches. A simple majority is required to suspend the meeting. The Committee Board can overrule this motion and cannot be appealed. A motion to adjourn the meeting shall be overruled before two-thirds of the conference duration expires. If any such motion is entertained, the house will vote on the motion immediately, without entertaining any for or against speeches. A simple majority is required to adjourn the meeting. If the motion is approved, Committee Board shall declare “Senate adjourned” before ending the last session of KUMUN 2016.
E. Rules Governing Speeches

Rule 19: Speeches

No senator may address a committee without having previously obtained the permission of the Committee Board.

The Committee Board may call a speaker to order if his or her remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion, or are offensive to committee members or the Secretariat, with issues of personal offence or infringement of sovereignty of a member states under the responsibility of the senator.

Senators should stick to the time limit of speeches. The Committee Board can interrupt the speaker if he/she exceeds the time limit.

F. Rules Governing Points

Rule 20: Point of Personal Privilege

A Senator may raise a Point of Personal Privilege whenever there is something that hinders the participation of the Senator to the Committee and request that discomfort to be corrected.

Rule 21: Point of Order

A Senator may raise a Point of Order if there is improperness in the implementation of the parliamentary procedure. An Senator may not, in rising to a Point of Order, speak on the substance of the matter under discussion. The Point of Order will be decided upon by the Committee Board in accordance with the current rules.

Rule 22: Point of Parliamentary Inquiry

An Senator may raise a Point of Parliamentary Inquiry, if the senator has a question regarding the parliamentary procedure. The Committee Director will answer it according to the present rules of procedure. Questions regarding issues other than parliamentary procedure should not be asked by raising a Point of Parliamentary Inquiry, rather a note should be sent to the Committee Board.

Rule 23: Point of Information
A Senator may raise a Point of Information directed to the Board, if the Senator has a question regarding the agenda item or the debate proceedings.

Point of information directed to the previous speaker indicates a request from the previous speaker to clarify a specific point in his/her speech. This point shall be raised immediately after the speech has been made. The Committee Board may overrule such a point.

**Rule 24: Raising Points**

When the floor is open, a senator wishing to raise a point should raise his/her placard and say “Point” so as for the Committee Board to prioritize the point over motions. In case of a point of order, the senator should raise his/her placard and say “Point of Order” as soon as the improper implementation is made.

Senator should keep raising his/her placard until recognized by the Board. After the senator is recognized to explain his/her point, s/he should stand up and make a brief explanation of his/her point. The explanation may not become a speech defending the point; it should be limited to the content of the point.

**G. Rules Governing Committee Document**

**Rule 25: Bills**

A bill is the draft of a proposed law presented to the Senate for discussion.

Before beginning the debate on individual sections of a bill, any Senator may raise a motion to move that the section be not debated. This motion requires Simple Majority to pass. Any Bill that has passed from the Chamber of Deputies shall be introduced in the Senate, and voted upon.

In order a bill to pass it requires the approval of the Chamber of Deputies, and the King, if King is not available Prime Minister’s consent is necessary.

Two-thirds majority is needed to pass a bill.

**Rule 26: Opinions**
Opinions is a form of document that is specifically asked to be prepared on two occasions:

*Type 1*- President may request an Opinion on the bills.

*Type 2*- Senators may ask opinions from the Chamber of Deputies under extra-ordinary circumstances. Type 1 is not open for vote. Type 2 requires simple majority to pass.

**Rule 27: Recommendations**

Recommendations are the document that enlists the action plan for a certain crisis situation. These recommendations go directly to the Prime Minister, and simple majority is required to pass a recommendation.

**Rule 28: Minority Reports**

Minority reports are documents that give detailed information about minorities within the Kingdom of Italy. These reports shall be submitted at any time. Introduction of these reports requires simply majority to pass.

**Rule 29: Statements**

Members can ask a Statement from the government regarding a specific topic. This motion requires two-thirds majority of the Senate, plus the vote of the President.

**Rule 30: Introduction of Documents**

Introduction motion is granted when special signatory numbers are met and the document is approved by the Committee Board. Board’s decision not to approve a draft report is never appealable.

**Rule 31: Discussion of a Document**

Once a substantive document is approved by the Committee Board and distributed, it has to be introduced by a motion in order to be addressed as a draft report. Simple majority is required for the documents to be introduced. Committee Board, time permitting, may read the document or ask the Senator who raised the motion to
introduce that document to read it out. More than one document may be on the floor at any time.

Rule 32: Adoption of a Document

Document shall be voted upon after the Motion to Move to Vote on <document name> is approved. Majority required for each document is specified in Rules between 25 and 29.

If this motion passes debate will be temporarily suspended for voting. After the adoption of the document, the debate will proceed.

H. Rules Governing Voting Procedures

Rule 33: Procedural Voting

Each member of the Committee shall have one vote on procedural motions.

All formal votes shall happen by a show of placards, unless a motion for a roll call vote is accepted.

Formal voting on any matter other than passing draft reports are considered procedural.

Each senator, including observers, must vote on all procedural motions.

Rule 34: Substantive Voting

Substantive voting on a document thereof will be taken among Senators.

Substantive voting refers to voting on any document, or a portion of a document divided out by motion (division of the question).

Voting rights shall only be accorded to senators; each senator shall carry one vote unless otherwise is stated. Each senator can move to either vote in favor, against or abstain from voting. In cases where the House is divided by a motion, each member can vote in favor or against, without a possibility to abstain from voting.

Abstaining senators are not considered to be voting and are not counted in the consideration of the outcome of the vote.
When committee moves into formal substantive voting, the chambers of the Committee shall be closed and note passing shall be suspended. After the debate on an agenda item is closed, all points and motions other than the following shall be considered out of order:

i. Motion to Move to the Voting Procedure  
ii. Motion to Vote by Secret Ballot  
iii. Motion to Divide the Question  
iv. Motion to Divide the House  
v. Motion to Vote by Acclamation  
vi. Motion for a Roll Call Vote  
vii. Point of Personal Privilege  
viii. Point of Parliamentary Inquiry  
ix. Point of Order

After the committee moves to the voting procedure of a draft report, no motions shall be entertained whereas Senators may raise points only related to the voting procedure.

**Rule 35: Roll Call Voting**

Before the substantive voting on a draft report, a senator may move to motion for a Roll Call vote. During a Roll Call vote, the Director shall call upon all senators present in that session in English Alphabetical order, where “present” refers collectively to all Senators participating in that session, regardless of their statuses of presence.

In the first sequence, Senators may vote in favor, against, abstain or pass. Senators who “passed” in the first sequence shall either vote in favor or against in the second sequence, with the possibility to vote with rights and without the possibility to abstain from voting.

**Rule 36: Dividing the House**

Immediately after the closure of the debate, a motion to divide the House may be introduced. This motion requires two-thirds majority. If the motion passes,
abstentions on that document will be ruled out of order; meaning that each member
will only have the right to either vote in favor or against, unattached to their status
during the roll call.

**Rule 37: Dividing the Question**

Before the substantive voting on a document, a Senator may move to motion to
divide the Question. Division of the Question means that before the final vote on the
document, it is divided into some parts to be voted separately. Document may be
divided so that each of its operative clauses will be voted upon separately, or the
division may group the clauses into two or more.

Preambulatory clauses and subclauses of the operative clauses are not subject to
such a division. If there are calls for multiple divisions, those shall be voted upon in
an order to be set by the Director where the most radical division will be voted upon
first.

If the motion receives the simple majority required to pass in the substantive voting,
the document will be divided accordingly, and a separate substantive vote will be
taken on each divided part to determine whether or not it is included in the final
draft.

Parts of the document that are subsequently passed will be recombined into a final
document and will be put to a substantive vote in the case of a document. If all of
the operative parts of a document are rejected, the proposal will be considered to
have been rejected as a whole.

For purposes of this rule, ‘most radical division’ means the division that will remove
the greatest substance from the draft report, but not necessarily the one that will
remove the most words or clauses.

**Rule 38: Voting by Secret Ballot**

This voting method shall be adopted if 20 senators are in favor of such voting. If
motion is accepted, all Senators shall write their vote to a paper and the Board shall
declare the result when the voting is final.
Members shall keep in mind that bills cannot be voted by secret ballot.

I. Special Provisions

Rule 39: Special Committee

Senate may decide establishing a Special Committee upon the approval of the President. The members of this committee shall designated by the Senators. The committee shall be directly accountable to the Senate of the Kingdom of Italy. Establishment of such committee shall be subject to the proposal of the 1/5th of the appointed members. Final vote on the Special Committee shall require a simple majority and President of the Senate shall have a veto right over the action.

Rule 40: Fact Finding Inquiries

Senators may propose establishment of a mission for Fact Finding Inquiry. With this action, either details of the person or details of the actions by other entities should be specified. The approval of that mission requires two-thirds majority.

Rule 41: Impeachment Procedure

With the order of the King any member of the Senate, Chamber of Deputies or the Government can be charged with high treason. With this order, Senate will immediately suspend debates and will start to serve as the High Court. Within the procedure of the High Court, person charged has to deliver his testimony and after deliberation period determined by the Committee Board, Board will declare the adjournment of the Court and Senate will immediately move to vote on the impeachment. If the Senate reaches two-thirds majority in favor of impeachment, person charged will be transferred to Constitutional Court for decision on merits.

Rule 42: Precedence of Points and Motions

Points are always considered prior to motions in the following order of preference:

i. Point of Personal Privilege
ii. Point of Order
iii. Point of Parliamentary Inquiry
iv. Point of Information
Motions will be considered in the following order of preference:

When discussing an agenda item:

i. Extension (of previous caucus)
ii. Suspension of the Meeting
iii. Motion to Move to Vote
iv. Private Sitting
v. Moderated Caucus
vi. Unmoderated Caucus
vii. Introduction of a Document

After the debate has been temporarily suspended and the Committee has not moved to the voting procedure:

i. Vote by Secret Ballot
ii. Division of the House
iii. Division of the Question
iv. Roll Call Vote
v. Moving to the Voting Procedure

II. Further Readings


During Mussolini’s regime, Italian society, contrary to appearances, was a very depoliticized society. The organizations of the regime mobilized great masses of people, and the towns of every region in Italy were frequently packed with crowds extolling the Duce. But if by 'political' we mean active participation in community life, information about facts and the comparison of ideas, we have to recognize that society in Mussolini’s day was the very opposite of a politicized society. The masses nearly always took part in political demonstrations as if in a ritual, circulation of news and information was always controlled by censorship, and any comparison of ideas was extremely limited, even within the Fascist Party.

This article explores the intense debate sparked in Italy by the public broadcast in 1994 of a documentary called Combat Film, featuring footage taken by American soldiers in the closing stages of World War II, including at Milan's Piazzale Loreto the day after Mussolini’s execution. The footage of Mussolini's bloodied and disfigured corpse lying alongside that of his mistress served as a jarring history lesson for a new generation of Italians. The controversy and public soul-searching sparked by the documentary—presented as it was, when it was—reflect the dynamics of remembering the legacy of fascism and antifascism at the end of the Cold War.

3. Video 1: Documentary of Mussolini

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L--tlaau9o4

4. Video 2: Fascism in Italy

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDBOyhNn0sg

III. Important Reminders

• Please be aware of the fact that committee starts from January, 1932. And during these 4 days, there will be many time lapses. This time lapses will come in the format of crisis.

• After allocations are finalized, some information regarding your position will be sent to you. Please study those material along with the study guide provided.

• Since the Rules of Procedure of this committee is slightly different than the general MUN committees, please study the Rules of Procedure carefully as well.

• The participants of this committee will represent a province of Italy.

• The participants of this committee called as “e.g. the Senator of Venezia”. Committee Directors will be President and Vice-President of the Senate.
• During these 4 days, your characters may be altered according to crisis, please be prepared.
The Cult of the Duce in Mussolini's Italy
Author(s): Piero Melograni
Source: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Special Issue: Theories of Fascism (Oct., 1976), pp. 221-237
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During Mussolini's regime, Italian society, contrary to appearances, was a very depoliticized society. The organizations of the regime mobilized great masses of people, and the towns of every region in Italy were frequently packed with crowds extolling the Duce. But if by 'political' we mean active participation in community life, information about facts and the comparison of ideas, we have to recognize that society in Mussolini's day was the very opposite of a politicized society. The masses nearly always took part in political demonstrations as if in a ritual, circulation of news and information was always controlled by censorship, and any comparison of ideas was extremely limited, even within the Fascist Party.

The Fascist Party did not contribute towards framing a policy: it confined itself to carrying out the directives that came from above, supporting the regime's propaganda and assistance activities, and incorporating its political following. In 1939, out of a population of 44 million, the Party and its dependent organizations distributed a total of 21,600,000 membership cards. But in fact the tendency to regiment the whole population and, the consequent absence of selection among registered members contributed to making the organizations rigid and thereby suppressed political debate. Mussolini made little use of the Party for purposes of government. Instead he used the State with its great bureaucratic apparatus. Above all, he used the prefects, who were State officials dependent on the Ministry of the Interior, charged with representing the central government in the various provinces of the realm. They had been in existence ever since the earliest years of the Kingdom of Italy, and had always
had considerable powers even under the democratic-liberal
governments.

After the advent of Mussolini their powers became even greater.
The document in which Mussolini codified the relation between State
and Party was a circular to the prefects, and was issued on 5 January
1927. In it he laid down that all citizens, and primarily the Fascists,
should obey the prefect of the province; that the prefect controlled
the Party and had the power to remove undesirable elements from
the fascist organizations; and that among the undesirables were
included those who were ‘infected with politicizing contagion.’
In many places of work and in the headquarters of the Fascist
organizations notices were put up saying: ‘Here one does not talk
about politics or high strategy. Here one works.’

