

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF *IL DUCE*
TRACING POLITICAL TRENDS IN THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN MEDIA DURING
THE EARLY YEARS OF FASCISM

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ABSTRACT

Scholars of Italian-American history have traditionally asserted that the ethnic community's media during the 1920s and 1930s was pro-Fascist leaning. This thesis challenges that narrative by proving that moderate, and often ambivalent, opinions existed at one time, and the shift to a philo-Fascist position was an active process. Using a survey of six Italian-language sources from diverse cities during the inauguration of Benito Mussolini's regime, research shows that interpretations varied significantly. One of the newspapers, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano* (Youngstown, Ohio) is then used as a case study to better understand why events in Italy were interpreted in certain ways. The thesis concludes with methods used by the Italian Fascist government to alter the journalistic atmosphere in the United States, thus leading to an environment only conducive to a philo-Fascist stance.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Throughout the interwar period, Benito Mussolini's Fascism weighed heavily in the thoughts and minds of the Italian-American people. Although no longer physically connected to their or their forebears' state of birth, many still felt an affinity to the nation. Most had family that resided in Italy, and even for those attached only ethnically, the advancement and prestige of their ancestral country translated directly to an improved status within the eyes of the native, white American society. Yet, the Fascist system was dualist in nature. Mussolini spoke with concern for the average Italian, while coupling that concern with militancy and a developing totalitarian system. The question for Italian-Americans thus became whether the positives of the regime outweighed the negatives, and whether ambivalence could give way to consensus.

For Jerre Mangione, this debate was all too real. Coming of age in 1920s and 1930s Rochester, New York, Mangione experienced an immigrant community in flux; one that was Americanizing but still felt connected to Italy, and interested in its affairs. In 1936, he travelled to his ancestral land to search for the truth, and published his thoughts in the well-received *Mount Allegro*:

In my years of becoming an American I had come to understand the evil of Fascism and hate it with all my soul. One or two of my relatives argued with me on the subject because they had a great love for their native land and, like some men in love, they could see nothing wrong. Fascism was only a word to them; Mussolini a patriotic Italian putting his country on its feet. Why did I insist on finding fault with Fascism, they asked, when all the American newspapers were admitting Mussolini was a great man who made the trains run on time?¹

¹ Jerre Mangione, *Mount Allegro: A Memoir of Italian American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943; New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 239-240.

Mount Allegro was written as a quasi-autobiographical account. Mangione changed the names of the characters and, given his background as a writer, undoubtedly added a little flair to otherwise ordinary events; however, even if the preceding passage was slightly sensationalized, it only shows the writer's concern more deeply. In Mangione's opinion, Fascism was a divisive subject and newspapers published in the United States carried only one side of the story.

This generalization of a pro-Fascist American press is not unique to Mangione, and many other period writers have pushed the same idea. The famed historian and exiled anti-Fascist Gaetano Salvemini believed that ethnics were "accustomed to their daily dose of propaganda in Italian" from domestic papers and radio prior to the Second World War.² Writing about the same time, Chicago high-school teacher Pearl B. Drubeck assigned her Italian class to analyze some foreign-language newspapers. Using *Il Progresso* and *Corriere d'America* – the two most circulated in her district – as sources, the class discovered that both had "a definite fascist propaganda program" full of "editorials, news items and letters from contributors deriding [American] democratic institutions and [the students] realized that the exaltation of Il Duce and the fascist policies was quite deliberate".³

Historians have continued the pro-Fascist press argument. John P. Diggins asserted in *Mussolini and Fascism* that "[i]n the United States Mussolini's popularity was to a great extent a product of the press", both English-language and Italian.⁴ The ethnic

² Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, ed. Philip V. Cannistraro (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977), 248.

³ Pearl B. Drubeck, "Propaganda and Foreign Language Study", *The Modern Language Journal* 25, no. 11 (December 1941): 882. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/317139> (accessed 27 November 2011).

⁴ John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 24.

papers in particular were quite fond of *il Duce*, and Diggins estimated that they were “almost 90 percent pro-Mussolini”.⁵ In more recent work, Italian-historian Matteo Pretelli agreed with Diggins, and concluded that “[t]he Italian ethnic press in the United States was particularly successful in promoting the myth of *Il Duce*. ...[T]he ethnic newspapers sided [with] the regime by publishing enthusiastic reports of immigrants visiting Italy, letters of Italians to relatives in America that hailed the Fascist ‘achievements’, and the alleged unity of [the] Italian people around its leader”.⁶

According to such historians, opposition was the work of a very small minority. Diggins in particular noted that the majority of “anti-Fascist publications represented the opinion of Italian-American labor”.⁷ Criticism of Mussolini and his regime thus came from leftist papers, often Marxist or anarchist, which were viewed already as radical to many in the ethnic community. The staunchly anti-Fascist *Il Martello*, for example, was published by Carlo Tresca. A well-known labor leader and revolutionary, Tresca organized strikes, was briefly associated with the Industrial Workers of the World, and toiled for the defense party in the Sacco-Vanzetti murder trial. Considering that American officials habitually watched both him and his paper, coupled with his well-publicized four-month prison stint in 1925, it is no surprise why scholars have insisted that anti-Fascist news resided outside of mainstream reporting.

Unfortunately, this paints a very sterile picture of the Italian-American press during the interwar period. This is not to say that at one time the ethnic media may have approached a ninety percent pro-Fascist ratio. Salvemini estimated from his personal

⁵ Ibid, 107.

⁶ Matteo Pretelli, "The Myth of Mussolini in U.S. 'Little Italies'", in *Przewroty – Rewolucje – Wojny: Studia Historica Gedanensia*, vol. II (Gdańsk, Poland: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2011), 280. *Academia.edu*, <http://www.academia.edu/777192> (accessed 2 July 2013).

⁷ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 83.

experiences in the 1930s that only ten percent of the Italian-American population was anti-Fascist. Half considered their own affairs primary to any foreign concerns and generally stayed out of politics, allowing the community to follow whichever side it pleased. Although less than five percent were openly supportive of Mussolini, the final thirty-five percent were undecided and could have been converted easily by the more organized Fascist faction if needed.⁸ If these estimates were accurate, then Diggins's approximation is certainly plausible. This is especially true when paired with the realization that most ethnic newspaper owners and editors were at least moderately positioned members of Italian-American society, and thus were more susceptible to conservative Fascist views than to those promoted by people like Tresca.

The purpose of this thesis is not to disprove that an overwhelmingly pro-Fascist consensus may have existed within Italian-language newspapers in the United States at one time. In fact, many historians have noted a high point for Mussolini's government in the 1930s. The apparent success of corporatism – at least to those not residing in Italy – along with the Fascist government's ability to mend the diplomatic schism with the Catholic Church in 1929 impressed many in the United States. Furthermore, Italian-Americans applauded Mussolini's war in Ethiopia, assuming that the Fascist victory would elevate Italy's prestige to that of the other great world powers, like the United Kingdom, France, or the United States. Yet, while a pro-Fascist majority may have existed around this time, this is a generalization when applied to the entire interwar period.

Instead, this thesis seeks to prove that the shift of the Italo-American news media towards a pro-Fascist perspective was an active process. Except for the most ardently

⁸ Salvemini, 244-245.

pro-Mussolini papers or leftist publications, interpretations of Italian events between 1922 and 1924 were often ambivalent about the new regime and presented a moderate stance in opinion when viewed as an aggregate. However, research from these years also demonstrates that the ethnic news media was willing to accommodate changes in its presentation under certain conditions. In time, indirect interference from the Fascist government created an artificial journalistic atmosphere within the United States, and it contributed to a type of press hegemony. Eventually, these influences shifted the Italian-American print media towards the often-claimed pro-Mussolini stance, thereby completing a slow, decade-long process of changing perceptions about *il Duce's* Italy.

The difficulty of this task arises not from a lack of primary evidence, but rather from the absence of a large body of secondary work. Some of the earliest historiographical material about the subject comes from the writings of the aforementioned Gaetano Salvemini. His edited work, now found in *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, forms the foundation for many later studies, and it is often cited by scholars.⁹ Written in pieces during the late 1930s and early 1940s, Salvemini recorded a number of his observations. These included not only his estimates for the number of Fascists and fellow travelers in the Italian-American community, but also the names of organizations and individuals that he believed were spreading Mussolini's ideology in the United States.

Besides being an important source, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States* is also representative of the post-war historiography of the subject: everything was generally put aside and forgotten. Just as many Italians sought to disguise what some

⁹ Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, ed. Philip V. Cannistraro (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977).

now call “*una vera guerra civile*” (a true civil war) in 1943–1945 Italy, most Americans did not want to expose any previous divisions in a nation preparing to fight a new ‘cold’ war.¹⁰ Ethnic Italians, like many other early-twentieth century immigrants, gained acceptance to mainstream American society as a reward for their loyalty and sacrifice in the Second World War; few wanted to explore the dark subject and jeopardize the group’s new status.¹¹ More telling is the fact that Salvemini published only a few excerpts from his work on Fascism in the United States during his lifetime. Whether the historian did not want to reopen wounds or if he felt the topic was no longer viable after the collapse of Mussolini’s government cannot be answered. What is certain is that his notes returned with him to Italy, and were finally edited and published as a book in 1977, twenty years after his death.

It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that scholars reopened the subject of the perception of Italian Fascism in the United States. Possibly influenced by the intellectual shift to New Social History, many of the initial post-war interpretations centered on people, especially the ethnic population, and politics. One of the first was John P. Diggins, and he led the discussion by publishing a series of articles all dealing with the manner in which certain groups of Americans accepted or rejected Mussolini and his ideology. This work was synthesized a few years later in *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America*.¹² In the book, after analyzing the opinions held by the different groups towards Italian Fascism, Diggins concludes that *il Duce* was generally well-

¹⁰ Giordano Bruno Guerri, *Antistoria degli italiani: Da Romolo a Giovanni Paolo II* (Milan: Oscar Mondadori, 1999), 334.

¹¹ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 187-267.

¹² John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

received by the majority of Americans. Still respected as an initial foray into the subject and for its comprehensiveness, subsequent publications, including this thesis, continue to draw heavily from Diggins's work.