There are several explanations for the depoliticization of the regime.
Firstly, it fitted in well with Mussolini’s intentions. He aimed to
exercise with the greatest possible freedom and with considerable
impartiality the role of mediator. His whole activity in government
represented a constant compromise between the various forces and
institutions that continued to function under his regime – the
monarchy, the army, the Catholic Church, the State bureaucracy,
big business, the landowners, the banks, the fascist syndicates, certain
party groups, and so on. It was a work of mediation and adaptation
which necessarily involved the relegation of great theoretical principles.
Secondly, depoliticization corresponded to an attitude of repugnance
for politics which was especially widespread among the middle classes
who constituted the main nucleus of the regime. Moderate-minded
people who were in the habit of saying that politics was a dirty business
had the illusion that they had at last embarked on a road which would
rid them of that incubus. Thirdly, depoliticization was made possible
by the absence of an organized opposition. With the advent of the
regime the free press had been suppressed, the Opposition deputies’
term of office was ended, and non-Fascist parties and trade unions
were dissolved. Up to 1943 the clandestine anti-Fascist organizations
kept together only small groups of conspirators. In 1934 the
Communist Party had barely 2,400 members, and it was by far the
largest such organization. Thousands of Italians dissented in silence,
refusing in some cases to enrol in the Fascist Party, and occasionally
making an open protest, thereby risking jail. However, until the second
world war discreet murmurings and protests never succeeded in
becoming organized. They remained a political fact of limited
relevance. There was no opposition which was strong enough to make
a political confrontation necessary.

The regime, in short, did not find its unifying element in a movement governed by ideals or in the existence of an internal enemy. Sometimes an outside enemy acted as a cohesive factor, and this happened, for instance, in 1935-36 at the time of the economic sanctions imposed by the League of Nations. But the fulcrum of the regime, its permanent plebiscitary element, was represented simply and solely by the cult of the Duce. The organizational energies of the regime were permanently mobilized around the exercise of this cult; millions of Italians deified the Duce. There is however one comment to be made in this connection: the masses who deified Mussolini did not necessarily accept the fascist ideology. Indeed, many who extolled in Mussolini the man sent by Providence, the saviour of the country, regarded the fascist movement with suspicion. They contrasted Mussolini's honesty and moderation with the corruption and extremism of certain fascist circles. They attributed Italy's misfortunes to those who acted without the knowledge of the Duce. At the same time others who had formerly fought in the fascist squads and who still continued to profess their faith in fascism criticized Mussolini harshly, regarding him as a man addicted to compromise who was betraying the principles and programme of the movement.

Mussolinianism and fascism were not identical. Indeed it is no paradox to say that in Italy it was Mussolinianism, not fascism, that won allegiance. Many of its opponents during the years of the regime were aware of the difference that existed between Mussolinianism and fascism: the subject was referred to in several articles which appeared in Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà, published in Paris between 1932 and 1935 under the editorship of Carlo Rosselli, the political anti-fascist who was murdered by fascists in 1937. In the March 1932 issue, for example, Carlo Levi, who later wrote Cristo si è fermato a Eboli, stated quite clearly that the early fascism had exhausted itself with the assumption of power, giving place to Mussolinianism. In the December issue of that year Andrea Caffi (an intellectual who had taken part — alongside the Mensheviks — in the Russian revolution of 1905) declared that 'some good seeds' could have been revived in the fascist movement if it had not been suffocated by the lies and abject servility of Mussolinianism. Some years later, in the weekly Giustizia e Libertà (21 July 1939), a contributor who signed himself 'Eritreo' perceptively illustrated the depoliticization of the regime and the role of Mussolinianism:
The strength of fascism lies in the lack of fascists. This may seem a paradox, but in effect it is not . . . Italians all have the membership card, but this does not imply that they are fascists . . . In admitting all the Italians into the Party, fascism has killed anti-fascism and fascism; in eliminating political strife it has also eliminated any possibility of fascist revolution . . . The slogan of the [fascist] local groups, Mussolini ha sempre ragione (Mussolini is always right), recalls the principle of ‘The King can do no wrong,' and is logically translated into the principle of the irresponsibility of the head of the State, an irresponsibility which however permits its apolitical character.

It is only by bearing in mind the depoliticization of the Mussolinian regime and the contrast existing between Mussolinianism and fascism that we can understand the problems connected with the cult of the Duce and, more generally, with the nature of the regime. Two other debatable questions, the consensus achieved by Mussolini, and the new leading class which Mussolini succeeded in creating or failed to create, can also be profitably examined.

Briefly, the consensus was widespread but superficial. This statement is convincing except for the ‘but,’ for which there is no reason. For the logic of the Mussolinian system in fact demanded that consensus should be superficial. A profound consensus could only arise from a politically very active party (which the Fascist Party certainly was not) and from an ideal involvement capable of arousing powerful passions (an involvement which would have been in sharp contrast with depoliticization). A profound consensus, moreover, would have been a consensus full of ferments and oscillations and difficult to control. It would have aroused great expectations to which the regime would not have been in a position to respond. It would have demanded a high price and would have prevented Mussolini from governing by means of the continual compromises and adaptations to which reference has been made. Mussolini obtained what it was possible to obtain in the Italy of the day by a kind of religious mobilization based on faith: it is no mere chance that when speaking of the ‘cult’ of the Duce we are using a word taken from the vocabulary of religion, not of politics.

The problem of the ruling class can be posed in similar terms. Mussolini, it is usually said, governed Italy for twenty years ‘but’ did not create a fascist ruling class. The fact is that Mussolini did not want to create such a class. And he did not want to create it because the regime presupposed depoliticization, compromise, the prevalence of the State over the Party, the utilization of the State bureaucracy: because a fascist ruling class would have ended by diminishing the role of the leader. No man of the regime was to put
him in the shade. No one should appear as his possible successor. In 1934 another opponent of the regime, Leone Ginzburg, who ten years later was to die in prison, wrote that Mussolini was certain of the fact that his creation would not survive him. Therefore, Ginzburg said, Mussolini was ‘completely indifferent to the rise of a political class, indeed he was hostile to anyone who attracted popular sympathies to himself: the problem of the succession was perhaps becoming more disquieting for the fascists than for the enemies of the regime.’3

Anyone wanting to study the origins of the Mussolini myth must go back to the years in which the future leader of fascism was still a prominent leader of socialism. Among Italian socialists, in fact, Mussolini could command attention by fascinating the crowd. He was one of the foremost national leaders, and acquired great popularity as a journalist and editor of the Socialist Party daily, Avanti! A companion of his wrote that he was ‘the revolutionary leader, the Benjamin of the rejuvenated socialist ranks, the excubitur dormantium, the electrifier of the party, the renovator of Avanti!’4

Then, in 1914, Mussolini abandoned the socialists to join the ranks of interventionists who favoured Italy’s entry into the war, and his political career went into a partial and temporary decline. Some interventionist circles at once tried to give fresh fuel to the prestige of the political figure who had come over to their side. In October 1916 Bissolati, then a minister, exerted himself to prevent Corporal Mussolini’s risking his life at the Front: ‘We have need now of his kind of energy, and we shall need it more after the war. . . . In him we are saving a sword, a sword for Italy to wield against internal foes.’5

During the war, however, and also in the immediate post-war period Mussolini remained a political figure of second rank. The crisis of his political career lasted with ups and downs until 1920. But in 1921 the crisis ended. He made a triumphant entry into the Chamber of Deputies. The old liberal ruling class found it opportune to ally themselves with him and with the fascist movement in an attempt to gain fresh vigour. They had the illusion that they could make use of fascism. Instead, of course, Mussolini made use of them. In 1922 Mussolini became Prime Minister, when he was only 39 years old and was thus the youngest Prime Minister in the history of Italy.

After assuming power Mussolini at once took pains to consolidate his prestige, to impress the popular imagination and further the establishment of a legend. From the earliest days he showed that he
had the qualities of a considerable stage-manager and actor. He was a completely different personality from the Prime Ministers who had preceded him. He was a daring driver of racing cars and flew in the little rickety aeroplanes of the day. He travelled all over Italy ceaselessly exercising his seductive powers as an orator: he boasted of his proletarian origins, and in fact no Prime Minister of Italy before (or after) him came of such humble birth. The ex-socialist extolled religion, the fatherland, and Rome's mission in the world. He imposed a spectacular choreography upon public ceremonies. On 29 October 1923, he took part in a procession in Bologna, in which his car was preceded by a troop of mounted trumpeters who played the triumphal march from *Aida*.

For some time the Mussolinian propaganda apparatus made use of fairly limited and crude methods. But to estimate their effectiveness one must bear in mind the conditions in Italy in those years. In 1921 nearly 30 per cent of the population was illiterate and a great number were semi-literate. Some 56 per cent of the working population was still employed in agriculture. The per capita income was very low and taken as a whole, especially in the Southern regions, Italy was still a poor society. Political life necessarily reflected this backwardness. Universal male suffrage had been introduced only in 1913. The parties were organized with few officials and modest funds. Radio, television and talking movies did not exist, and propaganda was carried out chiefly through the classic method of the press. Mussolini knew this method well, given his long experience as a journalist. One of his first actions in government was to give more power to the Prime Minister's press office, with the aim of exercising an ever-increasing influence on the news media. At the same time he took measures to make life for the opposition newspapers difficult. In July 1923 he issued a decree which virtually subjected the whole press to his arbitration. Under a very broad formula the prefects were authorized to warn any papers that incited 'to class hatred or to disobedience of the laws and orders of the authorities.' Two consecutive warnings in a year meant that the paper was closed down. But Mussolini did not immediately make use of all his powers: for some time opposition newspapers and parties continued to be tolerated.

It must also be remembered that in the second half of 1924, during the most acute phase of the Matteotti crisis, Mussolini's power was seriously threatened. The Socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti was killed by fascists on 10 June 1924. Many people considered that Mussolini bore some responsibility for the crime, leading to so much
disquiet that many members left the Fascist Party during the second half of 1924. Some of the more moderate governmental deputies hastened to reach agreement with the Opposition parties in order to eliminate Mussolini. The leaders of the extremist fascist wing invoked the use of strong-arm methods and tried to win over Mussolini to their standpoint, threatening him with death if he refused. Thus, there was no cult of the Duce during the Matteotti crisis.

The cult of the Duce, in the forms and with the aims that were outlined earlier in this article, only really became established from 1925-26 onwards. It was at that point that the cult began to expand unchecked, after the Matteotti crisis had been overcome, the regime established, the opposition forces liquidated, and after fascist extremism had been stifled. Propagandist inflation of Mussolini's actions and speeches then began to be continuous and pervasive. All the papers were obliged to give prominent place to the Duce's articles and speeches; typesetters had to print the word 'DUCE' in capital letters. On the walls of thousands of buildings Mussolini's historic slogans were painted in indelible black varnish — such phrases as 'We shall shoot straight' or 'The plough traces the furrow, but the sword defends it.' The observant tourist can still make out these writings on buildings in many suburbs despite the intervening years and attempts to whitewash them.

In building up his image Mussolini was influenced by certain well-known political writers and thinkers, among them Vilfredo Pareto and Roberto Michels. He was particularly impressed by the French writer Gustave Le Bon, author of *Psychologie des foules* (Paris 1865). Mussolini regarded Le Bon as one of the men who had most honoured humanity and one of his greatest masters: 'I have read all Le Bon's works' he said in 1926, 'and I do not know how many times I have re-read his *Psychologie des foules*. It is a major work, and one to which I often return.' In the book, so much appreciated by Mussolini, Le Bon had written that crowds do not love kindly masters, but love tyrants who oppress them: they trample down despots only when those despots have lost their strength and no longer inspire fear. According to Le Bon, the type of hero which attracts the crowd must always have the attributes of a Caesar: his panache must be seductive (and Mussolini took this advice literally, as many photographs bear witness), his authority must command respect, and his sabre must inspire fear. Crowds, according to Le Bon, have conservative instincts, a fetish-like respect for traditions, and an unconscious horror of novelties that could change their way of life. They are not influenced
by reason, and their arguments are always of an inferior order. To convince them one must pretend to share their views. When speaking to them one must constantly adapt oneself to their reactions. It is no use preparing a speech at one's desk. According to Le Bon, the orator must always try to follow the thoughts of his audience, not those of himself. In 1932 Mussolini told Emil Ludwig that his oratory was inspired by these same principles: he would prepare the plan of a speech, but the whole development would depend on the atmosphere of the piazza and on the eyes and voices of the thousands of people who packed it.

Le Bon's theories, which in the past enjoyed considerable prestige, cut little ice among sociologists today. But it is worth recalling that in 1921 Sigmund Freud, in his essay on *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego*, devoted several pages to Le Bon's book and that they so much appealed to Mussolini, that he called it 'rightly famous' and said that he frequently agreed with the ideas it expounded, especially with its 'brilliant' description of the collective mind and the primitiveness of the masses. Le Bon's theories are certainly crude and often vague and ill-founded. Fifty years ago, however, they were by no means useless as an instrument for interpreting society and developing the role of leader in society. Mussolini strove to be a leader on the lines which the psycho-sociology of his day laid down for would-be leaders in a modern mass society. He followed his own instincts, but he also undoubtedly knew something of the techniques of power, if only of a primitive and pseudo-scientific kind.

Unfortunately no thorough study has yet been made of the propaganda techniques, ceremonies, symbols and myths of the fascist regime. Whilst one cannot attempt to fill that gap here, one can make some suggestions and record the views of some contemporaries. The anti-Fascist writer Nicola Chiaromonte, for example, said in 1935 that the framework of Mussolinianism consisted of the following elements:

The myth of the fatherland, respect for religion, the monarchy as a guarantee of national continuity, bourgeois Catholic morality, just as much socialism as had to be included, and at the same time the utmost effort to preserve private property.