Beginning in the 1970s, Philip Cannistraro studied Fascism in the United States from a purely Italian-American base and drew slightly different conclusions than Diggins. While Diggins viewed a consensus, or at least the lack of any opposition equal to the pro-Fascist sentiment, Cannistraro saw a more complicated and sometimes divided Italian-American community in works like "Fascism and Italian-Americans in Detroit, 1933-1935" and *Blackshirts in Little Italy: Italian Americans and Fascism, 1921-1929*.¹³

Cannistraro's research has also helped open the transnational discussion. Not satisfied with an American-centric interpretation, much of his work incorporates the active, rather than passive, relationship between the Italian-American community and Fascist Italy.¹⁴ Following in this vein, some scholars have sought to position Fascism within the American political context, giving much attention to diplomatic relations.¹⁵ One of the most recent monographs is Pellegrino Nazzaro's *Fascist and Anti-Fascist Propaganda in America: The Dispatches of Italian Ambassador Gelasio Caetani*.¹⁶ In the book, Nazzaro chronicles the actions of Ambassador Caetani in connection with

¹³ Philip V. Cannistraro, "Fascism and Italian-Americans in Detroit, 1933-1935", *International Migration Review* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 29-40. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3002528> (accessed 30 October 2011); Philip V. Cannistraro, *Blackshirts in Little Italy: Italian Americans and Fascism, 1921-1929* (West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera Press, 1999).

¹⁴ Philip V. Cannistraro and Gianfausto Rosoli, "Fascist Emigration Policy in the 1920s: An Interpretive Framework", *International Migration Review* 13, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 673-692. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2545181> (accessed 10 October 2011).

¹⁵ Monte S. Finkelstein, "The Johnson Act, Mussolini and Fascist Emigration Policy: 1921-1930", *Journal of American Ethnic History* 8, no. 1 (Fall 1988): 38-55. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27500640> (accessed 30 October 2011); David F. Schmitz, *The United States and Fascist Italy, 1922-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

¹⁶ Pellegrino Nazzaro, *Fascist and Anti-Fascist Propaganda in America: The Dispatches of Italian Ambassador Gelasio Caetani* (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press, 2008).

Fascist directives and plans from Rome, all while incorporating American and Italian-American reactions to this foreign influence.

Interestingly, the late 1990s also began the inclusion of a number of Italian works on the topic. Stefano Luconi is perhaps the most important of the foreign scholars. He started originally by approaching the topic through the American case-study method,¹⁷ but quickly moved to a transnational style in *La "diplomazia parallela": Il regime fascista e la mobilitazione politica degli italo-americani*.¹⁸ In "Parallel Diplomacy", Luconi argues that Fascism in the United States was not only connected to the Italian government, but also that Mussolini actively sought to use the ethnic community to exert pressure on the United States for a more cordial diplomatic relationship. Other works from Italian scholars include Stefano Santoro's account of the Italy-America Society of New York,¹⁹ and Matteo Pretelli's investigation of whether Fascist influence was a harmless cultural exportation or subversive propaganda.²⁰ The recent inclusion of Italian emigration historians into the discussion has added many new sources and perspectives.

Unfortunately, the role of Fascism in the United States is more often manifested as a secondary motif or tangent, rather than the primary query of the writer. Published in 1971, Alexander DeConde's *Half Bitter, Half Sweet* is an important early study of Italian-

¹⁷ Stefano Luconi, "The Italian-Language Press, Italian American Voters, and Political Intermediation in Pennsylvania in the Interwar Years", *International Migration Review* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 1031-1061. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2547362> (accessed 7 October 2011).

¹⁸ Stefano Luconi, *La "diplomazia parallela": Il regime fascista e la mobilitazione politica degli italo-americani* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2000).

¹⁹ Stefano Santoro, "La propaganda fascista negli Stati Uniti: L'Italy-America Society", *Contemporanea* VI, no. 1 (January 2003): 63-92.

²⁰ Matteo Pretelli, "Culture or Propaganda?: Fascism and Italian Culture in the United States", trans. Stefano Luconi, *Studi Emigrazione* XLIII, no. 161 (2006): 171-192. *Academia.edu*, <http://www.academia.edu/777193> (accessed 2 July 2013); Matteo Pretelli, "The Myth of Mussolini in U.S. 'Little Italies'", in *Przewroty – Rewolucje – Wojny: Studia Historica Gedanensia*, vol. II (Gdańsk, Poland: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2011), 273-283. *Academia.edu*, <http://www.academia.edu/777192> (accessed 2 July 2013).

Americans in the United States.²¹ Although useful for its sections on Fascism in America, *Half Bitter, Half Sweet*'s principal purpose is to record the entire narrative of Italian immigration to the territory that later became the U.S. As examples for this particular study, the biographies of the disenchanted press director Lauro De Bosis and J. P. Morgan banker Thomas Lamont – *The Poet and the Dictator* and *The Ambassador from Wall Street* respectively – provide excellent histories of both men, including their relationships with Mussolini's government, ideology, and policies.²² However, while useful, the intended purpose for both monographs is not to document Fascism in the United States, and so the subject appears in only a fraction of the contents. Benito Mussolini and his Italy were popular topics in the 1920s and 1930s, and many allusions appear in works about that era for the simple reason that they are entwined to interwar history and cannot be divorced from the period. However, because writers of such books often mention the topic in passing, without interpretation and without true framework, the information only adds to the narrative rather than clarifies it. While the state of the historiography is expanding, much research still needs completed for a better understanding of the period.

Since the intention of this work is not only to add another piece to the mosaic, but also to clarify and dismiss some generalizations, this thesis begins by rebuilding the Italian-American community circa 1922, and then presents evidence that a pro-Fascist majority did not exist in the ethnic press at one time. Starting at the beginning of the

²¹ Alexander DeConde, *Half Bitter, Half Sweet: An Excursion into Italian-American History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971).

²² Jean McClure Mudge, *The Poet and the Dictator: Lauro de Bosis Resists Fascism in Italy and America*, Italian and Italian American Studies Series (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002); Edward M. Lamont, *The Ambassador from Wall Street: The Story of Thomas W. Lamont, J. P. Morgan's Chief Executive* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1994).

Fascist era, chapter three dispels the myth of a news consensus during the month surrounding the March on Rome in 1922. Since this is a revisionist interpretation, this section draws heavily from primary material. Six Italian-language papers are examined for biases to prove moderation prevailed for the system's inauguration. Chapter four then traces one of the moderate sources, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, from late 1922 to autumn 1924 as a case study. By doing so, this section further confirms that reporting during October and November 1922 was not an anomaly; an undecided and fair tone existed for at least a few years.

This information is then incorporated into the larger narrative in chapter five. Since the transformation of the ethnic press was an active and organic process, scholars like Diggins may not have been mistaken in their estimates, but only at fault for not offering the exact timeframe for such numbers. Drawing from a combination of primary evidence – paying particular attention to the Italy-America Society as one in-depth example – and secondary sources, this chapter rebuilds the Italian-American journalistic environment during the 1920s and early 1930s to show that external considerations played the largest factor in moving the ethnic press closer to *il Duce*.

The result of this manner of analysis allows for some understanding of certain trends and conditions that existed within the ethnic press during the 1920s. When combined with indirect influences, the march of the Italian-American newspapers towards the Fascist camp becomes apparent. By keeping both of these statements in mind, it is clear how the image of the press eventually came to fit within the historical narrative of a pro-Fascist majority.

Chapter Two: The Italian Connection

The Relationship between Italian-Americans, Italy, and Their Ethnic Press

The acceptance or rejection of Fascism in the Italian-American community did not occur in a vacuum. Contrary to the hopes of many white, protestant American-born men at the turn of the twentieth century, most Italian immigrants did not shed their ethnic identity upon entering the United States. Instead, they tended to settle among family members, friends, or neighbors from their provinces, and often created their own social networks, clubs, churches, and media. Although their old lives were not transplanted verbatim to the United States, most were still deeply connected to Italy. Italian-American newspapers served as a bridge between those two worlds. The ethnic paper combined news from the United States and the local city or neighborhood with reports from Italy, melted together by the use of the Italian language. Therefore, to understand the Italian-American view of Benito Mussolini and Fascism, one must first understand the ethnic community and its press in the post-war years.

The 1920s was a decade of transition for Italian-Americans. While Italians were some of the earliest explorers of the New World and a sparse number of mostly Northerners emigrated to the United States prior to the American Civil War, it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that the group arrived in large numbers. Driven out primarily by a poor economy coupled with political turmoil and instability, the bulk of Italians entered the industrializing United States after the 1880s. Most came from the regions to the east and to the south of Rome looking for work, convinced to leave by the

worldwide agricultural depression.¹ The number of arrivals grew exponentially. In 1880, around 44,000 Italians resided in the United States.² Ten years later the number of arrivals – around 50,000 – per year surpassed the foreign-born 1880 population.³ While numbers fluctuated between 1901 and 1914, at no point during that period did they drop below six figures. In fact, pre-war immigration peaked in 1913 at 376,776.⁴

These demographics made for a very interesting community during the immediate post-war period. Since immigration to the United States commenced in earnest only thirty or forty years before the March on Rome in 1922, Italian-Americans consisted primarily of those born in Italy or their offspring. The more recently arrived outnumbered those who had resided three or four decades in the United States, but the 1920s was a tipping point in which the second, American-born generation finally surpassed its parents in number.⁵

Interestingly, none of these developments diminished either group's concern for Italy. For the majority of those born in the Old World, their lives would always be predominantly Italian in thought and culture. The people who consciously decided to emigrate for employment were old enough to work, and thus received all of their early

¹ Alexander DeConde, *Half Bitter, Half Sweet: An Excursion into Italian-American History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 78-80.

² Ibid, 77.

³ Betty Boyd Caroli, *Italian Repatriation from the United States, 1900-1914* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1973), 31, 33.

⁴ Ibid, 38.

⁵ For the 1920s, the Italian-American population stood at over 1.6 million foreign born with 1.7 million American-born children. See *U.S. Census 1920*, "Population, vol. II – Table 16 – Distribution, By City of Residence, of Population Born in the Principal Foreign Countries", 758; Michael R. Haines, "Table Ad319-353 – Native-Born Population of Foreign Parentage, by Parents' Country of Origin: 1900-1970", *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Millennial Edition On Line (2006), 1-600 – 1-601. Cambridge University Press, <http://hsus.cambridge.org.proxy.ohiolink.edu:9099/HSUSWeb/toc/tableToc.do?id=Ad319-353> (accessed 11 December 2011).

mentality and cultural acquisition in Italy.⁶ In addition, they typically did not enter the United States independently; chain migration was quite common, and recent arrivals followed family or neighbors that had immigrated previously to New World cities and settled amongst them.⁷ Assimilation was slow and often incomplete.

In fact, a significant number never assimilated because they never intended to reside permanently in the United States. These people viewed emigration as a temporary solution, with the ultimate goal of acquiring enough capital abroad to sustain a comfortable life in Italy. Unlike other workers who sought to increase their positions in society, some Italians willingly sacrificed better living conditions to save money, and accepted the worst paying, most dangerous jobs for a quick paycheck.⁸ If numbers can help clarify what one historian called “one of mankind’s great voluntary movements of population” – that being emigration from Italy – then they can also illustrate the extent of repatriation.⁹ During 1906–1911, an average of almost 150,000 Italians and their children returned to Italy every year. While over 375,000 entered the United States in 1913, another 122,589 repatriated. The number of returnees actually peaked at almost twice that figure, 240,877, in 1908.¹⁰

For this group of people, events in Italy were crucial because they intended to return. Since the external factors of economic depression, unemployment, and political turmoil were the sources of the migratory flood, if such problems could have been fixed,

⁶ Ilaria Serra, *The Imagined Immigrant: Images of Italian Emigration to the United States between 1890 and 1924* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009), 18-19.

⁷ Stefano Luconi, “Forging an Ethnic Identity: The Case of Italian Americans”, *Revue française d’études américaines*, no. 96 (May 2003): 90-91. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20874906> (accessed 20 July 2013).

⁸ Robert F. Foerster, *The Italian Emigration of Our Times* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919; New York: Arno Press, 1969), 376-386.

⁹ DeConde, 77.

¹⁰ Foerster, 30.

then many would have returned home or never left in the first place. It is not a coincidence, for example, that repatriation climaxed in 1908. After the American financial crisis in the fall of the preceding year, unemployment rose from 2.8% to 8%, and many Italians returned home because of the lack of work.¹¹ When prospects in Italy appeared brighter than in the United States, people were inclined to depart.

From this background, it is obvious why Fascism concerned these people. The years 1919 and 1920 were the Two Red Years (*biennio rosso*) during which the acquisition of individual capital, the reason why many immigrated to the United States, was threatened by leftist turmoil. In addition, Italy's economy was further wrecked by the war, resulting in the "excessive straining of credit and inflation of the currency, depreciation of the lira, quintupling of prices, and labor troubles".¹² From a purely pragmatic viewpoint, Italian-Americans who wished to return favored a political party that could solve all these problems while protecting their new economic positions. In theory, the new Fascist Party offered a fitting solution; many in the immigrant community followed the news with interest, and debated whether the reality matched Benito Mussolini's rhetoric.

Yet, the 1920s was a transition period, and a second group developed that would eclipse the first after the anti-immigration laws of 1921 and 1924: the permanent Italian-Americans. Although older immigrants who had no intention of repatriating are included, a good portion of this group consisted of children brought from Italy at a young age and those born in the United States to immigrant parents. There was a dual identity

¹¹ Richard K. Vedder and Lowell E. Gallaway, *Out of Work: Unemployment and Government in Twentieth-Century America*, Independent Studies in Political Economy Series (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993), 55.

¹² Walter B. Kahn, "The Italian Economic Situation", *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 3, no. 4 (April 1921): 88. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1928801> (accessed 22 June 2013).

created by adding equal parts Italian and American. At home and within the community, these children received a typical Italian upbringing; however, they also acquired American habits, values, and education. Their goal was not to retire comfortably in Italy, but to reconcile those two backgrounds and enter into American society as full members.¹³

Similar to many other ethnic groups, the Italian-Americans of the interwar period were not wholly accepted by the established old guard of society. This is not to say that full integration was impossible; in the United States's dichromatic social order, Italians were classified as white, not black, and therefore enjoyed some of the privileges not allowed to African-Americans. However, ethnic Italians – especially those from the *Mezzogiorno* with their darker complexions and features – still inhabited the lowest rungs of that society and at times seemed to almost sway between the two classifications. For them, the 1920s and 1930s was a time of active national assimilation as they sought complete acceptance in a process that began just prior to the turn of the century, but would not conclude until after the Second World War.¹⁴

Part of the problem derived from the rampant stereotypes. While the Roman civilization bequeathed the world architecture and government, and the Italian states produced great men like Dante, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci, unified Italy sent only the poor, uneducated masses to the United States. Many immigrants who hailed from isolated villages already displayed what Americans assumed was a backwards culture with antiquated morals. When combined with the image of the intercity ghetto,

¹³ Serra, 19-20.

¹⁴ Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 44-267.

ethnic Italians were often characterized as the foil to Americanism; while the native born were clean, smart, and motivated, these immigrants were assumed to be dirty, of minimal intelligence, and lacked any desire for self-improvement. Unfortunately, the most applied attribute was violence and crime. In time, it became almost impossible to separate the Italian-American image from the Mafia or Black Hand; and, as evidenced by the famous Sacco and Vanzetti trial in the 1920s, it was just as easy to apply menacing political radicalism to the stereotype.¹⁵

Of course, there was some small truth to these prejudices. The Italian anarchist Gaetano Bresci – who resided in the United States for a short while – assassinated King Umberto I in 1900, and Italy was in political turmoil after the First World War. Organized crime was a powerful element in Sicily and southern Italy. Most importantly, few Italian professionals immigrated to the United States due to American society's inability to offer them employment. At best, Italian doctors, lawyers, and the like could have expected to serve only their ethnic community. For the unskilled and skilled blue-collar workers – such as bricklayers, tailors, or bakers – jobs were plentiful; for educated, white-collar Italians, the United States offered few incentives. Therefore, the overwhelming majority that immigrated to America came from the less-educated, and often less-cultured, classes.¹⁶

It is for this reason of identity that this second group of Italian-Americans was concerned with Fascism and the politics of Italy. While these stereotypes fit a few immigrants, they did not properly represent all; however, the persistence of political, economic, and cultural turmoil in the old country gave native-born Americans some

¹⁵ DeConde, 98-119.

¹⁶ Foerster, 329-334.

evidence to support prejudice. If Italians could not prosper in Italy, then what proof was there that they would improve upon entering the United States?

Therefore, during the interwar period, this rapidly expanding group of permanent Italian-Americans was seeking some political party that would improve the presentation of their place of origin. This national image came to be referred to as *italianità*, or Italianism, and was defined by Salvemini as: “1) the national character of the Italian; 2) the moral prestige of Italy; 3) the real or alleged needs and rights of the Italian nation; and 4) the international activities of the Italian government”.¹⁷ If a political party advanced these criteria and elevated Italian stature abroad, then the ethnic community would have accepted it. Benito Mussolini and his party promised to finish the nation building process begun during the Risorgimento and to forge new Italians and a new state free of defects.¹⁸ Fascist success would have brought improved *italianità*, so many Italian-Americans took an interest in the system. Acceptance hinged on whether Mussolini’s government could meet expectations.

The difficulty arises, however, in how to judge the perception of the masses. Historians are certain of the loyalties and opinions of a few prominent Italian-Americans. The aforementioned Carlo Tresca and Gaetano Salvemini were two of the most vocal anti-Fascists, and Monsignor Joseph Ciarrocchi’s crusade against the promotion of Fascism by the Italian consulate in Detroit is another example.¹⁹ Pro-Fascists were no less visible. The two slanted newspapers – *Il Progresso* and *Corriere d’America* –

¹⁷ Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, ed. Philip V. Cannistraro (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977), 5.

¹⁸ Giordano Bruno Guerri, *Antistoria degli italiani: Da Romolo a Giovanni Paolo II* (Milan: Oscar Mondadori, 1999), 298-299.

¹⁹ Philip V. Cannistraro, “Fascism and Italian-Americans in Detroit, 1933–1935”, *International Migration Review* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 35-36. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3002528> (accessed 30 October 2011).

examined by Pearl Drubeck's class were published by Generoso Pope, a well-known Italian-American businessman and a supporter of Mussolini.²⁰ Unfortunately, Tresca, Salvemini, Ciarrocchi, and Pope were all atypical of the community; respected intellectuals or leaders, the personal observations of these men tell little about the views of the lay masses.

The best means to understanding the perception of Mussolini and Fascism through the eyes of the common Italian-American is to study the materials where he originally acquired the information to form his own opinions. In the 1920s, before television and the widespread use of the radio, most foreign news came from newspapers, especially ethnic ones. Immigrants turned to their press because it usually supplied more articles related to their homeland than its American counterpart, and because many Italian-Americans were not literate in English or felt more comfortable learning in their native tongue.

In relation to the reader, 1920s publications were more representative than many today would believe. In his 1922 work, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, Robert E. Park found that ninety-three percent of the Italian-American press's circulation derived from commercial papers.²¹ To their editors and owners, these news sources were "private commercial enterprises, with a sole view to profit".²² Circulation was not merely a number; it was the very nature of the business as increased distribution brought more capital through purchases of the product or advertising. This meant that news

²⁰ Philip V. Cannistraro, "Generoso Pope and the Rise of Italian American Politics, 1925–1936", in Lydio F. Tomasi, ed., *Italian Americans: New Perspectives in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1985), 264-288.

²¹ Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, Americanization Studies Series (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922), 304.

²² *Ibid*, 350.

tended to be more “opportunistic rather than doctrinaire, [with] the paper seek[ing] to keep before the wind of popular favor rather than buck against it”.²³ By contrast, only one percent of the around 690,000 total circulation subscribed to propaganda papers, or those periodicals that advocated specific political stances without regard to popular opinions.²⁴ Of course, editors may have periodically inserted a few of their own views, and advertisers or benefactors also had some control over the general position of the paper; however, the Italian-ethnic press was still commercial in nature, and the need to cater to a consumer moderated extremist views. The press’s ‘give the people what they want’ mentality, along with print media being one of the few modes of information during the 1920s, makes newspapers an excellent starting point to evaluate popular opinion.²⁵

Although some issues or even complete collections may be unknown to historians or were destroyed during the following decades, the sheer size and diversity of the Italian-language press guarantees that there is still ample extant material for consideration. In 1920, this print media included ninety-eight different publications.²⁶ Only eleven of the ninety-eight were dailies, with the remainder usually published weekly or monthly.²⁷ Not surprisingly, New York City hosted the largest number of Italian papers at twelve, and Philadelphia followed with seven; altogether, thirty-eight publications were headquartered in ten of the United States’s major immigrant

²³ Ibid, 347.