In 1974 Giorgio Amendola, a communist leader who was arrested by Mussolini's police, wrote that the political platform of the regime centred around the following points: uncritical exaltation of the nation; demand for a strong State; defence of the established order.
Melograni: The Cult of the Duce

(and of the class privileges it protected); aversion (if not hatred and scorn) for the working-class movement; and antiparliamentarism. What emerges from this analysis is a conservative, benumbing ideology, the very reverse of daring. 'Fascism needs inertia,' as Chiaromonte acutely observed, and there is no doubt that after the fight waged against the democratic system between 1921 and 1926, the regime was daring in words but conservative and prudent in deeds. It profited, in fact, from inertia, and this was for a long time the reason for its success. Aspirations towards greatness found an outlet in the exercise of rhetoric.

A fundamental element of Mussolinian rhetoric was the exaltation of Romanità. Rome had been great and powerful in the time of Augustus. Now it was returning to prominence thanks to Benito Mussolini, who claimed to be the heir, if not the actual reincarnation, of Augustus. The symbols, slogans and festivals of the regime were largely inspired by ancient Rome. A whole cultural tradition which in the years of the Risorgimento and later of United Italy, and more recently with Gabriele D'Annunzio, had always cultivated the myth of Romanità, was able to find unrestrained expression during the regime. From the earliest days of his government Mussolini wanted to hark back to the tradition of Rome. When inaugurating a motorway he recalled that Rome had been a great builder of roads. When opening a women's congress he declared that it was necessary to march 'in the Roman fashion.' On 22 October 1923 he was presented with a Roman sword. And on 28 October 1923, the first anniversary of the March on Rome, he spoke to the people of Milan of a 'mysterious revival of Roman passion.'

'Duce' was a Latin word (dux), while in ancient Rome the lictoral fasces (a bundle of rods) had been the symbol of power, the insignia borne by the lictors who preceded the magistrates. A town founded by Mussolini was given the name of Littoria, some important university contests were called 'Littoriali' and a famous electric train was known as the 'Littorina.' The fascist youth organization was called Gioventù Italiana del Littorio. Fascists did not greet each other by shaking hands but by holding out their arms in the 'Roman salute.' Soldiers took to marching with the 'Roman step.' The armed corps established by the regime was called the militia and was subdivided into legions, cohorts, centurie (companies of 100 men), and maniples like the army of ancient Rome. During the regime, Labour Day was no longer celebrated on 1 May but on 21 April, the anniversary of the foundation of Rome. The Roman eagle became a widely used
symbol in the iconography of the regime, and so too was the wolf, which according to legend had suckled Romulus and Remus, the twin founders of the city. A great Forum was built in Rome (and still stands today) for political and sports rallies. The model of the new man that the regime aimed to create continued to be represented by the virtuous citizen of ancient Rome. And after 1936, following the conquest of the 'empire' of Ethiopia, there were constant references in Mussolinian propaganda to the considerably more extensive Roman Empire. The Italians were induced to identify themselves with their predecessors, and more than once defined as barbarians the Gauls, Germans and of course the Britons, who had however preceded them in the industrial take-off.

In marble busts and bronze medallions Mussolini was more and more frequently portrayed as a Roman condottiere. He himself posed for his photographer before the statue of Augustus. In 1937 when the Augustan Exhibition of Romanità was opened the official orator, a professor of the day, let it be understood that in Mussolini were summed up the gifts of both Caesar and Augustus: of the one who had subdued disintegrating factions and the other who had founded the empire. Mussolini, indeed, was often presented as the most genuine expression of the whole of Italian history over the past two thousand years. Another professor wrote that in the Duce there came to life again the organizing will of Rome, the noble piety of the Christians, the wisdom of the great men of the Renaissance, and the constructive passion of the Risorgimento.1

There are a number of reasons related to the whole development of Italian history during the years of the regime which caused the cult of the Duce to become so widespread. The first is to be sought in the essence of Mussolinianism as described earlier in this article and above all in the distinction between Mussolinianism and fascism. The regime did not claim that all Italians should become fascists even if they were enrolled in the Party. It even preferred that men who held offices of great responsibility, from the chief of police to the prefects, should remain outside the internal affairs of the Fascist movement. Adherence to Mussolinism was facilitated by a number of ambiguous elements: it deprived citizens of some fundamental political rights, but at the same time it left them considerable autonomy in matters that were closely connected with politics. Take, for instance, the intellectual élite: adherence to the regime did not prevent the followers of idealism, positivism, and other trends from
maintaining their different cultural positions.\textsuperscript{12}

The second reason for the diffusion of the Duce cult is to be found in propaganda techniques. The press had a predominant role, but Mussolini only began to take a serious interest in the role of cinema and radio after 1934.\textsuperscript{13} Cinemas were compelled to show a propaganda documentary at every performance and the radio transmitted political commentaries on the events of the day, as well as Mussolini’s speeches. Radio audiences were not large: 176,000 in 1931, 800,000 in 1937, 1,170,000 in 1939. However, thousands of loudspeakers were installed in the piazzas of the towns and villages to reproduce the Duce’s speeches. Mussolini was quite satisfied with his own propaganda apparatus until, he noticed the superior quality of Nazi propaganda after Hitler came to power. Mussolini still considered himself superior to Hitler as a leader, but realized that his propaganda apparatus was in comparison very amateurish. The regime’s rallies were haphazard affairs: participants wore clumsy, makeshift uniforms, and even the scenario and platforms from which Mussolini spoke looked as if they were made of bits of wood and cardboard. The Italian regime tried to emulate the Nazis at great expense without succeeding.

The third reason for the diffusion of the cult lies in Mussolini’s successes. Nothing succeeds like success. And Mussolini was clever enough to turn even quite modest achievements into prestigious ones. There was no opposition to criticize them, and there was no free press. The newspapers were even forbidden to give any prominence to news about crime. Judged from the dailies of the period, Italy gives the impression of being an idyllic country with no thieves, murderers, railway accidents, or even floods. A journalist who did his job conscientiously would have been punished. At the same time only a few foreign newspapers were sold in Italy, and they rarely commented on Italian affairs. Until the second world war foreign broadcasts did not go in for propaganda campaigns against the regime, apart from an anti-fascist transmitter in Barcelona which put out a series of broadcasts to Italy during the Spanish Civil War. In those years few tourists visited Italy and few Italians travelled in Europe. So the only news to reach Italy was of a world in strife.

Another reason for the expansion of the cult was the repression by the authorities of all forms of dissidence, and the presence of a highly efficient police force. In 1926 the regime issued laws ‘for the defence of the State’ which established a Special Tribunal, the death penalty, and confino or house arrest under police supervision, to which people could be sentenced without a normal trial. In the
seventeen years from 1926 to 1943, some 5,000 persons were sentenced by the Special Tribunal. About 10,000 were sent to *confino*, including people accused of non-political crimes. Twenty-five persons were condemned to death. Nothing, in fact, comparable with the terrifying harshness of the Hitler regime, or with the many millions of Soviet citizens who died during the Stalinist repressions. The Italian fascists did not start to torture and kill until 8 September 1943, at the time of the Salò republic. On 20 May 1939 a correspondent of *Nuovo Avanti*, the socialist newspaper published in Paris, said that Mussolini had a valuable collaborator, the Chief of Police Bocchini, who had succeeded in imposing perfectly regular police methods and abolishing all useless cruelty. According to the writer the savage brutality of *squadrismo* (the fascist squads of the early days) had been replaced by coldly considered methods that were correct — in their way. The police spies, including those of the OVRA, the special secret police established in 1927, had become the disciplined and accurate instruments of their superiors, acting without passion or outbursts of personal rancour: the wealth of information had made torture unnecessary. \(^{14}\) Giorgio Amendola, whose father died in 1926 as the result of an attack by fascists, recently said the same thing:

The type of repression carried out by fascism was extremely flexible. The violence of the early years, the time when they murdered my father, was followed by a rational form of repression which soon took on the characteristic aspect of corruption. From 1926 to 1943 fascist repression was essentially *corruzione*: 'Enrol in the Fascist Party,' etc. There was nothing of the kind that happened in Nazi Germany. \(^{15}\)

Flexible, paternalistic and corrupting repression was sufficient to guarantee the stability of the regime. Fear of loss of earnings induced many people to keep quiet and outwardly adhere to the regime while in their innermost hearts they did not believe in Mussolini. Vanity, fear of isolation or being snubbed by the press, caused many intellectuals to don the black shirt and become zealous Mussolinians. In all this repression did play its part, but a much more modest part than many people believe today: its main use was to reinforce conformity.

Thus the final reason for the diffusion of the cult of the Duce is related to the nature of man and of mass societies where conformity plays a big part. The tendencies towards uniformity and totalitarianism contrast with the urge for diversity and democracy. Authoritarian regimes have existed not only between the two world wars, and not
only in Italy and furthermore the cult of the Duce was not an exclusively Italian phenomenon. Many liberal politicians, even in free and democratic Britain, contributed to the diffusion of the cult when in the 1920s and 1930s, on judging Mussolinianism to be a regime suited to Italy, they publicly accorded certificates of merit to the Duce. The Italian press had always been ready to cash in on them, ever since in 1923 Lord Curzon had declared Mussolini to be ‘a man of marvellous energy and iron fist.’ Many people have not forgotten that Bernard Shaw refused to condemn Mussolini for the Matteotti murder. And even Winston Churchill, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Anti-Socialist and Anti-Communist Union, on 17 February 1933, declared that the Roman genius was personified in Mussolini, ‘the greatest living legislator.’ Churchill added: ‘With the fascist regime, Mussolini has established a centre of orientation from which the countries involved in a hand-to-hand struggle against socialism should not hesitate to be guided.’ Approval for the cult of the Duce came from all sorts of quarters, even from the least expected people. In 1933 Sigmund Freud sent the Duce a copy of one of his books, with the significant dedication: ‘To Benito Mussolini, from an old man who greets in the Ruler the Hero of Culture.’

The decline of the myth and the eventual collapse of the regime rested on the fact that during the second half of the 1930s none of the previously mentioned elements of stability were still able to operate. In the first place, the substance of Mussolinianism changed under the influence of Nazism: the introduction of racial laws and the alliance with Germany were repugnant to a large section of public opinion. Propaganda no longer succeeded in presenting Mussolini as the sole great artificer of the destinies of the world: everyone saw that Hitler and Germany were gaining the upper hand. Mussolini began moreover to pile up failures that could not be kept hidden. During the war, foreign broadcasts, particularly the BBC, were listened to every evening by hundreds of thousands if not millions of Italians. Repression became less effective as dissatisfied people became too numerous to persecute, and because the State apparatus and the police themselves wanted to ensure their own survival in post-Mussolini Italy. Finally, a crisis began to develop in the pro-Mussolinian spirit of conformity. Party members no longer wore their badges on their coats, the Corriere della Sera lamented on 22 November 1942. The opposition that had formed within the ruling élite of the regime led, on 25 July 1943, to the liquidation of the leader.
One cannot conclude these reflections on the cult of the Duce without some mention of the strange contradiction that existed during the years of the regime between the myth and the reality. Propaganda gave credit to a picture of a Duce who was capable of taking an enormous number of decisions with speed, assurance and complete self-reliance. Much evidence proves that this was not the case.

Mussolini was a man full of uncertainties and strongly conditioned by the complexity of the apparatus that he claimed to dominate. In the summer of 1929 Mussolini was at one and the same time Prime Minister and in charge of eight ministries: foreign affairs, the interior, the colonies, war, the navy, aviation, public works, and the corporations. When he fell in July 1943, he was still at the head of five ministries. The fact that he assumed so many responsibilities simultaneously made it impossible for him to exercise effective control. He had only limited knowledge of the administrative problems of the posts he held, and consequently the under-secretaries had the real power. Measures were always submitted to him for his signature. However, although he signed them, they were often contradictory. Guido Leto, who for many years directed the secret police, the OVRA, said in his memoirs that comical conflicts arose because 'the heads of administrations in disagreement used to show each other as proof the record or memorandum bearing Mussolini's signature — which had been affixed in approval below completely antithetical conclusions.' Mussolini's character increased the frequency of such conflicts: Carmine Senise, who was chief of police between 1940 and 1943 and in daily contact with Mussolini, writes that the Duce was so gullible that he always agreed with the last speaker:

This tendency to let himself be influenced by whoever was near him reached incredible lengths. If two different people talked to him on the same day about the same question and made two opposite proposals, it was by no means rare for him to agree with both.

Mussolini disliked methodical work: Giuseppe Bastianini, who was Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs from 1936 to 1939, considered that Mussolini was too impatient to go thoroughly into problems:

He was not attracted by or interested in anything that could not be solved by intuition. He thus diffused around himself a dangerous, messianic confidence, a disconcerting amateurishness, and in this he took pleasure as if it were a homage to his cleverness and proof of blind faith in him.
Sometimes he would admit his own deficiencies: 'I never make a mistake' he once said, 'in interpreting the feeling of the masses. I make mistakes in judging men.'\textsuperscript{22} One of his closest collaborators, Giorgio Pini, editor of the \textit{Popolo d'Italia}, declared that the Duce's temperament seemed made to elicit disobedience.\textsuperscript{23}

In addition to its subjective limitations, the Duce's power was also strongly conditioned by limitations of an objective kind. Even from a formal standpoint, Mussolini did not succeed in becoming the supreme authority of the regime. He was head of the Government but the head of State was still the King, Victor Emmanuel II, and thus the regime was ruled by a diarchy. The King's powers were by no means few or unprotected, for they found a guarantee in the monarchist sentiments of a large part of the country and, above all, in the loyalty of the army: officers and soldiers swore an oath of obedience to the King, not to the regime; the symbols on their uniforms and flags were those of the country, not of fascism. The monarchy and the army had come to an agreement with Mussolini because the course of events had imposed a compromise. But it was simply a compromise, ready to be broken at any time, as it in fact did on 25 July 1943, when Mussolini was arrested by order of the King and replaced by a general. The army, the bureaucracy, the clergy, and also big business, the landowners, the middle classes, the urban and rural proletariat made up a society that was anything but monolithic. At all levels, Italy under the fascist regime remained a composite, articulated society in which, despite the abolition of the political parties, differing forces continued to confront each other, living in an often unstable equilibrium.