²⁴ Ibid, 304.

²⁵ Ibid, 328-356.

²⁶ Ibid, 297; *N. W. Ayer & Son’s American Newspaper Annual and Directory: A Catalogue of American Newspapers*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1920), 1293-1294. *University of North Texas Digital Library*, <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc9268> (accessed 20 July 2013). N. W. Ayer actually counts a total of 104 Italian-language new sources: 98 in the United States with another six publications in Canada.

²⁷ Park, 302.

metropolises. The remaining sixty therefore came from lesser, often manufacturing or trade-based cities, like St. Louis, Missouri, Erie, Pennsylvania, or Dallas, Texas.²⁸

The largest newspaper – *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* – came from New York City, and eclipsed all others with a circulation that stood at 108,137.²⁹ This does not, however, decrease the significance of smaller publications within communities. New York was the principal city for immigration and was home to 390,832 foreign-born Italian-Americans in 1920, or about one in every four. This means that seventy-five percent lived elsewhere; in fact, without including the twelve American metropolises with the most Italian immigrants, the population of foreign-born in cities of 25,000 was a little over 400,000, thus exceeding New York City. Another half a million resided in other towns and villages.³⁰

This means that many smaller papers potentially had a disproportional influence relative to their size. According to numbers, *Il Progresso* thus sold about one paper for every three or four Italian immigrants. By contrast, Dallas's *La Tribuna Italiana* had a circulation of 7,134; while this number is a fraction of *Il Progresso*'s total readership, only 583 foreign-born Italians inhabited the city of Dallas in 1920.³¹ *La Tribuna Italiana* served not only the ethnics of Dallas, but also those residing in small and medium-sized towns and on farms throughout the region. With 900,000 of the total 1.6 million Italian-born population residing in places other than the top twelve cities, it is important that

²⁸ Ibid, 297; *N. W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual and Directory* (1920), 1293-1294.

²⁹ *N. W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual and Directory* (1920), 1293-1294.

³⁰ *U.S. Census 1920*, "Population, vol. II – Table 16 – Distribution, By City of Residence, of Population Born in the Principal Foreign Countries", 758.

³¹ *U.S. Census 1920*, "Population, vol. II – Table 12 – Country of Birth of Foreign-Born Population, for Cities Having 100,000 Inhabitants or More", 730; *N. W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual and Directory* (1920), 1294.

scholars try to include a few examples outside of places like New York or Chicago to better evaluate the other half of the Italian-American population.

On the eve of Fascism's advent to power, a diverse ethnic-Italian community and press existed in the United States. Although it was a predominately new group with strong working-class ties, many Italian-Americans already resided in places outside of the main immigration ports. For many that remained in places like New York City, the goal was eventually to return home. However, for a growing number of the second generation and those with the intention to stay indefinitely, prejudices and a sense of ethnic kinship – a relationship that by this time was beginning to grow past regional and provincial bonds to a newly fashioned national identity – still drew attention back to Italy. While Italian-Americans had different reasons to why they concerned themselves with events across the globe, their desires in relation to *italianità* were still similar.

To service the need for information from Italy was an ethnic press. This media varied from metropolises that hosted multiple publications to small cities that printed one paper for the entire surrounding area. It was commercial in nature, and formed an integral part of the ethnic community, reflecting many of the subscribers' thoughts and positions. By October 1922, this press was poised to evaluate, debate, praise, or criticize the events that would unfold half a world away.

Chapter Three: Shattering Conformity

A Case of Italian-American Press Moderation during the March on Rome

To trace the Italian-American popular perception of Benito Mussolini and his political system, it is best to start at the inauguration of Fascist rule in Italy: the March on Rome. By autumn 1922, the Fascist Blackshirts had secured physical control of many provincial cities and towns, and began to congregate outside of Rome to rally support for Mussolini and his lieutenants in Parliament. On 28 October, under pressure to either include the Fascists or pacify their movement, King Vittorio Emanuele III dismissed the Italian cabinet under Prime Minister Luigi Facta and invited Mussolini to form his own council. This event was unexpected and therefore came as a surprise to most, including observers outside of Italy. Few foresaw the extreme consequences that the decision would have on the world over the next two decades, and contemporary responses and opinions varied significantly.

Historians have traditionally interpreted the Italian-American view of the March on Rome and Fascism during the event as positive. Diggins established the leading theory in which Mussolini and his party were accepted by the majority of Americans, including those of Italian origin, during the event if not before. Beginning with the American press, Diggins found that “a significant shift occurred” after 28 October.¹ Prior to that time, American newspapers and periodicals published little about the Fascists until the Blackshirt initiative in fall 1922. With the possibility of violence, bloodshed, and civil war, “the press in general hung suspended between belief and doubt”

¹ John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 29.

as writers and editors did not know what to make of the situation.² After Mussolini's peaceful ascension to power, editors generally replaced uncertain articles with friendly, if not supportive, pieces. Although the Fascists threatened their way into office, the episode was technically legal. King Vittorio Emanuele III possessed the right to dismiss and appoint prime ministers, and he voluntarily chose Mussolini for the position.³ At the time, it was common for Italian politicians to appoint popular radicals to coalition governments as a means to control them; and until Mussolini, the tactic had been successful.⁴ Of course, praise did not remain constant in all American papers "as particular developments in Italy elicited acclaim or censure" depending on the situation; nevertheless, "Mussolini's popularity was to a great extent a product of the press", and his government more often than not received praise over condemnation.⁵ In general, American newspapers supported *il Duce* and the Fascists for most of the interwar period.⁶

Acceptance by the ethnic newspapers was even more complete. As mentioned earlier, Diggins estimated that "[t]he Italian-American press... was almost 90 percent pro-Mussolini" until the start of the Second World War.⁷ Opposition papers were generally radical, labor-based publications that were dwarfed by the pro-Fascist segment in both number and readership. Furthermore, none of these traits changed during the 1920s or the 1930s; both camps "were fixed in frozen conviction: rare was the impartial paper and rarer still a paper willing to change its views as a result of developments in

² Ibid.

³ Luigi Villari, *Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1956), 13.

⁴ Martin Clark, *Modern Italy: 1871 to the Present*, 3rd ed. (Harlow, Great Britain: Pearson Longman, 2008), 265-267. It must be remembered that although Mussolini was appointed prime minister instead of being absorbed into another ministry, his council still included many politicians from outside of his party.

⁵ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 29, 24.

⁶ Ibid, 22-41.

⁷ Ibid, 107.

Italy”.⁸ The Italian-American press was pro-Mussolini from 1922 until the war in Europe caused it to abandon *il Duce* because of a conflicting loyalty to the United States.⁹

Later research on the subject corroborates Diggins’s ideas. A study of three northern Ohio newspapers – the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, the Toledo *Blade*, and the *Defiance Crescent News* – all confirmed Diggins’s analysis of the American media coverage. Few articles about Fascism appeared in these papers prior to October 1922 and most of the reporting after the March on Rome was pro-Mussolini. Some discrepancies existed as a few anti-Mussolini or questioning articles were published, but these were exceptions to the majority rather than the norm.¹⁰ In addition, historians also know that the first Fascist-oriented groups in the United States were created over a year before the March on Rome took place. Led by Agostino De Biasi, the publisher of the pro-Fascist *Il Carroccio*, these New York groups developed independently from the Italian party in order to organize foreign support for the movement. Leaders and units arose in other cities, such as Philadelphia, prior to or immediately after the March on Rome. There was opposition, but it came from what were at the time perceived to be the radical elements of American politics: communists, anarchists, socialists, and unions. Still, the Fascist movement was much stronger than its anti-Fascist foil, and it took until 1925 for the opposition to form a valid coalition. Early resistance was present, but it was sporadic and it answered charges levied by the Fascists rather than organize any offensive block to the movement.¹¹

⁸ Ibid, 83.

⁹ Ibid, 81-86.

¹⁰ Lisa Marie Priolisi, “Reactions of Selected Ohio Newspapers to Some Critical Events in the History of Fascist Italy” (MA Thesis, Bowling Green State University, 1992), 20-29.

¹¹ Philip V. Cannistraro, *Blackshirts in Little Italy: Italian Americans and Fascism, 1921–1929* (West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera Press, 1999), 8-23, 36-38.

Later historians have concurred with Diggins's assessment of the ethnic press. Philip Cannistraro's introduction to the subject began during a visit to New York's Little Italy in the 1960s. After walking into a small shop, he "discovered shelves packed with faded copies of Italian-language newspapers, pamphlets, and paperback books, all published in the 1920s or 1930s, ...most of which were pro-Fascist tracts and Fascist propaganda materials".¹² As mentioned previously, Matteo Pretelli wrote that the Italian-language newspapers were "particularly successful in promoting the myth of *Il Duce*".¹³ Stefano Luconi, in his case study of Pennsylvania sources and their relation to American political brokerage, found that editors of the ethnic press were almost never at odds with Fascism.¹⁴ Instead, "the bulk of the Italian-American press generally acted as a resonance box for Mussolini until Italy declared war on the United States".¹⁵

These assertions, however, do not fit the whole Italian-language press during the month surrounding the March on Rome. After examining issues from six ethnic newspapers – *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica* (Chicago), *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts* (Boston), *La Capitale* (Sacramento, California), *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano* (Youngstown, Ohio), *La Trinacria* (Pittsburgh), and *La Voce del Popolo* (Detroit) – of diverse backgrounds and places printed two weeks prior and two weeks after the event, two trends appear. First, when viewed as a whole, the Italian-American press was not 90 percent pro-Fascist, and it generally displayed moderation in reporting. Second, based on a few sources, editors were willing to change their positions on the

¹² Ibid, 1.

¹³ Matteo Pretelli, "The Myth of Mussolini in U.S. 'Little Italies'", in *Przewroty – Rewolucje – Wojny: Studia Historica Gedanensia*, vol. II (Gdańsk, Poland: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2011), 280. *Academia.edu*, <http://www.academia.edu/777192> (accessed 2 July 2013).

¹⁴ Stefano Luconi, "The Italian-Language Press, Italian American Voters, and Political Intermediation in Pennsylvania in the Interwar Years", *International Migration Review* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 1031-1054. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2547362> (accessed 7 October 2011).

¹⁵ Ibid, 1037.

subject. This is not to say that pro-Fascist papers did not exist, or even to suggest that they may not have been slightly in the majority; it is to say, however, that an equal number of publications critical of Mussolini and his party also voiced their opinions during the episode. Perhaps most importantly, even some of those newspapers that historians identified as Fascist, or exhibited all the traits typical of philo-Fascist sources, did not display a pro-Mussolini bias. For those that sided with the Blackshirts, true praise for the Fascist cause was only exhibited after King Vittorio Emanuele III appointed *il Duce* as prime minister. Before that moment, editors that personally agreed with the movement restrained much of their enthusiasm while the march still seemed like a prelude to revolution or civil war. The remainder of the press tended to present moderate opinions altogether; some articles supported the Fascists, others questioned their motives, means, and objectives, and a couple contained a forward, matter-of-fact type reporting.

A Period View of the Situation by the Italian-American Press

If any of the six papers was expected to yield the results anticipated by previous works, it was *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica* from Chicago. Unlike many other newspapers headquartered in large American cities, this source has not been utilized by researchers who have perhaps passed over it for the other, more popular, Chicago publication, *L'Italia*.¹⁶ Its absence of use may also be due to the fact that the paper dissolved around 1934, and therefore information concerning the later phases of Fascism, the war in Ethiopia, or Italy's shift into a German alliance could not have been obtained

¹⁶ N. W. Ayer & Son's *American Newspaper Annual and Directory: A Catalogue of American Newspapers*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1922), 212, 222. *University of North Texas Digital Library*, <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc9267/m1/1> (accessed 20 July 2013). While the four-times weekly *L'Italia* carried the larger circulation at 37,466, the once weekly *La Tribuna Italiana* still found a significant audience with a 25,000 circulation.

from it.¹⁷ Instead, the possible political leanings of the paper are foreshadowed through its editor, Alessandro Mastro-Valerio.

Mastro-Valerio is not a well-known historical figure, but there are some references to his personality and beliefs that help reflect the position he sought for his newspaper. Described by one historian as “[a] typical nineteenth-century anticlerical liberal”, Mastro-Valerio worked to improve the Italian image in the United States while remaining friendly with many radicals in the city.¹⁸ During the 1890s, he was associated with Chicago’s famous Hull House.¹⁹ In 1895, he published an article for the organization’s collection in which he identified the Italian-American community as honest and included a number of very intelligent individuals; however, he also believed that they were held back by temporary emigration and their closed nature and culture.²⁰ Some became “American citizens, but [they] always remain[ed] Italians” and even “[t]heir children, though American-born, [were]... ‘incorrigible’ Italians because of their distinct individuality”.²¹ Mastro-Valerio called for the deportation of Italian killers and bootleggers during Prohibition because they were “casting a stigma on [the] race’s good name”,²² and for the community to establish colonies in the rural Southern states.²³ This

¹⁷ Library of Congress, “About La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica. (Chicago, Ill.) 1898–1934”, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045422/> (accessed 7 December 2011).

¹⁸ Peter R. D’Agostino, *Rome in America: Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 157.

¹⁹ Rivka Shpak Lissak, *Pluralism & Progressives: Hull House and the New Immigrants, 1890–1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 97.

²⁰ Alessandro Mastro-Valerio, “Remarks upon the Italian Colony in Chicago”, in *Hull-House Maps and Papers: A Presentation of Nationalities and Wages in a Congested District of Chicago, Together with Comments and Essays on Problems Growing Out of the Social Conditions*, Crowell’s Library of Economics and Politics Series, ed. Richard T. Ely (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1895), 131–139.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 131–132.

²² Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 89–90.

pattern – a leftist background, the emphasis on Italian identity, and the desire to transfer parts of the ethnic group to new colonies – sounds eerily similar to another historical Italian figure: Mussolini. Like many Italians that desired to remain in the United States, Mastro-Valerio supported improved *italianità* and took interest in the possibilities offered by the Fascists.

Not surprisingly, the articles published by *La Tribuna Italiana* immediately after the March on Rome are archetypes of Diggins's thesis. The first column of the paper printed 4 November (the first issue after the crisis was settled peacefully) carried the headline "Glorious Fascism", and the accompanying article praised the system "because it [was] in the spirit of the majority of the nation".²⁴ Signed by *Il Cavaliere Trans-Atlantico* (The Trans-Atlantic Knight), the article invoked nationalistic images of Italy and its heroic fallen youth from the Great War.²⁵ The reference to the dead continued a few pages later where an article claimed that the half-million killed in battle would have wanted Fascism to succeed if they had lived.²⁶ The enthusiasm was not limited to the deceased, and even the living celebrated their new "liberators" with a tumultuous reception in Rome.²⁷

The praise continued the following week, and was even more thunderous. Once more, the first column of the paper set the tone for the remainder of the issue. It began with a political cartoon featuring a decisive Mussolini sitting behind his new political

²³ Humbert S. Nelli, "Italians in Urban America: A Study in Ethnic Adjustment", *International Migration Review* 1, no. 3 (Summer 1967): 43. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3002739> (accessed 3 December 2011).

²⁴ "Fascismo Glorioso", *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 4 November 1922, 1.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Il Fascismo Vuole Compiuto il Sogno di 500,000 Morti!", *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 4 November 1922, 8.

²⁷ "Il Popolo di Roma Copre di Fiori i Nuovi Liberatori", *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 4 November 1922, 3.

desk. Gesturing to the outgoing Prime Minister Luigi Facta, who appears meek and carrying a small broom or duster, Mussolini orders him to sweep all the old out so that he could begin anew.²⁸



Mussolini to the Presidency Cartoon. From *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 11 November 1922, 1.

The accompanying article further clarified the idea; it claimed that Mussolini would “[restore] order in Italy as Cromwell and Napoleon restored it in England and in France after those two grand revolutions”.²⁹ In addition, *La Tribuna Italiana* reprinted a letter from the Fascio Italiano di New York that praised the movement in Italy and sought new supporters in the United States,³⁰ along with a poem that celebrated the Blackshirts.³¹ Nowhere was there any indication that Mussolini’s seizure of power was anything less than a blessing for Italy.

However, while *La Tribuna Italiana* was decisively pro-Fascist in the two weeks after the March on Rome, articles published prior to 28 October lacked such an extreme attitude. Rather than idolize Fascism, these pieces presented a chaotic political situation in which no group, including Mussolini’s followers, had a clear platform or agenda. The

²⁸ “Mussolini alla Presidenza” Cartoon, *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 11 November 1922, 1.

²⁹ “Ecce Homo?”, *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 11 November 1922, 1.

³⁰ “Fascio Italiano”, *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 11 November 1922, 2.

³¹ “Camicie Nere”, *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 11 November 1922, 2.

Italian ministers were divided on what courses of action to assume towards the Fascists. Some wanted to repress the movement, while others called for “politics of persuasion”.³² What was certain to both those who agreed with Mussolini’s party and those who condemned it was that the Fascists would not fully retreat from their platform, and a crisis was brewing.³³

When pro-Fascist comments were offered, they were not as overt as after Mussolini’s appointment to government. When discussing economic issues, *La Tribuna Italiana* specifically noted that both the socialists and the Fascists pushed similar plans to force the wealthy, through taxes and sometimes coercion, to put the unemployed to work. Admittedly, “the fascists [had] nothing to teach in material of ideas or of systems”, but their victory would end the old Piedmontese hegemony that stifled Italian politics for fifty years.³⁴ They had no radical or specific agenda; the attractiveness of Mussolini’s party derived from its ability to change. Unlike the socialists, the Fascists were not bound by doctrine, and in many cases seemed willing to adopt different positions based on reality. Ottavio Corgini and Massimo Rocca, the two men tasked with shaping the Fascist Party’s economic policy, approached the question “with an open mind and [were] ready to welcome the teachings of science and of experience”.³⁵ The new generation in particular wanted a revival of liberal economics, and Corgini and Rocca’s program was “an example of this return to the sources”, possibly referring to both historical precedents and the will of the people.³⁶ While their plans were not perfect, *La Tribuna Italiana*

³² “Il Gabinetto Esamina la Situazione”, *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 21 October 1922, 1.

³³ “Il Fascismo Non Recede dal Suo Programma”, *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 21 October 1922, 3.

³⁴ “Parole e Fatti”, *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 21 October 1922, 7.

³⁵ “Riabbeverarsi alla Sorgente”, *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 28 October 1922, 2.

³⁶ Ibid.

admitted that “in the fascist program there [was] some good”.³⁷ The party further benefited by declarations of support from the ex-Prime Ministers Francesco Nitti and Antonio Salandra.³⁸

At the same time, reporting was not completely favorable towards the Fascists. While Nitti and Salandra backed Mussolini, Facta inadvertently condemned the Blackshirts. He called for an end to the violence, and declared it was the Italian government’s task “to restore the respect to the law”, obviously implying the illegal Fascist activities prior to the March on Rome.³⁹ Comments made by Socialist Deputy Arturo Labriola were more direct. According to Labriola, socialism was not pushed by a party, but by the masses within a free state. Unfortunately, in October 1922, the people’s democracy was threatened to the point where “socialism [could] not carry out a concrete political action”.⁴⁰ Socialism would only arise after the state curbed the illegalities of the Blackshirts.⁴¹

These pre-March on Rome articles contained a much different tone than those printed after. While Fascism and Mussolini were heralded as saviors following *il Duce*’s peaceful appointment, *La Tribuna Italiana* did not wholeheartedly support the Blackshirts during the earlier struggle. In fact, the paper admitted that the Fascists’ platform and ideas were not innovative; the only attractive feature of the party was its ability to change. At the same time, Mastro-Valerio’s publication had no reservations about reprinting testimony by a popular Socialist deputy that denounced the illegalities of

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Anche Nitti Fa la Corte al Partito di Mussolini!”, *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 28 October 1922, 2.