Raymond Aron showed an understanding of the real nature of the Mussolinian regime when he wrote that it did not succeed in producing the unification of the élite but rather in bringing it into line. The unity of the leading groups was always superficial and proof of the persistence of differences and contradictions came in what followed the overthrow of the regime. As Aron said:

\begin{quote}
The country found itself, not in the same state as it had been thirty years previously, but at least with the possibility of returning to a type of organization similar to that destroyed by fascism. . . . The fascist type of revolution is marked by a change in the structure of the élite and in the form of government, without any real upheaval in the structure of society.
\end{quote}

In point of fact there was even more to it than Aron suggested, for the post-fascist democratic society in Italy retained a whole series
of innovations that were a legacy of the regime. The democratic republic founded in 1946 took over the economic set-up linked with the existence of the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI), which had come into being at the time of the economic crisis of the early 1930s to reorganize the financial connections between the big banks and industry. The Republic incorporated in Article 7 of its Constitution the Lateran Pacts concluded between Mussolini and the Vatican in 1929. The Republic even retained, except for some modifications, the four basic legal codes which had come into force between 1931 and 1942 and also the text of the laws of 1931 governing the police. So the institutions and the laws remained. And the men remained too, for the purge of leaders and officials compromised with the regime took place only on a limited scale. What did not remain was the cult of the Duce, which had virtually vanished even before the dictator was shot and suspended by his feet in Piazzale Loreto in Milan. The Italians fondly imagined that in Mussolini's grave they had buried their recent past for ever. Winston Churchill was not being accurate when on 23 December 1940 he said that 'one man and one man alone' had been responsible for Italy's disasters. He was however a sound psychologist and a good prophet: he understood that the Italians would do all they could to prove him right.

NOTES

1. The text of the circular is given in A. Aquarone, L'organizzazione dello Stato totalitario (Turin 1965), 485-88.

2. The figure of 2,400 members was given by D. Z. Manuilskij in a report of May 1934, reproduced in P. Spriano, Storia del Partito comunista italiano. Gli anni della clandestinità (Turin 1969), 408.

3. L. Ginzburg, 'Ipotecare il futuro' in Quaderno 10 di Giustizia e Libertà, February 1934, 73.


5. Letter from L. Bissolati to G. De Felice-Giuffrida reproduced in R. De Felice, Mussolini il rivoluzionario 1883-1920 (Turin 1965), 323.
6. For further information about the press office and propaganda under the regime see P. V. Cannistraro, *La fabbrica del consenso. Fascismo e massa media* (Bari 1975).


12. Amendola, op. cit., 44.


This article explores the intense debate sparked in Italy by the public broadcast in 1994 of a documentary called *Combat Film*, featuring footage taken by American soldiers in the closing stages of World War II, including at Milan’s Piazzale Loreto the day after Mussolini’s execution. The footage of Mussolini’s bloodied and disfigured corpse lying alongside that of his mistress served as a jarring history lesson for a new generation of Italians. The controversy and public soul-searching sparked by the documentary—presented as it was, when it was—reflect the dynamics of remembering the legacy of fascism and antifascism at the end of the Cold War.

So long as the past and the present are outside one another, knowledge of the past is not of much use in the present. But suppose the past lives on in the present; suppose, though encapsulated in it, and at first sight hidden beneath the present’s contradictory and more prominent features, it is still alive and active; then the historian may very well be related to the non-historian as the trained woodsman is to the ignorant traveller.

R. G. Collingwood

At the end of April 1945, with World War II drawing to a close in Europe, the *New York Times* announced the seemingly banal details of “A Dictator’s End.” The paper reported that “Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci and 12 members of his cabinet were executed by partisans in a village on Lake Como yesterday afternoon, after being arrested in an attempt to cross the Swiss frontier. The bodies were brought to Milan last night.” In fact, their bodies were brought to an unremarkable square in Milan, which has
since been immortalized in public memory—the Piazzale Loreto. It was here where a year earlier Fascists had executed fifteen partisans, their bodies put on display as a warning to local residents lest they consider joining the Resistance against Nazism-fascism. Mussolini’s corpse, together with that of Petacci and the others, were hung upside down for hours of public exposition. Large crowds of angry Milanese vented their pent-up rage at the fallen dictator, shouting insults, spitting at and kicking Mussolini’s bloated corpse. It was reported that when the bodies were taken down, one woman fired several shots into Mussolini’s corpse, while other women mocked the way Mussolini’s mistress was dressed; a decidedly muted but pointed form of retributive justice.\(^3\)

Almost fifty years later, over three million Italians tuned in to the main television network, RAI, to see Mussolini and Petacci come alive before their very eyes, in a manner of speaking. The program in question was called *Combat Film*. It featured footage taken by American soldiers in the closing stages of the war, including at Milan’s Piazzale Loreto the day after Mussolini’s execution. The stilted black-and-white footage of Mussolini’s bloodied and disfigured corpse lying alongside that of his mistress served as a jarring history lesson for a new generation of Italians. For others, it was a vivid reminder of Mussolini’s violent legacy and of the ferocity with which the once seemingly adoring crowds had greeted *Il Duce* in what was to be his last public appearance. The public response to *Combat Film* was swift and contentious. The program proved to be hugely popular among viewers, garnering impressive and record levels of audience share. Yet, the public broadcast of *Combat Film* by Italian state television just weeks after Silvio Berlusconi’s center-right coalition came to power sparked an intense national and European debate over the historical figure of Mussolini, his execution, the war itself and the Italian transition to democracy. Critics called the program “shock TV” and distasteful, while others worried that showing such footage might have the effect of resurrecting Mussolini’s ghost. What they really worried about, of course, was the rehabilitation of Mussolini and fascism at the very moment when former neofascists from the National Alliance could be found in Berlusconi’s government.\(^4\)

The *Combat Film* controversy, which will be discussed in greater detail below, serves as a hermeneutic device with which to examine the complex interaction between history, memory and public policy in contem-
temporary Italy. This article explores the long shadow Mussolini and fascism have cast over Italian politics, historical writing and public memory since the Duce’s death in April 1945. In death, as in life, Mussolini’s figure exerts an unmistakable influence on the Italian imagination and in politics, galvanizing the public interest as few historical figures can. As the historian Alexander Stille so aptly puts it, Il Duce is one of a select group of historical figures “who will invariably be re-evaluated by each passing generation, often in service to the political needs of the present.” This is especially true in a post–Cold War world where the Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance, the successor of the neofascist Movimento Sociale Italiano, MSI), has entered the political mainstream. Thus, every historical assessment of Mussolini and of fascism—whether academic or popular—is imbued with enormous political significance. To borrow from one commentator, Mussolini’s ghost is still rattling its chains. How so?

The controversy sparked by the documentary—presented as it was—reflected the changing dynamics of remembering the legacy of fascism and antifascism in a changing political context. That the broadcast of a few hours of American archival footage should provoke public and scholarly “soul-searching” at all is itself a stark reminder that the figure of Benito Mussolini and the question of how he met his end constitute a kind of “mythic icon” or lieu de mémoire of postwar Italy. To speak of the Piazzale Loreto is to evoke what Richard Slotkin calls a “complex system of historical associations,” where history, memory and politics intersect and compete with contemporary debates over national identity or public policy over how to remember the past for the sake of the present and future. Who exactly killed Mussolini, and why? Who got to tell the story of the story of Mussolini’s execution, and why are the events surrounding Mussolini’s execution still a source of public interest and academic debate? Why does the story of what happened to Mussolini after his death matter at all in postwar Italian society?

The controversy sparked by Combat Film is evidence of the extent to which the antifascist paradigm that underpins Italy’s democratic republic is in danger of losing its essential function as broker between the two main pillars of Italy’s postwar political culture—the Catholic and communist subcultures. As we shall see, already by the 1980s, both subcultures had lost some of their appeal and much of their overt dominance. This makes the antifascist paradigm less essential to national unity and governance. The
rhetoric of “national pacification,” that was heard during the debate over *Combat Film* in the mid-1990s is indicative of a related process by which lines of moral judgments on fascism versus antifascism, on Mussolini’s Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI) versus the Resistance, are blurred. The question remains, however, whether a blurring of the lines of distinction between fascism and antifascism will adversely affect the civic health of Italy’s democratic polity.

**MUSSOLINI’S GHOST: DEALING WITH ITALY’S DUCE**

Although he has been dead for over half a century, Benito Mussolini continues to inspire fascination, consternation, admiration and fear. Indeed, some speak of Italy’s “melodramatic fascination” with the “traumatic” events of its recent past. Over the past decade, for example, newspapers in Italy and around the world have featured stories with such titles as, “Mussolini’s Ghost Still Haunting Italy: Popular Politicians Resurrect Il Duce to Cure Modern Woes,” “Benito Mussolini, Back from the Dead,” “Mussolini Riding Wave of Nostalgia,” and “Fabulously Fascist: Mussolini’s Granddaughter Enters the Ring.” For the most part, the stories behind such titles deal with the political fortunes of Italy’s Alleanza Nazionale and its rise to power in the mid-1990s as part of a center-right coalition government. Notable among the neofascist parliamentarians was Mussolini’s granddaughter, Alessandra. In other instances, the storylines are far more disturbing, and tell of the enduring popularity of the cult of *Il Duce* among hundreds of young, disgruntled, potentially violent neofascist thugs.

In short, Italy has never known a period since 1945 without some talk of Mussolini and fascism. In the 1950s there were ongoing concerns in certain circles about the electoral inroads of the Movimento Sociale Italiano that seemed to presage a return of fascism, to say nothing of the public attention garnered by the return of Mussolini’s mortal remains to his hometown, Predappio, in 1957. As late as the 1970s observers mused aloud of Italy’s lingering taste for a “strong man” in politics, or of concerns of a fascist revival in a troubled democracy. Even today, thousands of people, ranging from curious tourists to militant neofascists and militant
antifascists, travel to visit the site of Mussolini's grave in Predappio, some leaving handwritten expressions of admiration.13

The Italian historian Luisa Passerini suggests that the intense, seemingly inexhaustible interest historians, the media and the general public exhibit vis-à-vis Mussolini reflects the connection between the image of Mussolini in popular memory and Italian national identity. She refers to this as "l'autoimmagine degli italiani," which can be loosely translated to mean "the way Italians see themselves." In effect, Passerini suggests that for many Italians, Mussolini's story is their story; his successes and his failings, his humble background, his ambitions, delusions of grandeur and ultimately his fate, in some way reflect those of the country itself.14

Mussolini's singular place in Italian collective identity was clear enough to his staunchest opponents. In the midst of armed struggle against fascism-Nazism, the leaders of the Resistance (the Committee for National Liberation, or CLN, based in Rome; and the National Committee for the Liberation of Upper Italy, or CLNAI, based in Milan)15 understood the enormous symbolic weight Mussolini carried in the eyes of the Italian people, and indeed world opinion. Resistance leaders believed many ordinary Italians continued to identify with, and perhaps felt a certain degree of sympathy for, their fallen Duce. The Resistance, after all, was a relatively limited phenomenon. As H. Stuart Hughes acknowledged, the Italian Resistance was "the work of a minority—the work of a large minority, but still in no sense the achievement of the whole of the Italian people."16

Interestingly, during the Resistance itself, no one seemed very interested in propagating the myth of Italy as a "nation of resisters" as Charles de Gaulle did in France (save, perhaps for antifascist exiles abroad, such as Carlo Sforza, Mussolini's former foreign minister). This myth emerged a few years later, during the postwar transition to a democratic republic.17 During the war itself, the Resistance in Italy constituted a moment of collective soul-searching, and as such provides an interesting study of "memory in action" as Italians struggled to come to terms with the past. How and why did fascism come to power? How and why did it survive for so long? How were the mistakes of the past to be avoided in the future?

Few during the Resistance placed all the blame for fascism on the Italian people as a whole. Fewer still were willing to dismiss fascism as a mere blip, as the fault of one man—Mussolini. If one of the objectives
of the Resistance was to mobilize ordinary citizens, it was to be done by settling scores with the past. As a result of these beliefs, the antifascist leadership perceived the need to mobilize Italians, but also to inculcate in them genuine democratic values. From the pages of the official organ of the Young Christian Democrats we read that the time had come to acknowledge the complicity of the masses under fascism and to confess “out loud and without shame our own mea culpa.” The article concludes with a call to prepare Italians intellectually for democracy. The antifascists’ mission thus became to “Educate! Educate! This is the real mission. Indeed, reeducate the thousands and thousands of young people led astray and bewildered.” This apparent moment of collective soul-searching was happening while the war against Nazism-fascism was still underway, and while Mussolini continued to rule as ostensible leader of the RSI. As the war neared its end, however, and the antifascist leaders began to plan for the postfascist reality, one can discern a subtle shift away from speaking of collective responsibility for fascism, in favor of a more focused attention on the person of Mussolini himself, and to a lesser degree on his fascist henchmen.

Once again, it fell to the political leaders of the antifascist parties to link the defeat of fascism and Italy’s political rebirth to sharp dissociation from the person of Benito Mussolini, the man and the myth. Dissociation from Mussolini the man entailed, simply enough, his removal from the political scene altogether; that is, Mussolini’s arrest and summary execution. The Duce himself seemed to believe that Resistance leaders could be persuaded to negotiate an agreement to spare him from death, and from what he perceived as an even worse fate: a public trial by the Allied powers. But Mussolini’s attempts to broker some sort of compromise between fascist leaders and the antifascist parties fell on deaf ears. If anything, the closer the Resistance came to defeating Nazism-fascism in central and northern Italy in the spring of 1945, the less likely it was that Mussolini could escape the arm of retributive justice. There was more than retribution at stake; there was also the declared need to break decisively with the fascist past, to lay the foundations for the political, economic and moral reconstruction of Italy after two decades of dictatorship. In short, the men who led the Resistance against Nazism-fascism and who were destined to lead Italy through reconstruction understood that postfascist Italy would need in some way to define itself against the very image of
Mussolini and of fascism itself. Mussolini's fascist regime would give way to Italy, the antifascist nation; and Mussolini il Duce would give way to Mussolini as a kind of antihero; a tragicomic, pathetic figure rather than national savior.

In other words, it was both a pragmatic and symbolic imperative that accounts for Mussolini's summary execution by the partisans in April 1945, without a trial and in technical violation of the 1943 Armistice. Sergio Luzzatto suggests that the pragmatic imperative—to remove the very symbol of fascism in the midst of civil war—took precedence over the finer points of international treaties. Both Fascists and resisters, he says, understood that they were engaged in a life-and-death struggle. A year later, a similar pragmatic and symbolic imperative also motivated the communist leader Togliatti, acting as justice minister, to grant a blanket amnesty—excluding prominent Fascists—for the political crimes of fascism. That this gesture was offered in June 1946 to mark the birth of the postfascist republic, and that it should come at the behest of a communist politician and leading antifascist, is a telling indication of how quickly the memory of Italy's fascist past was to be obscured or remembered selectively; this as a strategy to preserve the unity of the fragile antifascist coalition, and in the haste to get Italy back on its feet as quickly as possible.

In the final days of the war, there was little inclination for mercy on either side of the fight, but where the Fascists worried about mere survival, the Resistance worried about survival and beyond. Many of the prominent Resistance leaders made it clear that for pragmatic and symbolic reasons, Mussolini should be removed from the scene, for good. Leo Valiani of the Action Party, for example, wrote in his paper that all the fascist leadership had to be dealt with so that they could do no more harm. The highly influential Communist Luigi Longo (rumored to be the brains behind Mussolini's summary execution) argued that Mussolini was "to be bumped off immediately ... without a trial, without theatrics, without any historic declarations." Presumably, Longo wanted to make sure Mussolini would never again be able to use his demonstrated powers of persuasion. Perhaps the harshest perspective of all was that of socialist leader and future Italian President Sandro Pertini. In the year or so before the liberation, Pertini was the most adamant in opposing any talk of a negotiated compromise to spare Mussolini. As the war neared an end and Mussolini's fate was at hand, Pertini urged the partisans to kill the Duce.
Mussolini’s Ghost

“come un cane tignoso,” which can be loosely translated to mean “like a sick dog.” Mussolini had spent most of his adult life creating a cult of personality around his person that verged on the individual and collective worship of his very physique (one thinks, for example, of the many posters, photographs, and chiseled busts depicting Il Duce’s so-called “Roman” features and his bare chest). For the antifascist Resistance, if the image of Il Duce as a national superhero had helped to “sacralize” fascist politics, then the image of Il Duce as a sick dog, as something subhuman, could serve the opposite purpose: the desacralization of fascism in Italian life.

This was vengeance, to be sure, but with a political purpose. Virtually no one, it seemed, among the leading antifascists was in much of a mood at the time to speak of perdono (forgiveness) as a “supreme virtue” of the new Italy the Resistance hoped to build. Understandably, with the war not yet over, Resistance leaders worried that premature talk of forgiveness or conciliation would lend some legitimacy to the Nazi-fascist cause. There were a few voices calling for mercy and restraint vis-à-vis fascist officials and soldiers, principally from elements of the Catholic Church as well as leaders on the center or right wing of the antifascist spectrum. Consider, for example, the case of Mario Borsa, a longtime antifascist who was appointed director of the influential daily Corriere della Sera by the CLN. When the time came to discuss Mussolini’s fate, Borsa quoted celebrated nineteenth-century politician Carlo Cattaneo at the time of Milan’s “Cinque Giornate” in 1848, when the Milanese ousted their Austrian rulers. The question then was the fate of the pro-Austrian Count Bolza. Cattaneo said at the time: “If you kill him, you will be doing a justly thing; if you don’t kill him, you will be doing something saintly.” Unfortunately for Mussolini, in the violent climate of April 1945, not many cared to play the part of saint.

Justice rather than saintliness was surely on the mind of the socialist leader Pietro Nenni who found himself in the ironic position of editing Avanti!—the very newspaper at which Mussolini had made a name for himself as editor and influential national figure before World War I. Writing in the paper at the end of April 1945, hours before Mussolini’s execution, Nenni described the socialist-cum-fascist Duce as a “straccio umano,” a human rag, who should be shot immediately before the Allies had the chance to put him on trial. Nenni regretted, though, that Italians would not have the chance to “drag this rag through the town squares of Italy,
like a caged beast, as an eternal mockery of the cult of *Il Duce.* In the face of such anger, vengeance and determination to see fascism defeated definitively, and considering the tendency to dehumanize the *Duce,* it was clear that Mussolini’s fate was sealed.

The details surrounding Mussolini’s last hours and his execution in particular continue to inspire interest, speculation and rumor. The accepted version of Mussolini’s execution was filtered through the lens of the Italian Communist Party, and in particular through Walter Audisio (“Valerio”). Audisio’s version is given full treatment in his memoirs, *In nome del popolo italiano.* Loosely translated, the title means “on behalf of the Italian people,” an apt description of the central thesis of the official version of Mussolini’s final hours; namely, that Mussolini’s execution, though the literal responsibility of one man alone—Walter Audisio—was carried out on behalf of the Italian people, as an expression of collective will.

It is tempting to dismiss Audisio’s version as fantastical, riddled as it is with numerous inconsistencies and outright contradictions. This is to say nothing of its self-aggrandizing and melodramatic style and substance. Still, as a detailed elaboration of the official version of Mussolini’s execution, Audisio’s account is a key thread of the fabric of postwar Italian memory vis-à-vis Mussolini, fascism and the postwar transition. The question is, of course, whether “Valerio’s version” was really his own, or whether he was merely the vehicle through which the Italian Communists helped to construct a particular memory of the fall of the *Duce.* Whatever the case, Audisio gave the Italian Communists and the Resistance at large what many wanted: a *Duce* who died a coward’s death.

It is clear that “Valerio’s version” of Mussolini’s arrest and execution served to dislodge Mussolini from the Italian imagination, and to set him up as the tragicomic villain of a drama whose destructive close was finally at hand. In this regard, inconsistencies and contradictions over such questions as which branch of the antifascist coalition gave the orders to execute the *Duce,* important as these are, interest us less than the way Mussolini’s final moments were depicted and to what end this version of events was publicized. Audisio depicts Mussolini’s final hours as pathetic, tragic, and yet also somewhat farcical: the once proud *Duce* is indifferent to the fate of his mistress because consumed by his instinct for self-preservation; he is too easily duped into believing that Valerio and Guido have come to rescue him and help him escape into exile; and
finally, faced with the prospect of his pending execution, Mussolini is said to be timorous, incredulous and helpless all at once. There is now good reason to question this characterization of Mussolini’s final moments. But in the immediate aftermath of the event, indeed in the hours and days after Mussolini’s execution, the communist press and other Resistance leaders seized upon this image of Mussolini dying a coward’s death. The communist journal *Rinascita* spun Audisio’s story in unequivocal but purposeful terms: “It is noted that in the final days and final moments of his life, Mussolini behaved like a human rag.” The journal went on to say, paraphrasing the socialist Sandro Pertini, that Mussolini “ended up dying like a dog.” Here, again, was the impulse to dehumanize Mussolini as a way to begin to purge Italy of its fascist past.

In Audisio’s version of the past, the once proud, hypermasculine and violent Duce who wanted to live like a lion rather than a lamb—and have his country do the same—ended life as “un povero cencio tremolante,” a trembling rag. The Duce who lived like a lion but died like a lamb could therefore serve as a metaphor for fascism itself and for the Mussolini regime. The memory of a humiliated, emasculated, dehumanized Mussolini could function as a symbolic foil to the moral heroism and political idealism of the Resistance and of antifascism in general. To have executed Mussolini served the immediate practical task of removing the symbolic and titular head of fascism while the war raged on in the spring of 1945. But to then tell the story after the fact of an emasculated Mussolini who died a coward’s death belongs to the realm of national mythmaking: to legitimate the moral and political claims of antifascism on Italian national identity after Mussolini by delegitimizing Mussolini himself and discrediting fascist ideology altogether.

The various parties of the Committee for National Liberation, be they revolutionary or moderate, generally agreed that Mussolini and the other fascist leaders had to die, to serve as sacrificial lambs. Voices in some quarters, the Vatican for instance, lamented the absence of a formal trial and decried the public humiliation and mutilation of Mussolini’s corpse; other voices staunchly defended the decision to execute summarily Mussolini. The antifascist exile Carlo Sforza, one-time member of Mussolini’s cabinet, who went on to become an influential foreign minister under the postwar governments of Alcide De Gasperi, lauded Mussolini’s execution as “the most legitimate and fairest act performed
by Italians” in those years. Woe to Italy, he said, if Mussolini had been
given a soapbox in the form of a public trial, from which to “accuse and
defame Italy.” Consequently, Sforza reasoned, “no other execution had
been as necessary” as that carried out on Mussolini at Dongo in late April
1945. 40 An editorial in the New York Times expressed a similar sentiment,
arguing that “by the final manner in which [Italians] have dealt with their
former dictator, they have spared the Allies a problem.” 41 Within days of
Mussolini’s execution, the Communists spoke of Mussolini’s summary
execution as an expression of “Jacobin justice.” 42 The Socialists greeted
the news of their former editor’s demise with yet another invocation of
justice served. In the pages of Avanti! one reads an admission that the
scene at Piazzale Loreto was gruesome but that, all in all, it was necessary.
“The people were compelled to render justice on their own tyrant,” the
paper declared, “to free themselves from the nightmare of an irreparable
offense.” 43

To remember Mussolini’s execution as an act of the Italian people
rather than one man or one political party is to give birth to a found-
ing myth of postfascist Italy: the myth of Italy as a nation of antifascists.
Although the hard work of the Resistance to Nazism-fascism was done by
a small minority of Italians, the values that inspired the antifascist Resis-
tance were extended to the whole of the Italian people, whatever their
actual role in the fight against Mussolini and his allies. 44 To remember
Mussolini’s execution as an act of the Italian people was also to provide a
symbolic point of reference and of unity in the face of national disunity,
popular disaffection and ideological bickering within the ruling class and
society at large; this at a delicate time in Italy’s democratic transition and
economic reconstruction. That the men who actually carried out the execu-
tion were Communists also served to give Italian communism a moral
and political voice in postwar reconstruction, and in the more elementary
redefinition of Italian society after two decades of fascist dictatorship. In
the place of Mussolini’s “cult of personality,” one can discern the start of
what Renzo De Felice referred to as an “official culture of antifascism.”
De Felice charged that since the end of World War II, Italy’s political and
intellectual classes had perpetuated the “myth” of Italy as the antifascist
nation par excellence. 45 That is, through a particular construction of the
memory of the war and the fight against fascism, Italy’s postwar political
leaders propagated the idea of antifascism as a political and moral virtue
shared by the whole of the Italian people. Indeed, said De Felice, the official culture of antifascism made it seem as if democracy and antifascism were interchangeable. In other words, to be a democrat was to be an antifascist, and vice versa. In De Felice’s view, the net effect of this “myth” had been both to obscure the actual history of fascism and the war, and to allow many decidedly undemocratic political elements (Fascists and Communists) to hide behind the mask of Italy’s so-called antifascist republic. De Felice was the most prominent spokesperson for a reassessment of the history and memory of Mussolini, fascism and the antifascist pedigree of the postwar republic. However, historians note that debates over the precise legacy of fascism and antifascism were a common feature throughout the life of Italy’s postwar republic. The late 1980s and in particular the decade following the fall of the Berlin Wall witnessed a sharp debate among historians, and to a lesser extent in public discourse, over the history of fascism and in particular over the role that a kind of “myth” of antifascism played in Italy’s postwar political culture.

A SECOND ITALIAN REPUBLIC WITHOUT HISTORY?

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the political arrangements Italy had known since 1948, together with the historic victory of Silvio Berlusconi’s center-right Polo coalition in 1994, signaled the start of a new era in Italian life which invariably affected the politics of remembering Italy’s recent past. The historian Richard Bosworth has argued that starting in the early 1990s, Italy has experienced an “unmooring from the past.” Bosworth maintains emphatically that the Second Republic is “without history.” Perhaps one should put it more precisely—contemporary Italy has experienced not simply an “unmooring from the past” but rather an unmooring from certain versions of the past, namely, from the so-called “fascist–antifascist antithesis” that served as a building block of Italy’s postwar republic. However much historians, politicians and the public at large may have debated such questions as how reflective antifascism and the Resistance had been of the Italian people as a whole, there is no question that what Simone Neri Serneri calls the “ur-myth of the Resistance” and the “myth” of Italy as an antifascist nation constituted “legitimizing” and “hegemonic” principles to which all the major
political parties could appeal in the postfascist era. If contemporary Italy experienced an “unmooring” from the past in the 1990s, this was it—a loosening of the foundational myth of the Resistance and of Italy as an antifascist nation par excellence.