³⁹ “Dichiarazioni di Facta”, *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 28 October 1922, 6.

⁴⁰ “Un Partito Socialista Non Serve in Italia: Dichiarazioni dell’On. Labriola”, *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*, 21 October 1922, 2.

⁴¹ Ibid.

the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PNF) and their effects on Italian society and government. While the Chicago paper certainly fits within the accepted pro-Fascist narrative pushed by later scholars, one cannot ignore the moderate and almost skeptical perception of the party prior to Mussolini's appointment as prime minister.

Similar in reporting, but not background, to *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica* was James V. Donnaruma's *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts* from Boston. Like the Chicago paper, *La Gazzetta* fully supported Mussolini and his followers after the October confrontation ended peacefully; nevertheless, *La Gazzetta* pushed a moderate position prior to the conclusion of the Fascist demonstration. Unlike the Chicago publication, Donnaruma's newspaper has been a popular source for later historians, who identified it as pro-Fascist.⁴²

Like Mastro-Valerio, James V. Donnaruma, who purchased the paper in 1905, was concerned with the image of Italians in the United States. He arrived in Boston in 1886 at the age of twelve, and sought assimilation for himself and other North End Italians into mainstream American society. He applauded the New England culture as superior to that of Italy; so, when Mussolini assumed power and promised to correct the backwards Italian nation, Donnaruma whole-heartedly supported the endeavor as one of the de facto leaders of the community.⁴³

⁴² Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 83; Pellegrino Nazzaro, *Fascist and Anti-Fascist Propaganda in America: The Dispatches of Italian Ambassador Gelasio Caetani* (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 68; Benedicte Deschamps and Stefano Luconi, "The Publisher of the Foreign-Language Press as an Ethnic Leader? The Case of James V. Donnaruma and Boston's Italian-American Community in the Interwar Years", *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 5-7. *Academia.edu*, <http://www.academia.edu/2779456> (accessed 20 July 2013). Note- This online edition is a reformatted form of the original print source. Page numbers refer to the online document, not the article as found in the *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*.

⁴³ Deschamps and Luconi, 2-19; Stephen Puleo, *The Boston Italians: A Story of Pride, Perseverance, and Paesani, from the Years of the Great Immigration to the Present Day* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 30-39.

Given the similarities between Mastro-Valerio and Donnaruma, it is no surprise that *La Gazzetta* featured pro-Fascist editorials after 28 October. In one article written by Giuseppe De Marco (noted as a regular contributor), Mussolini was linked to a patriotic image of Italy and its history. According to De Marco, Mussolini – who was also referred to as *il Duce* by the author – was the leader of a new group of young patriots trying to advance Italian civilization. In this sense, Mussolini was a modern counterpart to the heroes of the Risorgimento; just as Giuseppe Garibaldi once answered the King of Italy with the famous remark *obbedisco* (I obey), Mussolini responded likewise when asked by King Vittorio Emanuele III to establish a new cabinet. Yet, this change was also more symbolic. Instead of war, the Fascists prompted “the greatest ‘revolution’ of history: **without a drop of blood**”.⁴⁴ Mussolini and the Blackshirts were not radicals; they were only the avant-garde of popular change responding to a necessary call.

The rhetoric continued in the following 11 November issue of *La Gazzetta*. A few different appeals for Italian-American sentiments appeared on the front page. There was a verbatim speech given by Mussolini, via the Associated Press, as a message to those Italians residing in the United States. In it, the new prime minister alluded to Italy’s role in the First World War and its quest for honor. He tried to provoke a sense of *italianità* by reminding even those abroad should have had a “renewed consciousness [that would make them] proud to be Italians”.⁴⁵ This sense of patriotism was further complemented by the Piacenza Fascists’ pledge to remember the 2000 “martyrs” of the movement with the promise to work towards the betterment of Italy. This model, *La*

⁴⁴ Giuseppe De Marco, “Alla Gran Prova, Ora”, *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts*, 4 November 1922, 8.

⁴⁵ “Primi Atti del Governo dei Fascisti in Italia”, *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts*, 11 November 1922, 1.

Gazzetta noted at the end, “[was] imitating itself in all Italy”.⁴⁶ The paper also gave reports of the movement’s spread to both Germany and Scandinavia.⁴⁷ Praise from the editorial was no less substantial. According to the unknown author, Italy and its new leader faced two internal problems: “the one ethical, the other economical”.⁴⁸ To the first, the Fascists offered peace between the social classes and the promise to stop atheism by reorienting the government’s approach towards the Catholic Church. The economic situation was to be fixed by privatizing public industries and infrastructure, therefore ending the unprofitable state monopolies.⁴⁹

Donnaruma and his paper were clearly pro-Mussolini, but it should be noted that, like in *La Tribuna Italiana*, these post-March on Rome articles contradicted the viewpoint held prior to 28 October, which offered arguments for and against the Fascists. For example, in the 11 November issue, the paper reported that Blackshirts detached the railcar transporting Count Sforza, the Italian ambassador to Paris, from the train outside of Turin. However, the illegality of the act was then negated in the following paragraph, which claimed that Sforza resigned his post the minute that the Fascists formed a government, citing political reasons. Sforza thus became the villain, as he refused to cooperate, while Mussolini was transformed into a conciliatory figure for ordering Sforza to remain, even with their differences.⁵⁰ By contrast, the Fascists appeared as the aggressors prior to 28 October for threatening to march on Rome “to impose the fascist government to the nation”.⁵¹ Of course, *La Gazzetta* was not entirely anti-Fascist;

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ “Sul Cammino di Mussolini”, *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts*, 11 November 1922, 8.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “Primi Atti del Governo dei Fascisti in Italia”.

⁵¹ “Fascismo e Governo in Aperta Contesa”, *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts*, 14 October 1922, 1.

Donnaruma's paper reproduced excerpts from Mussolini's own *Il Popolo d'Italia* giving his reasoning for the proposal: "the only government possible today for the salvation of Italy is... fascist".⁵² However, these comments were then moderated with reasoning from a Facta interview in the left-leaning *La Stampa* (Turin). From both perspectives, it was clear to the paper that there were "in Italy two States, the one of fact, the other existing of law, in open conflict".⁵³ In this sense, the situation was not unlike the "praetorians' revolt" from antiquity; interpretation of this comparison was left to the reader.⁵⁴

It is strange that Donnaruma, who shared many of the same desires as Mussolini related to a strong Italian identity, allowed an article that described the planned March on Rome as a coup d'état, and therefore illegal, to be printed. The most logical explanation is that *La Gazzetta* was unsure how to respond to what increasingly resembled a putsch. Even if Donnaruma and his reporters agreed with Fascist ideology, they may have refrained from commenting due to the gravity of the situation or out of fear of alienating subscribers. It would have been too hypocritical for the publisher, who championed American culture and democracy, to support unnecessary violence. Or, perhaps, the owner himself was undecided until he learned the transition was peaceful. In either case, one fact remains: even publications like *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts*, considered by historians to be a traditional bastion of Fascist support, had moments of moderation. Along with *La Tribuna Italiana*, Donnaruma's newspaper clearly begins to erode the theory that the Italian-American press was always overwhelmingly sympathetic to Fascism and unwavering in its support.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

La Capitale from Sacramento, California was another identified pro-Fascist newspaper by historians.⁵⁵ Yet, unlike *La Tribuna Italiana* and *La Gazzetta*, which both offered a cautious and moderate interpretation of Fascism before presenting it more amicably after 28 October, *La Capitale* printed disengaged reporting both prior to and following the event. Additional commentary was not provided, and stories of Fascist and non-Fascist aggressions were set side by side. During the 1935 invasion of Ethiopia and subsequent colonization, *La Capitale* was one of the leading ethnic press proponents of the endeavor to spread the advanced Italian culture; however, nothing printed in late-October or early-November 1922 gave readers any impression of partiality towards Fascism.⁵⁶

In fact, on the eve of the march, the Sacramento paper was more concerned with the other powerful men of Italian politics than it was with Mussolini. Replicating an article from *Il Paese* (Rome), *La Capitale* informed Sacramento's Italians about the real possibility of Giovanni Giolitti resuming the post of prime minister. With the realization that the Fascists threatened many Giolittian political strongholds, *Il Paese* theorized that the turmoil would force the moderate politician to intervene. Giolitti would stave off possible socialist expansion, while working "to restore the authority of the State", eventually "putting judgment to the fascists".⁵⁷ Yet, Giolitti was reluctant to assume the office "since the Fascists would [have] demand[ed] a predominant position in the new Cabinet and would [have been] able to abuse it".⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 83; Nazzaro, 152-153.

⁵⁶ Nazzaro, 152-153.

⁵⁷ "Le Voci del Ritorno di Giolitti al Potere", *La Capitale*, 21 October 1922, 2.

⁵⁸ "Il Significato del Ritorno del Sovrano", *La Capitale*, 28 October 1922, 1.

The situation was without precedent and even the king returned to Rome due to a divided ministry and the anticipation of turmoil. Besides Giolitti, rumors also circulated about the possibility of a new nationalist coalition, as a counter to the Fascists, under the poet and war hero Gabriele D'Annunzio, who also "caution[ed] of the violent tendencies of the Fascists".⁵⁹ The reported burning in effigy of the *Partito Popolare Italiano* (PPI) leader Don Luigi Sturzo by the Florentine Blackshirts in an adjacent article did not help the perception of Mussolini's party.⁶⁰ Nor did it benefit from the *Volk-Zeitung's* (an Austrian newspaper) reprinting of an alleged Fascist letter stating the desire to reclaim the Brenner Pass and adjoining territory,⁶¹ or from *Il Popolo d'Italia's* denunciation of General Pietro Badoglio, which was "most commented in political and journalistic circles" in Italy.⁶²

Still, the government was unable to agree on any measures to take regarding Fascism. Even outside commentators, such as Bologna's *Il Lavoro d'Italia*, were incapable of providing an accurate definition of the movement. It was related to the old national syndicalism trends, but borrowed little from "old models", and instead relied on "the complex work of an Italian generation".⁶³ From the combined indecision, *La Capitale* concluded "[t]he situation, in short, presents itself more than ever chaotic. The only certain fact is the growing popularity of the Fascists".⁶⁴

After the March on Rome, these sentiments changed only slightly. On 4 November, the Sacramento news source published an editorial titled "It Was Inevitable"

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ "Don Sturzo Bruciato in Effigie a Firenze", *La Capitale*, 28 October 1922, 1.