The antifascist paradigm made possible the coexistence and cooperation of the two main pillars of Italy’s postwar political culture—the Catholic and communist subcultures. As we have seen, Catholic and communist influence in Italian politics and society had waned considerably by the mid-1980s. In effect, the antifascist paradigm that was once indispensable in practical political terms and symbolically essential to Italian identity grew increasingly less relevant and therefore less essential. Indeed, voices were raised from across the political spectrum blaming the antifascist paradigm for what critics saw as “a poverty of ideals and a decline into clientelism which, they claimed, was stifling the political life of the nation.”

This critique of the antifascism paradigm was heard during the Combat Film broadcast on Italian state television in April 1994. The footage was paradoxically stilted and even confusing, yet vivid and jarring at the same time. The Duce’s corpse was barely recognizable; aside from the simple white tag numbered “107,” there was little to identify the mutilated corpse as that of the man who had boastfully ruled Italy for over 20 years. Petacci was readily identifiable—her corpse had been spared the blows and the pistol shots. According to one commentator, Maria Grazia Bruzzone, in the clear black and white of the 35mm film, Petacci’s face betrayed a kind of “frozen smile,” while her head was rested on the Duce’s shoulder, as if she were tired and resting. Though poetic, there was nothing accidental in the way the two corpses were depicted—side by side, almost literally hand in hand, with Petacci’s head resting on Mussolini’s shoulder. This pose, so to speak, had been deliberately arranged by the American cameraman, identified by the Combat Film editors as “il tenente Tamber,” with the artistic touch worthy of the best Hollywood filmmaker, as Bruzzone caustically noted.

To be sure, the Combat Film series documented considerably more than a few fleeting images of Mussolini’s corpse the day after Piazzale Loreto. Combat Film offered a selective but extraordinary glimpse into the final weeks and months of the war in Italy. It included rare and never-before-seen footage of such episodes as the iprite a Bari, involving the
German attack against an Allied warship carrying nerve gas; the Allied bombing of Cassino, the Allied carpet bombing of the island of Pantelleria and other lesser-known moments of the Allied campaign in Italy in the last two years of the war. Particularly moving, and disturbing, was the footage of family members searching for loved ones among those killed by the Nazis in the Ardeatine Cave massacre in Rome. That the journalists who edited the *Combat Film* series chose to place the Ardeatine footage alongside images of Mussolini’s corpse proved to be a source of considerable controversy. It called into question claims of journalistic impartiality and objectivity, and raised the specter of a deliberate attempt to create a kind of moral equivalence between Mussolini’s execution and the murder of over 300 innocent civilians, mostly Jews. Add to this questionable judgment basic errors in historical fact, and it is easy to see why professional historians described the presentation of the series as scandalous and as a “slap in the face” of sound historical analysis.

When it was aired in subsequent days, *Combat Film* still managed to attract well over two million viewers. When the series aired a third time, millions more tuned in; indeed, it is estimated that at one point in the third broadcast, close to nine million viewers had tuned in to the program for even just a few minutes. By the standards of a state television network facing ever-increasing competition from Italian and international broadcasters, the *Combat Film* series was an astounding success, drawing historic numbers of viewers. Among those watching was Alessandra Mussolini who expressed particular disgust at how the American servicemen had staged the footage to depict Mussolini and Petacci in a kind of lovers’ embrace. “It was cruel, and horrible,” she told reporters, “they made a spectacle out of a tragedy.” Romano Mussolini, Alessandra’s father and the *Duce’s* only surviving son, refused to watch the program. When his daughter asked him whether he thought it was a good idea to show these images on television, Romano responded simply, “At the end of the day, it is history.” Ever the politician, Alessandra used the broadcast to make a political pitch, namely, that the time had come for a kind of national truce, for public recognition that the partisans and the Allies, like the Nazis and Fascists, had used violent means. It was time, Alessandra said, for a “national pacification.”

As we have seen, reaction to *Combat Film* was swift and largely critical of the way in which extraordinary visual images from the war
were rather crudely edited and packaged—perhaps intentionally so—by a small team of RAI journalists. There was widespread consensus among the critics, which counted many professional historians, that the host of the *Combat Film* broadcast, Vittorio Zucconi had been at best derelict in his journalistic duties, and at worst intentionally misleading in presenting what was purported to be unedited and therefore impartial historical evidence. Viewers watched as Zucconi introduced the archival material as documentary evidence of “come eravamo,” that is, a snapshot of “how we were” at the end of World War II. He then proceeded to introduce various scenes from the documentary with leading editorial comments that many critics found inappropriate and inaccurate. The noted historian Claudio Pavone, for example, took particular exception to the manner in which Zucconi introduced a scene in which American soldiers are seen executing fascist fighters from the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI). Zucconi warned viewers, “And now we will show you how the Americans shot fascist prisoners.” The problem here, as Pavone noted, is that the RSI fighters were not merely “prisoners” but rather spies. In glossing over this important detail, Pavone charged, Zucconi was playing fast and loose with historical facts. That Zucconi then turned to one of his studio guests, prominent right-wing politician Giano Accame, a former RSI soldier himself, for his comments on the footage, also gave rise to questions about Zucconi’s judgment and his true intentions. When Accame memorialized the executed RSI soldiers as “heroes,” which is not surprising given his own personal story, these former fascist spies suddenly were offered up as noble martyrs to their cause.59

There is no disputing the argument that, on a human level, the execution of young RSI soldiers, who no doubt believed as fervently as the partisans in the moral virtue of their cause, is a tragedy deserving of some measure of pity and acknowledgment. But, as many critics of *Combat Film* pointed out, there is a danger in going too far along the path of pity, wandering instead onto the path toward relativism, creating a kind of moral equivalence between those who died fighting for Nazism-fascism and all that it stood for, and those who died fighting for the Resistance and anti-fascism. By failing to provide viewers with a proper historical context for the execution of RSI soldiers, the critics argued, Zucconi and company ran the gamut from revisionism to relativism. Giovanni De Luna charged that the *Combat Film* footage was thrown at the Italian public to provoke an
“emotional” reaction, not reasoned historical analysis. He acknowledged that the death of an RSI soldier could not but provoke what he called a “pietas naturale” (natural human sympathy). But *pietas* is not the same thing as sound historical judgment. More to the point, while it is true that both Fascists and partisans were killed during the years of Italy’s “civil war,” the values for which they fought and died were not the same. The great shortcoming of the RAI’s *Combat Film*, therefore, was its failure to assert the moral superiority of antifascism and the partisan cause. The presence of Giano Accame as an invited guest alongside Tina Anselmi, a well-known Catholic partisan fighter, seemed designed precisely to place fascism and antifascism on the same moral level. The same could be said of the editorial decision to splice together footage of Mussolini’s mutilated corpse with painful scenes of family members searching for loved ones after the Ardeatine Cave massacre.

With political nerves still raw from electoral successes of the National Alliance, it is no surprise that many commentators greeted the public broadcast of *Combat Film* with considerable suspicion. There were good reasons to question the editorial judgment and motivation behind the documentary and the commentary that followed its broadcast. When asked to assess the mistakes and the crimes of fascism in light of the *Combat Film* footage, Accame quipped, “those who think big, make big mistakes, but those who think small, end up in Bribesville.” His reference to the corruption and bribery scandal that rocked Italy in the 1990s reflected one current of thought that lay blame for such widespread, systemic corruption on the clientelism created by party politics under the antifascist paradigm. What is most notable about Accame’s comment is its normative assumption that the Fascists’ “big ideas,” however destructive they proved to be, were intrinsically superior to the supposed narrow-mindedness of the antifascist paradigm and the party system that it helped to spawn.

That Accame could say such things on national television prompted the journalist Barbara Spinelli to speak of “l’Italia malata,” of an ailing Italy that in the span of a few short weeks seemed all too willing to forget the destructive legacy of fascism. While its authors maintained that the *Combat Film* documentary revealed, “how we were” close to fifty years ago, Spinelli reasoned that the broadcast said more about “quello che stiamo diventando” (what we are becoming). A few weeks earlier, Spinelli maintained, it would have been unthinkable, impossible, for someone like
Accame, with noted neofascist affiliations, to appear on state-run television boasting that the Fascists “pensa in grande” (think big) and therefore could be excused for making big mistakes. “I think that just a few weeks ago,” Spinelli wrote, “such a broadcast would not have been possible: good taste would not have permitted it, nor would the memory of what fascism did, or why it was fought and defeated by the Allies.” That fascist fighters could now be eulogized in the public square as national “heroes”—an assessment made possible, Spinelli maintained, by this new-found license to say whatever one wished—was evidence of the extent to which political and cultural realities were changing, and in a substantive way. That these things could be said on national television and discussed under the guise of serious historical debate convinced many critics that, indeed, old norms and conventions were crumbling, existing taboos were no longer so. With the end of the First Republic, Spinelli worried, “everything is possible, everything is permissible…. Fascism is an idea, the same as any other: open for discussion. The same goes for the Resistance,” Spinelli concluded, “it too was an opinion, no more legitimate than any other.”

Hence, behind the rhetoric of “national pacification,” the argument goes, there was a deliberate and organized campaign of revisionism which political leaders such as Berlusconi helped to promote as part of what they were calling a “new era” in Italy’s history. As Richard Bosworth suggests, the political changes heralded by Berlusconi’s electoral victory in 1994, and the concomitant ascent of the National Alliance, were seen by many segments of Italy’s political and cultural elite as “an occasion to make peace between Fascists and anti-Fascists; their past conflicts should be redefined as only ‘a piece of history.’” As with earlier bouts of revisionism, the intent appeared to be to create what the Italian historian Nicola Gallerano describes as “a new historical common sense … in which the relationship with the past was cheerful and nostalgic, and above all ‘pacified.’”

The so-called “Second Republic” of the 1990s witnessed, we have seen, the rise of Italy’s neofascist political parties to the point where the Alleanza Nazionale, led by Gianfranco Fini, became a key element in Berlusconi’s center-right coalition government. Though Berlusconi’s first government was relatively short-lived, the neofascist presence in government was a watershed in postwar politics, marking the first time neofascists had participated in Italy’s government since the war. The Alle-
anza Nazionale was here to stay, a prospect that frightened and offended a good many people, in Italy and abroad.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, the Alleanza Nazionale moved to distance itself, at least symbolically, from its fascist past; hence the change in the party’s name from the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI). This apparent negation of the party’s fascist heritage, once a source of pride for party leaders and grassroots members alike, was seen as the precondition for the grafting of former neofascists onto a center-right coalition capable of occupying the mainstream of Italian political life. In December 1993, for example, when then-MSI leader Gianfranco Fini went to Rome’s Ardeatine Caves to commemorate the victims of Nazism killed there in 1944, he insisted publicly that fascism was indeed a thing of the past; a matter for the history books, not a living reality in Italian political life. Fini declared: “Even we, like all Italians, are post-Fascists. Not neo-Fascists.” Fini also called for a “clean and irreversible shift in the party program.” Later, when Fini rose to power as Italy’s deputy prime minister, he offered public condemnations of fascist racial laws that had targeted Italy’s Jewish population in the late 1930s. The most dramatic and very public critique of Mussolini fascism came during Fini’s official state visit to Israel in November 2003 when he declared that “the Italian people take responsibility for what happened in 1938, when the racial laws were adopted. There cannot be a condemnation without assuming responsibility.” It is interesting, and perhaps telling, that Fini assumed responsibility on behalf of the Italian people, omitting any direct reference to any one political party or philosophy.

On the surface, then, the attempt to rehabilitate former neofascists and lend credibility to Gianfranco Fini’s leadership entailed a strong, unequivocal dissociation of his own party from Mussolini’s legacy. Indeed, following Fini’s comments in Israel, distancing the National Alliance from Mussolini, the Duce’s granddaughter Alessandra, a prominent figure of the party, abruptly quit the party in protest. Fini’s comments, she said, revealed not so much a difference of opinion, but rather a “prejudice against my surname.” Yet, despite Alessandra Mussolini’s indignation, there is good reason to believe that, as Antonio Carioti notes, the National Alliance’s “break with the past was only apparent.” When in December 1993, Fini called for a “clean and irreversible shift” in the party program, he added an explicit reference to an old motto of the MSI—non rinnegare
e non restaurare (don’t deny, don’t restore). The letter and the spirit of such a motto is sufficiently ambiguous so as to raise doubts about the precise nature of the relationship between the fascist past and the party’s present-day reality. More concretely still, it would be useful to explore whether or to what extent the symbolic transformation of the MSI into the National Alliance reflected substantive transformations in the political philosophy of Fini and the postfascists. According to Carioti, the founding documents of the National Alliance “reveal no trace of a profound and deeply felt theoretical-revision” in the party philosophy. Indeed, Carioti insists that the National Alliance that formally replaced the MSI at the start of 1995 “cannot seriously be considered a new party” at all, given its lingering institutional ties to individual members and political groupings associated with the former MSI.  

It is important to recall that there was nothing particularly new in the historical revisionism that inspired so much public debate about fascism/antifascism in the mid-1990s. Nor was this the first time that reflections on Mussolini’s execution and the public exposition of his corpse in the Piazzale Loreto had occasioned substantive public debates over the meaning of the end of World War II for Italian national identity and the nature of the postwar democracy. Indeed, as early as 1980—in the midst of ongoing political tensions and national soul-searching brought on by the waning influence of the Catholic and communist subcultures and the deadly specter of domestic political terrorism—Italians tuned into the RAI television network to see Damiano Damiani’s documentary titled simply Piazzale Loreto. According to the Italian historian Guido Crainz, with Damiani’s documentary about the exposition and mutilation of Mussolini’s corpse in the Milanese square in April 1945, “we reach a high point of reflection on the past.” The documentary’s central theme was violence, in particular “partisan violence” against Nazism-fascism, and this in the midst of Italy’s anni di piombo, when fears of domestic terrorism were intense and diffuse. Damiani was credited with tackling an immensely sensitive subject at an immensely sensitive time, and doing so in a sophisticated way that gave room to the many different voices eager to speak on the matter. Crainz maintains that Damiani’s Piazzale Loreto was all the more remarkable as one of the few instances in which Italy’s state-run television network “made any serious attempt to grapple with the problem of terrorism,” that is, by linking the contemporary threat of
domestic terrorism to the legacy of violence associated with the end of the war in 1945.\textsuperscript{71}

At the same time, however, as with \textit{Combat Film} in the 1990s, Damiani's \textit{Piazzale Loreto} and the many other documentaries or fictionalized series about Italy's recent past both reflected and helped to promote a new round of historical revisionism that invariably opened the door to a kind of moral relativism vis-à-vis contemporary judgments of fascism and antifascism.\textsuperscript{72} The historical and moral-ethical assessment of fascist versus partisan violence was at the heart of another "upsurge of revisionism" in the Italian media in 1989–90. The debate centered on the so-called \textit{triangolo della morte} (triangle of death). This referred to episodes of retributive violence committed at war's end, mainly by communist partisans against former Fascists and fascist sympathizers in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy.

As in previous bouts of revisionism, and as would happen with the \textit{Combat Film} footage, Italian journalists seized on the supposed "revelations" of a widespread campaign of retributive justice on the part of communist partisans in 1945 for decidedly political purposes. According to Simone Neri Serneri, the media debate over the \textit{triangolo della morte} had at least two clear purposes. For one, it was aimed at tarring the Italian Communist Party's central—indeed one could say mythical—role in the fight against fascism, so as to impugn the party's claims to be a legitimate democratic alternative in the Italian political system. To this end, the stories about the \textit{triangolo della morte} tried to substantiate what might be called a "thesis" of a "cold civil war" within Italian political culture—one between Communists and anticommunists, not between Fascists and antifascists as the hegemonic culture of antifascism would have it. At the same time, the revisionist debate over the triangle of death was yet another way of spreading an alternative version of the history of the Resistance, one in which the Resistance itself was "contaminated, if not dominated, by private and party acts of violence." And, furthermore, these private and party acts of violence gave evidence that partisan fighters had been "no less savage" than the Fascists. Here, again, was the familiar blurring of the lines of moral judgments on fascism and antifascism, on Mussolini's Italian Social Republic and the Resistance. In this alternative version of Italy's recent past, Neri Serneri notes, the Resistance had been, in fact, a bona fide \textit{civil war}, "where the warring parties had each had their own
interests, some culpable, others praiseworthy.” In the final analysis, the kind of revisionism offered in public debates about the triangle of death opened the door to normative conclusions that the “divisions linked to such tragic and far-off crimes could no longer be perpetuated.”

If these forms of public memory, framed mainly by the mass media for a mass audience, were intended to remember the past in such a way as to influence contemporary politics in certain directions, it is also the case that the professional historians were already deeply engaged in sound historical analysis of the end of the war in Italy. Indeed, by the time the media and public opinion got around to thinking about the rhetorical meaning of terms like “resistance” as opposed to “civil war,” or to learning about the triangolo della morte, historians of contemporary Italy had already produced a substantial body of work documenting the extent and nature of the events in question. Perhaps most notable was Claudio Pavone’s masterful and deeply influential monograph La guerra civile, which, in addition to weaving together a rich tapestry of the Resistance experience with extensive primary documentation, insisted on speaking of the “morality” of the Resistance. That is, Pavone invited his readers to consider the moral and political legacy of the Resistance, not only for the end of the war in Italy and the final defeat of Nazism-fascism, but also for helping to set the genetic code of Italy’s postwar democratic culture. Pavone’s serene if deeply engaged reflection on the meaning of the Resistance and the end of the war in Italy stood in stark contrast to much of the public debate over this traumatic period. Certain elements of the Italian press, in particular, displayed a troubling, if predictable, propensity to latch on to what was sensational, shocking and controversial about Italy’s recent past, with little regard for any distortions created in the process, intentionally or not. Simone Neri Serneri has concluded that, more often than not, the press was all too eager to use the historical debate over the “civil war” or the “triangle of death,” for political-ideological reasons. This demonstrates yet again, a consistent pattern in which “the mass media are not interesting in questioning or popularizing historical research, but only in exploiting ‘historical material’... to confer a so-called scientific authority upon their own ideological-political message.”

Historical revisionism, therefore, can be used to open the door to a kind of moral relativism vis-à-vis contemporary judgments of fascism and antifascism. Any historical reassessment of the nature and degree of
partisan violence against Nazi-Fascists invariably raises normative questions about the ethics of violence committed in what its adherents believed to be a just cause. In short, what differentiates fascist acts of violence from partisan violence? It is not clear what the implications of this revisionism might be, for historical scholarship, but more importantly for the civic health of Italy’s democratic polity. On what ground does Italy’s democratic republic stand, if not on the moral-political foundation of antifascism? If an incomplete and selective memory of the crimes of fascism has harmed the “civil conscience” of Italians, as some historians lament, then what will be the effect of public and private memories that conflate fascism and antifascism and prove reluctant to assert the moral superiority of the latter over the former?

CONCLUSION

Claudio Pavone asked recently, “Have the Italians truly known how to come to terms with their fascist past?” More to the point have Italians been able or even willing to come to terms with the events of World War II and the conduct of some of the Italian military in occupied territories, as the so-called “junior partner” of the Nazis?

There is something of a consensus emerging among many scholars and other commentators to suggest that the simple answer to those questions is no. Not only have Italians not confronted fully their fascist past, the argument goes, but they—politicians, intellectuals, the general public—have cultivated, promoted and internalized the myth of the Italians as brava gente, or what Pavone describes as the myth of the “inherent goodness of the Italians.” Other commentators speak of the “bad German-good Italian” trope as a evidence of the very same attitude which served both legal-political purposes during Italy’s democratic transition, but also set the terms of reference for much of the scholarship on Italian fascism after 1945. Ruth Ben-Ghiat refers to an “exculpatory legal and ideological” process after 1945 which had both immediate consequences for the dynamics of Italy’s postwar transition, and in shaping scholarly understandings of the nature of Italian fascism, especially in comparison to Nazi Germany. When it came to the dynamics of democratic transition, for instance, the “bad German-good Italian” myth perpetuated both a
kind of “blame game” and a rhetoric of victimization. On the one hand, Mussolini’s dictatorship could be seen to have been essentially benign relative to the racialist and genocidal nature of German Nazism; even Italian complicity with such Nazi-inspired policies as the racial laws and the deportation of Jews to concentration camps could be minimized by arguing that anti-Semitism and racialist thinking were German imports of the late interwar period. This has contributed to the notable tendency in historiography and in general perceptions of Italian fascism as a “lesser evil” than Nazism. According to Ben-Ghiat, this tendency to speak of Italian fascism as an “imperfect totalitarianism” has actually impeded a full and proper historical assessment of the true nature of Mussolini’s dictatorship. Instead, she writes, “it has until very recently fostered a witting or unwitting underestimation of Fascist violence committed both within and outside of Italy, and has perpetuated historiographical traditions and popular credos that minimize Italians’ agency and their responsibility for such violence.”

For his part, Claudio Pavone reasons that the absence of a full and thorough documentation of both Nazi and fascist occupation practices has contributed to an “impoverished” understanding of fascism itself, and of the complexity of Italian attitudes and actions in the interwar era and during World War II. A selective memory of the Italians as brava gente, the argument goes, has actually slowed and even warped the development of the country’s so-called “civil conscience,” an indispensable element of any democratic polity.

It is clear from the Italian case, for example, that the legal and political rationale for closing the door on the investigation and prosecution of war crimes, or for issuing an amnesty that ended the purge of Italian administration/institutions of fascist elements, may have served the objective of hastening Italy’s postwar transition. These decisions likely did succeed in avoiding the radicalization of popular sentiment, in particular the revolutionary impulse of certain segments of the population. But it is also clear that both the historical record and the collective memory of fascism and war were the poorer for it. With thousands of investigative dossiers closed and locked away in military or state archives for decades, it has not been possible for historians to document fully—certainly not to the extent that this has been done for Nazi Germany—the way Mussolini’s regime actually worked, or the nature and extent of Italian occupation policies.
Without full and unfettered access to both military or civilian archives, it is not possible for historians to provide detailed analyses of what the Italian historian Enzo Collotti describes as "the concrete institutions through which fascism oppressed and repressed national minorities, racial minorities [and] political adversaries...." \(^8\) And without such detailed historical assessments, it continues to be difficult for historians to understand the true nature of Italian fascism or to reflect more deeply on its "totalitarian" quality, especially by way of comparison with its German counterpart.

These omissions in the documentary record and in historical interpretation, in turn contribute to "gaps" in Italian collective memory. As Ben-Ghiat notes, "Italian atrocities committed in their Balkan and colonial territories, the more than 50 concentration camps throughout Italy that held Jews and foreigners during World War II, the forced labor of Italian Jews in the cities and countryside—none of these events has much resonance at the level of individual recollection...." \(^8\) Nonetheless, even though these gaps may not matter much to the day-to-day lived experiences of most Italians, it is arguable that such gaps really do constitute a deformed or immature "civil conscience" that, in turn, harms the health of Italy's democratic polity and influences debates over national identity and public policy. In any event, further research is needed to test this hypothesis. The historian Ernesto Galli della Loggia is convinced that these gaps do, indeed, matter; they contribute, he says, to the "singular schizophrenia" of Italian public opinion which reflects the "bad German-good Italian" dichotomy discussed above.\(^8\)

To speak as some have of Italy's "melodramatic fascination" with its recent history, or of a "singular schizophrenia" in Italian collective memory, is to invite further reflection on the connections between how the past is remembered and the lived experience of contemporary society. In death, as in life, Mussolini was as much a symbol as he was a cause of the elementary struggle to define Italian collective identity, a task left unresolved since Unification in the nineteenth century. Indeed, in the nineteenth century, the men who unified Italy boasted of having "made Italy" but realized that the far more daunting task of "making Italians" lay before them. Mussolini, the Socialist-cum-Fascist, proffered a third way in his attempt to "make Italians" by fusing left and right, thereby going beyond the political alliances made between left and right in the nineteenth century. In this sense, the story of Mussolini's violent end, the
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public mutilation of his corpse, and the selective memory of the end of World War II reveals the extent to which Italian national identity, like its recent history, remains contested terrain.

NOTES

3. Reports of the events of Piazzale Loreto in late April 1945 abound in Italian historiography and in public memory. See also newspaper accounts of the time, including the series of New York Times reports from 30 April 1945. For a concise summary of the events in question, see Mirco Dondi, “Piazzale Loreto,” in Mario Isnenghi, ed., I luoghi della memoria: Simboli e miti dell’Italia unita (Rome-Bari, 1996), 487–99.
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10. See, for example, the article “Malcontents in Italy: Neo-Fascism as a Rallying Point for All Classes,” The Times, 17 July 1951; “Rights Regained by Fascists,” ibid., 2 Jan. 1953; and “Double Threat to Italian Democracy: Challenge of the Right,” ibid., 5 June 1953.


13. See Baoini, “Predappio.”


15. In 1944, the Central Committee of the CLN in Rome granted sweeping powers to its Milan Committee which, according to Paul Ginsborg, “became the supreme organ of the Resistance,” and took the name National Committee for the Liberation of Upper Italy. See Ginsborg, A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943–1988 (London, 1990), 16.

16. H. Stuart Hughes, The United States and Italy (Cambridge, MA, 1979), 135.


18. On the question of popular consensus under fascism and the debate over when and why support for the Duce evaporated among ordinary Italians, see Pietro Scoppola, La Repubblica dei partiti: Evoluzione e crisi di un sistema politico, 1945–1996 (Bologna, 1991), 84–85. Utterly indispensable to this debate, however controversial it may be, is Renzo De Felice’s mammoth biography of Mussolini,
especially his *Mussolini Palleato*, 2 vols. (Turin, 1990), and more recently his *Rosso e nero*, ed. Pasquale Chessa (Milan, 1995).

19. “Libertà cosciente,” *La Punta*, 2 Feb. 1944, quoted by Claudio Pavone, *Una guerra civile: Saggio storico sulla moralità nella Resistenza* (Milan, 1991), 564–65. It is interesting to note that while this call for the political education of Italians was pronounced among British policymakers, American policymakers were more magnanimous vis-à-vis the Italians, for the most part distinguishing between the Italian people and the fascist regime. There were many reasons for this difference in attitude, including the influence of the large and prominent Italian American community in the US, as well as the influence in Washington of high-profile antifascist exiles such as the historian Gaetano Salvemini and Mussolini’s former foreign minister, Carlo Sforza, who fled to the US in opposition to Mussolini’s regime in July 1940. Sforza in particular was critical in convincing US policymakers that the Italians were at heart a democratic, peace-loving people. Men like Sforza persuasively sold the line that fascism represented a betrayal of the “real” Italy and of Italy’s traditional alliances and orientation. See James Miller, “Carlo Sforza e l’evoluzione della politica americana verso l’Italia, 1940–1943,” *Storia contemporanea* (Dec. 1976): 825–53; and J. P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton, NJ, 1972).

20. If the Armistice of September 1943 is any indication, the Allies envisioned a different fate for the former dictator. The agreement signed by the government of Marshall Pietro Badoglio with the Allies, which ostensibly took Italy out of the war, contained an oft-forgotten clause that obliged the Italians to ensure that fascist officials were captured alive and turned over to the Allies for criminal trials. On the terms of the armistice, see Elena Aga-Rossi, *Una nazione allo sbando: L’armistizio italiano del settembre 1943* (Bologna, 1993), 79. The full text of the armistice can be found in idem, *L’inganno reciproco: L’armistizio tra l’Italia e gli angloamericani del settembre 1943* (Rome, 1993).