⁶¹ "I Fasci Minacciano un'Incursione su Innsbruck?", *La Capitale*, 21 October 1922, 1.

⁶² "Violento Attacco Contro Badoglio", *La Capitale*, 28 October 1922, 3.

⁶³ "Sindacati Nazionali e Fascismo – Rapporti di Buon Cameratismo", *La Capitale*, 21 October 1922, 3.

⁶⁴ "Il Significato del Ritorno del Sovrano".

that gave rationalization to why the Fascists were able to assume control of the government.⁶⁵ The author, the paper's director L. Rolla, noted that weak and unstable administrations plagued Italy since before 1915. Italian politicians lacked the charisma and will to fight the First World War, and were responsible for the disastrous performances at Caporetto and at the Paris peace negotiations. Domestic affairs were horrendous as the government "permitted the major disparagement to the laws and to order".⁶⁶ Unlike *Il Lavoro d'Italia*'s response from two weeks prior, Rolla insisted that *Fascismo* was born as a practical response to the government's ineptness and general chaos. The people wanted security and stability. The Fascists "[had] saved Italy from social revolution, [and] from complete ruin", so it "was logical, [and] it was inevitable" that the Fascists assumed power.⁶⁷ They brought to a government level the energy and the decisiveness that previous politicians lacked.⁶⁸

However, unlike *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica*'s proclamation of "Glorious Fascism", Rolla's editorial was the limit of *La Capitale*'s celebration. The list of new cabinet ministers was presented without comment,⁶⁹ along with an article regarding the new prime minister's pragmatic concern about Italian-American immigration and his state's debtor status to the U.S.⁷⁰ The good image of Fascism was even countered by two reports of Blackshirt violence and aggression, which included one death.⁷¹

⁶⁵ L. Rolla, "Era Inevitabile", *La Capitale*, 4 November 1922, 1. This article is signed with a solitary R. This is assumed to be L. Rolla, the newspaper's director.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ "Il Nuovo Gabinetto Italiano", *La Capitale*, 4 November 1922, 1.

⁷⁰ "Mussolini e gli Stati Uniti", *La Capitale*, 4 November 1922, 1.

⁷¹ "Inchiesta sul Conflitto Nazionalista-Fascista", *La Capitale*, 4 November 1922, 1; "Rappresaglie Fasciste a Terni", *La Capitale*, 4 November 1922, 3.

In many ways, it seemed as though Rolla and *La Capitale* wanted to put their faith in Mussolini, but were restrained by both the novelty of the administration and its means of ascension. It was admittedly a “*colpo di stato*”, or coup d’état, bloodless but illegal nevertheless.⁷² This placed both Mussolini and Italians in an unprecedented situation:

Italy will not have a representative Government from the parliamentary point of view, at least as far as... the elections and the population will not have demonstrated its will on this important movement that overturned a Government in less than three days, and for the moment, gave to its leader the power of a Garibaldi.⁷³

Yet, for all the illegalities, the new administration worked. The Blackshirts at the Naples rally returned home without issue.⁷⁴ Even the Italian press “show[ed] a notable moderation towards Prime Minister Mussolini”, allowing him the chance to make something good out of the opportunity.⁷⁵ In his editorial, Rolla agreed; while the press celebrated what appeared to be the energy of the ministry, it also felt “that any judgment on the Mussolini cabinet would [have been]... premature”.⁷⁶ The only certainty was that the Fascists “close[d] for Italy a painful period... [of] enslavement to internal and external enemies”.⁷⁷

After the March on Rome, *La Capitale*, like *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts*, took a slightly friendlier attitude towards Fascism, but its position was not without reservations. There was support in the sense that *La Capitale* wished for Mussolini to succeed if only to stabilize Italy; nevertheless, a pro-Fascist stance was nullified by reports of violence and the admission that the entire episode was technically illegal from

⁷² “Come i rappresentanti dei Fascisti andarono al potere”, *La Capitale*, 11 November 1922, 8.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “L’Esodo delle Camice [sic] Nere”, 4 November 1922, 3.

⁷⁵ “La Stampa e il Nuovo Gabinetto”, *La Capitale*, 11 November 1922, 1.

⁷⁶ L. Rolla, “Le Prime Attività del Gabinetto Mussolini”, *La Capitale*, 11 November 1922, 1. Signed as R., author is presumed to be L. Rolla.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

the paper's point of view. Unlike *La Tribuna Italiana*, which backed Fascism ideologically, *La Capitale* accepted the Blackshirts' grab for power for more practical reasons; just as in the old adage 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend', Mussolini appeared to be the only effective counter to Bolshevism in 1922 and was therefore accepted by the Sacramento paper. However, when all of the articles published by *La Capitale* are considered collectively, the outcome is a moderate view of the situation with support for Fascism only because it meant possible change.

Il Cittadino Italo-Americano was the ethnic paper that served Youngstown, Ohio. Unlike *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts*, this source has been left untouched by most historians, so a secondary evaluation of the paper's stance towards Fascism is not available; however, there are indications that *Il Cittadino* should have been pro-Fascist leaning. The Library of Congress designated this source as an official organ of the Sons of Italy and other Italian-American societies.⁷⁸ Circa-1920 issues substantiate this assertion with the claim "Patronized by the Largest Italian Societies in Ohio and Pennsylvania" in the masthead.⁷⁹ Although the Sons of Italy declared itself to be non-political after factional fighting occurred in 1922, historians noted that the organization became an unofficial, but very important, tool for Fascist propaganda during the interwar period.⁸⁰ In addition, *Il Cittadino* supported the Republican Party throughout the early 1920s and even ran full-page ads for candidates.⁸¹ The Republican administrations at that time allied themselves with Mussolini for a variety of reasons. During an

⁷⁸ Library of Congress, "About *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano* = The Italian-American Citizen. (Youngstown, Ohio) 1902-1938", *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88078385/> (accessed 7 December 2011).

⁷⁹ *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 15 May 1920, 1.

⁸⁰ Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, ed. Philip V. Cannistraro (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977), 91-105; Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 94-95.

⁸¹ "L'Ora del Popolo", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 30 October 1920, 1.

atmosphere of panic regarding possible communist subversion, the Fascists stood as a bulwark against Bolshevik expansion into southern Europe. In addition, Mussolini's promise of a stable capitalist economy and his willingness to seek American friendship impressed many Republicans, aided of course by his denunciation of Woodrow Wilson's policies.⁸² Politically, *Il Cittadino* would have found more in common with a conservative, nationalist government than a socialist one. Based on these characteristics, the Youngstown source should have manifested a pro-Fascist stance; however, a close reading of the paper in October-November 1922 proves this hypothesis wrong.

Reporting prior to Mussolini's appointment was similar to that found in *La Capitale*. *Il Cittadino*, like its Sacramento counterpart, used the majority of its print space to discuss how Fascist initiative affected important political figures and platforms from other parties, rather than Mussolini or the Quadrumvirs. Fascism was a natural result of errors made by the Socialists. Perpetual strikes signaled the Socialist Party's loss of the "idea of motherland" as turmoil proved to be more antipatriotic than antisocial from the viewpoint of many citizens.⁸³ Borrowing from the thoughts of a Father Semeria – an individual who was pointed out as "not being [a Fascist] sympathizer" – published a week prior in *Il Progresso*, the Youngstown paper admitted that the "merit of fascism [was still] actual social organization in Italy".⁸⁴ *Il Cittadino* noted, and seemed to hope for, the possibility of Giolitti's return. He was presented as a moderate alternative; Giolitti certainly was not a radical, but there was news that his appointment would have brought badly needed financial and electoral reforms. Even Don Sturzo and his PPI

⁸² David F. Schmitz, *The United States and Fascist Italy, 1922–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 36-59.

⁸³ Angelo Flavio Giudi, "Fascismo e Socialismo", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 21 October 1922, 1.

⁸⁴ "Il Momento Politico", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 21 October 1922, 1.

acquiesced to the notion that Giolitti was “the only capable person to hold front to [the current] political situation”.⁸⁵

At the same time, *Il Cittadino* was unable to refute the reality of Italian circumstances. Quadrumvir Michele Bianchi urged the Fascists to resist incorporation into another administration;⁸⁶ it was clear that the Blackshirts “intend[ed] to have all the Government in their hands”.⁸⁷ And considering their “excessive demands”, there was little possibility of other parties voluntarily including them.⁸⁸ News from Rome about the Naples rally illustrated that the Fascists had two options: either they would have had to adopt a modified platform and possibly found a union with another party; or, they needed “to carry out that much feared march on Rome and realize the coup d’état”.⁸⁹ However, *Il Cittadino* refused to believe that Mussolini and his party had the audacity to seize the capital. In the paper’s opinion, such an act “would [have] serve[d] to eliminate... a great part of the sympathies” from supporters.⁹⁰

Yet, the Youngstown paper also stated the possibility that Mussolini was a good change for Italy. Similar to how the Italians needed the strong-willed Francesco Crispi as prime minister in the late-nineteenth century, Italy also required a tough ruler in the 1920s. “[I]f Benito Mussolini want[ed] to inaugurate truly the politics of the lion [Crispi] abandoning those of the rabbit, well [came] Mussolini”, as long as the transition was peaceful.⁹¹ The patriotism inspired by the party, along with its willingness to assert

⁸⁵ “Giolitti Riprendera’ il Potere: Un Nuovo Programma”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 21 October 1922, 1, 6. Quote on page 6.

⁸⁶ “Mussolini ed un Gabinetto Giolitti”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 21 October 1922, 5.

⁸⁷ “Giolitti Riprendera’ il Potere”, 6.

⁸⁸ “Il Congresso di Napoli”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 28 October 1922, 1.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ “Il Momento Politico”.