21. In a series of articles Mussolini wrote and published under the title *Giramondo* during the last year or so of his life, he asked to be spared “la farsa di un assordante processo a Madison Square di Nuova York,” and he said he was proud to be living through “il quinto terribile atto” of the national drama in person. See his writings, collected and published in English translation as *The Fall of Mussolini: His Own Story*, trans. Frances Frenaye, ed. Max Ascoli (Westport, CT, 1975).

22. Luzzatto, *Il corpo del duce*, 41. See also L. Canfora, *La sentenza: Concetto Marchesi e Giovanni Gentile* (Palermo, 1985). A highly symbolic gesture in this regard was the assassination of prominent fascist leader Giovanni Gentile in Florence on 15 April 1944, or the order given by the CLNAI to execute supporters of the Italian Social Republic as traitors. These and other such gestures can be seen
as bold and unequivocal responses to fascist delusions of a negotiated settlement to spare Mussolini’s life

23. Luzzatto, Il corpo del duce, 42.

24. On the amnesty and the abortive “purge” of fascist officials, see Giorgio Bocca’s biography, Palmiro Togliatti (Milan, 1991), 416–20. See also Roy Palmer Domenico, Italian Fascists on Trial, 1943–1948 (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991). Even during the war the Allies understood that prosecuting fascism in Italy would be a difficult task. On one level, there was the question of how to define war guilt and how to verify accusations made against individuals, and on an equally pragmatic level, how to purge Italian (and German) society of fascism without “destroying the whole structure” of society. See “Guilt of Italians Complex Problem,” New York Times, 5 Nov. 1943.

25. Luzzatto, Il corpo del duce, 42. Valiani’s original article is in “L’ora del popolo,” L’Italia libera (Milan edition), 26 April 1945. Longo was quoted in G. Pesce, Quando cessarono gli spari, (Milan, 1977), 129. Pertini’s views have been described in G. Artieri, Le guerre dimenticate di Mussolini: Etiopia e Spagna (Milan, 1995), 283. On Pertini’s general hard-line approach to dealing with the Italian Social Republic, see Paolo Spriano, Storia del partito comunisto italiano, vol. 5, La Resistenza, Togliatti e il partito nuovo (Turin, 1975), 446.


27. For this notion of the “sacralization” of politics in Fascist Italy (and in Nazi Germany for that matter), see Emilio Gentile, The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy (Cambridge, 1996); and George L. Mosse, Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich (New York, 1975). For the notion that Mussolini’s execution and the subsequent mutilation of his corpse amounted to a “desacralization,” see Mario Isnenghi, “L’esposizione della morte,” in Gabriele Ranzato, ed., Guerre fratricide: Le guerre civili in età contemporanea (Turin, 1994), 330–52, esp. 333.


29. Luzzatto, Il corpo del duce, 42; cf. A. Repaci, Fascismo vecchio e nuovo e altri saggi (Turin, 1954), 137.
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33. Walter Audisio, *In nome del popolo italiano* (Milan, 1975). Interestingly, Audisio’s account was published posthumously, at the author’s request, and purports to substantiate the version he gave through the pages of *l’Unità* in the days and months following Mussolini’s death. Indeed, the memoir is filled with Audisio’s repeated assurances of the veracity and complete accuracy of his account, aware as he was of a lifetime of doubts and skepticism that followed him after the events of 28 April 1945.

34. Luzzatto unhesitatingly gives in to just such a temptation in *Il corpo del duce*, 45.

35. By the 1970s doubts had surfaced over the veracity of the claim and, by extension, over the question of who legitimately could claim responsibility for Mussolini’s execution. And the greatest doubt of all came from Valerio’s accomplice, Guido—the communist official Aldo Lampredi. In 1972, Lampredi challenged Audisio’s version of events in a confidential memorial to the secretary of the Italian Communist Party, which, interestingly, was made fully public only in the late 1990s, testimony to the ongoing contestation of the memory of fascism, antifascism and the war. See Lampredi’s testimonial in “La fine del Duce,” *l’Unità*, 23 Jan. 1996; cf. G. Bocca’s response to the publication of the testimonial, “Che noia è rimorto il Duce,” *La Repubblica*, 25 Jan. 1996. Lampredi’s version of Mussolini’s execution challenged two key motifs of Audisio’s account: the claim to have pronounced a death sentence on behalf of the Italian people; and that the *Duce* had died a coward’s death. As with Audisio’s version of the story, what is at stake here is not simply historical accuracy but rather the symbolic meaning of these respective images of the past. While Audisio depicted Mussolini as a pathetic, trembling, cowering figure in the final moments of his life, Lampredi recalled that, far from being speechless, Mussolini cried out loudly and decisively: “Mirate al cuore!” (Aim for the heart).


39. The Vatican reaction is described in Milton Bracker’s piece “Slain by Partisans,” *New York Times*, 30 April 1945, 1. See also *l’Osservatore Romano*, late
April–early May 1945. For the reaction of some CLN members, including the moderate centrist and right-wing parties, see the unsigned article “Il racconto del partigiani che esegui la sentenza e Come ho visto Mussolini a Piazzale Loreto a Milano,” Risorgimento liberale, 1 May 1945. See also the Christian Democrat organ Il popolo, 30 April 1945. Cf. A. Giovagnoli, La cultura democristiana (Rome-Bari, 1996) for Catholic reaction to the events in question. Other critical assessments of the events of late April 1945 came from leading antifascists such as Piero Calamandrei, in his Ponte magazine. See, for example, “Idrometro,” June 1945, 254, written under the pseudonym “Il Pontiere.” See also reactions by Adolfo Omodeo, a well-known Action Party activist, in his Lettere 1910–1946 (Turin, 1963); and G. Ansaldo, Diario di prigionia (Bologna, 1993). For a sense of how Mussolini’s family reacted to the news of his death and public mutilation of his corpse, see Anita Pensotti’s interview with Mussolini’s son Romano, “Il Memoriale di Romano Mussolini a cinquant’anni dalla morte di suo padre,” Oggi, April–May 1995, esp. 42–44.

40. Sforza is quoted by Audisio in In nome del popolo italiano, 383–84.
42. See “L’esecuzione di Mussolini,” l’Unità, 30 April 1945.
44. On the difficult task facing Resistance leaders as they came to terms with the limited nature of the Resistance and its responsibilities to rebuild and redefine Italy, see G. E. Rusconi, Se cessiamo di essere una nazione: Tra etnodemocrazie regionali e cittadinanza europea (Bologna, 1993). See also Luzzatto, Il corpo del duce, 69.
45. See Ventresca, From Fascism to Democracy, introduction and chap 1.
46. The debate begun by De Felice in his controversial book-interview, Rosso e nero, has been summarized in a useful survey by Jader Jacobelli, ed., Il fascismo e gli storici oggi (Rome-Bari, 1988).
47. For a brief overview of the role antifascism played in Italy’s democratic transition after 1945, see Giovanni De Luna and Marco Revelli, Fascismo, antifascismo: Le idée, le identità (Florence, 1995).
49. In addition to ibid., see an insightful commentary by Simone Neri Serneri, “A Past to Be Thrown Away? Politics and History in the Italian Resistance,” Contemporary European History 4, no. 3 (1995): 367–81. A more thorough exploration of the “fascist–antifascist antithesis” can be found in De Luna and Revelli,
Fascismo, antifascismo, which maintains that this is actually a broad interpretative framework in which to understand the whole history of postwar Italy.


51. For a general overview of the foundational myths of the postwar Republic and the role of antifascism in Italy’s democratic transition, see Ventresca, From Fascism to Democracy, introduction and chap. 1.

52. Neri Serneri, “A Past to Be Thrown Away?” 368. This was at least part of De Felice’s critique of the “culture of antifascism” in Rosso e nero.


54. Ibid. The journalists who edited and presented Combat Film, principally Vittorio Zucconi, Roberto Olla and Leonardo Valente, were unmistakably critical of the “staged” nature of the footage, while insisting that the material was “unedited” and therefore objective in its presentation of the “facts.” See “Gli autori si difendono,” La Stampa, 8 April 1994, 5; Simonetta Fiori, “Ma l’autore non si pente,” La Repubblica, 8 April 1994, 10–11; and Guido Tiberga, “Soldati reclutati a Hollywood: Chi c’era dietro la macchina da presa,” La Stampa, 7 April 1994.

55. See Sandro Veronesi’s biting indictment of the Combat Film series in which he accuses the RAI of “rewriting history,” “La Rai rescrive la storia: Salò e la Resistenza sono uguali,” l’Unità, 7 April 1994, 3.

56. Basic errors of fact include associating the liberal philosopher Benedetto Croce with Communist Party leader Palmiro Togliatti’s strategically significant svolta di Salerno in 1944, and erroneous information about the establishment of the CLN. I will discuss the reaction of professional historians below, but for a sample of the critical assessment of how the RAI journalists carried out their work, see “Galante Garrone: ‘Schiaffo alla storia’,” l’Unità, 8 April 1994, p. 6; Giorgio Bocca, “I due falsi storici del 25 aprile,” La Repubblica, 14 April 1994, 1, 6; Alessandra Baduel, “Pavone: ‘Mai sentite tante falsità,’” l’Unità, 7 April 1994, 4; “Emozioni tante, poca storia,” an interview with partisan and writer Nuto Revelli, La Stampa, 7 April 1994, 5.

57. For a survey of audience share, see “Combat Film, bufera sulla RAI,” La Stampa, 7 April 1994, 5; and “Milioni di spettatori, ma è polemica: La RAI nella tempesta per i film USA sul ’45,” ibid., 7 April 1994, 1. See also “In 2,5 milioni incollati allo schermo,” La Repubblica, 8 April 1994, 11; and “La Rai replica lo scoop dell’orrore: Il fascismo in tv tra choc e polemiche,” ibid., 7 April 1994, 9.

58. See Alessandra Mussolini’s interview to Maurizio Tropeano, “Mussolini: ‘Ho spento la tv’,” La Stampa, 8 April 1994, 5.


61. Many critics charged that Zucconi favored Accame over Anselmi, to the point of ignoring the latter at crucial moments in the broadcast to give voice to Accame or to others in the studio. See Sandro Veronesi, “La Rai riscrive la storia: Salò e la Resistenza sono uguali,” *l’Unità*, 7 April 1994, 3.

62. Accame referred to the controversy over *Tangentopoli*—translated loosely as “bribesville,” it refers to the widespread corruption and bribery scandal that helped bring down Italy’s First Republic and defined the early years of the Second Republic. See Barbara Spinelli, “La TV e l’Italia malata,” *La Stampa*, 8 April 1994, 1, 6.

63. Ibid.

64. Bosworth, “The Italian ‘Second Republic’,” 16. Bosworth maintains that the bout of historical revisionism associated with Renzo De Felice’s very public comments on the history of fascism and its legacy for Italy and for Europe was integral to this political “revision” of the fascist–antifascist antithesis. See, for example, De Felice’s role as consultant to the exhibition *The Italian Economy between the Wars, 1919–1939* held in Rome’s Colosseum, 22 Sept.–18 Nov. 1984. For a fascinating account of the exhibition, which was considered a major popular success, see Tim Mason, “The Great Economic History Show,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 21 (spring 1986): 3–35. For a concise, if somewhat thin, summary of De Felice’s place in the historiography of Italian fascism, see Borden W. Painter, Jr., “Renzo De Felice and the Historiography of Italian Fascism,” *American Historical Review* 95, no. 2 (April 1990): 391–405.


68. See the story as reported in *La Repubblica*, 27 Nov. 2003. This was not the first time Alessandra had broken ranks and left the National Alliance, although for different reasons. See “A Mussolini Quits Rightist Party in Italy,” *New York Times*, 15 Nov. 1996, A8.

69. Carioti, “From the Ghetto to *Palazzo Chigi*,” 62.

70. Ibid., 57, 73–75.
72. See, for example, Nicola Caracciolo’s Tutti gli uomini del Duce (transmitted in 5 parts in 1982), Pasquale Squitieri’s Claretta (1984), and Alberto Negrin’s Io e il Duce (1985).
74. On the “triangle of death,” see, for example, ibid., 370 n.9.
78. See Claudio Pavone’s excellent and concise “Introduction” to the special issue of the Journal of Modern Italian Studies 9, no. 3 (2004), devoted to the so-called “hidden pages” of contemporary Italian history, 271-79, esp. 271-74.
79. Ibid., 271.
80. Ibid., 271-74. For a fuller treatment of the myth of Italian “goodness,” see D. Bidussa, Il mito del bravo italiano (Milan, 1994).
83. See Bidussa, Il mito del bravo italiano. In the past decade or so, Italian historians have devoted ever-greater attention to the racism and racist thought in fascist Italy. See Alberto Burgio, “Una ipotesi di lavoro per la storia del razzismo italiano,” in idem and Luciano Casali, eds., Studi sul razzismo italiano (Bologna, 1996), 19-28. For the most recent scholarship on the Jews of Italy under fascism and Italian anti-Semitism, see Stefano Luconi’s review article “Recent Trends in the Study of Italian anti-Semitism under the Fascist Regime,” Patterns of Prejudice 38, no. 1 (March 2004): 1-17. See also B. D. Cooperman and B. Garvin, eds., The Jews of Italy: Memory and Identity (Bethesda, MD, 2000); and Joshua D. Zimmerman, ed., The Jews of Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945 (Cambridge, 2005). The latter anthology works to challenges the “myth” of Italian benevolence vis-à-vis Jews in the fascist era.


86. See Pavone, "Introduction," 271–74.