Italian rights internationally, prompted “a series of fruitful struggles” between politicians that pushed Italy to new heights.⁹²

After the peaceful conclusion to the Rome confrontation, *Il Cittadino* continued to express a limited acceptance of Fascism and echoed many of the same positions and concerns as *La Capitale*. Fascism was not a perfect solution, but it was worth trying because Mussolini promised to fix the government while respecting constitutional law.⁹³ However, it was clear that *Il Cittadino* treaded cautiously about the subject. In an unsigned editorial published 11 November 1922, the paper reasoned its stance for subscribers. Admittedly, “fascism [had] without doubt destroyed” but “not... for the taste of destroying”.⁹⁴ There was still the chance that the ends justified the means. Italy faced two problems: internal economic obstacles (especially related to inefficient state monopolies) and poor international relations with Mediterranean neighbors due to territorial disputes. After months, if not years, of political inaction, *Il Cittadino* bluntly stated “[w]e do not want to return the causes that produced the fascist movement, because we believe it perfectly useless”.⁹⁵ The Youngstown source urged readers to give the system time before making any real judgments. Italian-Americans were distanced from Italy by both time and space, so only those people who were directly involved in the situation had the background to make correct decisions. “We personally have faith”, the editorial concluded, “in the future of the Country, and therefore in a wise administration of the man, or better, of the men that govern it”.⁹⁶

⁹² “Il Congresso di Napoli”.

⁹³ “Importanti Dichiarazioni di Mussolini”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 4 November 1922, 4.

⁹⁴ “Incertezze del Momento Politico”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 11 November 1922, 1.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

All of this information provided a quite balanced interpretation of the situation. The only perspective that suggested any favoritism towards the Fascist Party was *Il Cittadino*'s almost naïve hope of economic and political improvement. It did not justify the brutality of the Fascists; quite conversely, the paper actually admitted that the system destroyed in the past. The publication was realistic enough to accept that Fascism had a terrible record in terms of legality, but it refused to believe that the king and his government would have voluntarily appointed the system to power if it were not one of the best options at the time. In a stagnant state, any change seemed favorable to a system that was broke and inept. The March on Rome could have never succeeded; therefore, rather than acknowledge Mussolini's appointment as the result of threats, it seemed more likely to *Il Cittadino* that the decision was based on the reality that the Fascist Party was growing and was poised to win more parliamentary seats in the next election at any rate.

The most biased interpretation came not from *Il Cittadino*'s writers, but rather from an article that listed a few translated American newspaper reactions. These verbatim selections allowed Youngstown's Italians to see the spectrum of American responses. *The New York Times*, for example, denounced many aspects of the movement "because it [was] the revolt against democratic methods and systems".⁹⁷ By contrast, the *New York Tribune* referred to Mussolini as "[a] Black shirted Garibaldi" and noted his role in stopping "the impurities of Communism, of Socialism, of the Germanophiles, and of the Nittians".⁹⁸ In light of such viewpoints, along with the opinions from other newspapers surveyed in this chapter, *Il Cittadino*'s wait and see attitude certainly gave it a moderate stance in 1922. Although the Youngstown paper had all the characteristics of

⁹⁷ "Le Impressioni del Movimento Politico Italiano nella Stampa Americana", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 4 November 1922, 2.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

a pro-Fascist source, the information printed within it swayed between the good and bad aspects of the movement.

Similar to *Il Cittadino*, Pittsburgh's *La Trinacria* displayed many characteristics typical of a philo-Fascist newspaper. Unlike its Youngstown counterpart, there has been some mention of the paper in secondary sources, albeit during its early years. *La Trinacria* was originally published by Mariano Cancelliere, a prominent Italian-American who was often seen with business owners. The paper was anti-union and anti-labor, and it attracted direct and personal attacks from Carlo Tresca's *Il Proletario* and *La Plebe* about fifteen years before the March on Rome.⁹⁹ *Il Proletario* in particular was a well-known New York anti-Fascist newspaper.¹⁰⁰ By 1922, control switched from Cancelliere to a Board of Directors, a clear indication that it never lost its business connection.¹⁰¹ In addition, *La Trinacria* had a strong Catholic influence, an important fact since both Roman Catholic priests and the Church have long been identified as proponents of Fascism.¹⁰² The paper dedicated at least one page per week for religious news and stories, and the editor was Father Ercole Dominicis.¹⁰³ Like the preceding four newspapers, *La Trinacria* should have displayed a pro-Fascist stance during the March on Rome.

In contrast, the Pittsburgh source differed significantly from all those surveyed thus far. While *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica* and *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts* altered their moderate reporting to salute Mussolini's inclusion into the government, and

⁹⁹ Nunzio Pernicone, *Carlo Tresca: Portrait of a Rebel*, Italian and Italian American Series, ed. Stanislao G. Pugliese (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 24, 37-38.

¹⁰⁰ Nazzaro, 60; Cannistraro, *Blackshirts in Little Italy*, 36.

¹⁰¹ See board of directors and administration listing. *La Trinacria*, 20 October 1922, 4.

¹⁰² Salvemini, 145-164; Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 182-197.

¹⁰³ *La Trinacria* reprinted the Bishop of Pittsburgh's blessing for the paper as a good Catholic source and promoter of religion. See *La Trinacria*, 20 October 1922, 4.

La Capitale and *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano* expressed open, yet ambivalent, attitudes, *La Trinacria* itself never admitted any good concerning Mussolini and his party. Like the pro-Fascist sentiments found in *Il Cittadino*'s reproduced article from the *New York Tribune*, *La Trinacria*'s supportive comments came not from the writers, but rather from two letters to the editor that were printed in the weeks before the March on Rome. The first was sent from Italy by an anonymous author and was published on 20 October 1922. The letter was a typical piece of pro-Fascist reading about the need of a stable and strong Italy; however, the importance of the article comes not from the letter itself, but from the newspaper's introduction. While the editor admired the writing because it presented Fascism "under a point of light to make it seem... almost nice", he also reminded readers that it did not represent the views of the paper.¹⁰⁴ Although it was well-written, *La Trinacria* published the piece because it had an editorial policy of including different opinions.¹⁰⁵ To make this stance even clearer to patrons, the second letter, printed in the 27 October issue, actually carried the title "Fascism and the Impartiality of *La Trinacria*".¹⁰⁶ Signed by Antonio V. Rosati of Duquesne University, the writing both excused the irregularities Fascism and attacked the newspaper's stance towards the movement. Rosati noted in particular an article published on 13 October 1922 in which *La Trinacria* claimed "fascism attacked some homes of parish pastors and beat some priests, and desecrated some churches and obstructed processions".¹⁰⁷ These declarations, Rosati wrote, were slanderous; furthermore, he continued by asking rhetorically, did "the writer read America's newspapers? Not any precession was by the

¹⁰⁴ "Il Fascismo", letter to the editor, *La Trinacria*, 20 October 1922, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Antonio V. Rosati, "Il Fascismo e l'imparzialità della Trinacria", letter to the editor, *La Trinacria*, 27 October 1922, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Fascists impeded”.¹⁰⁸ Clearly, Rosati implied, the Pittsburgh paper had an agenda regarding its presentation of the new political movement.

Perhaps *La Trinacria* was not as suppressive as Rosati asserted – it had in fact published a multipage copy of Mussolini’s recent speech as Udine¹⁰⁹ – but the man was correct in writing that the Pittsburgh paper was against the Fascist Party. Opposite to *il Duce*’s speech was text taken from a letter written by the senators from the *Partito Popolare Italiano*, and this group, not the PNF, was where *La Trinacria*’s sympathy laid.¹¹⁰ The PPI was founded by Don Luigi Sturzo in 1919, and was the forerunner to the post-war Christian Democrats. Sturzo, a priest and the mayor of Caltagirone, Sicily for fifteen years, championed Italian workers and Christian principles. When Pope Benedict XV repealed the Church’s restriction to participation in Italian government, Sturzo organized the PPI as a national party and it quickly became popular.¹¹¹ Dominicis’s connection to Sturzo and the party was not imagined; appearing between Mussolini’s and the senators’ evaluations was a message from Sturzo addressed to *La Trinacria*. The Italian politician thanked Dominicis for the regular copies of the publication, and told readers “I follow with interest your good battle and I am grateful for the defense, that the newspaper constantly fulfills, of the reasons and the actions of our Party”.¹¹²

After the king appeased the Fascists by appointing Mussolini, *La Trinacria* broke its impartiality with Dominicis claiming that it was not possible “to remain without

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ “Il Discorso Politico di Benito Mussolini”, *La Trinacria*, 27 October 1922, 1, 4-5.

¹¹⁰ “I Senatori del P. P. I. a Don Luigi Sturzo: Il testo ufficiale della lettera”, *La Trinacria*, 27 October 1922, 1, 4.

¹¹¹ Malcolm Moos, “Don Luigi Sturzo—Christian Democrat”, *The American Political Science Review* 39, no. 2 (April 1945): 269-272. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1949186> (accessed 12 July 2013).

¹¹² Don L. Sturzo, “Don L. Sturzo alla *Trinacria*”, letter to the editor, *La Trinacria*, 27 October 1922, 1.

comment” in relation to the PNF and the PPI.¹¹³ He compared Mussolini and Sturzo to two diverse horses as an analogy to explain the situation. Mussolini was “a furious colt that [had] need of the bit”, being against both the monarchy and republicanism.¹¹⁴ Part of the blame went to the government, which, by allowing the Fascists to form a cabinet, only made itself look weak. The consequences of this action were still unforeseen. Continuing the analogy, Sturzo was described as “[t]he other colt not **furious**, but **fiery**” that only lacked a force at the reigns to be successful.¹¹⁵ Of course, Dominicis was not alone in this stance, and he pointed to the Italian press as not “all enthusiastic of [the] fascist movement”.¹¹⁶

Most of *La Trinacria*’s criticism dealt with the illegality and violence of the Fascists. Prior to the March, it published an article that asked people to follow the example set by the town of Nonantola to avoid a civil war. Under the leadership of the resident priest, the citizens created a committee that included all the heads of the local political parties, and together they agreed to respect religious and civil rights while working towards peace.¹¹⁷ After the March, the condemnation for the turmoil fell on Fascist shoulders. The Pittsburgh paper bluntly proclaimed “we cannot approve... their demonstrations and affirmations and methods of government that are the dictatorial imposition, the violence, the arrogance”.¹¹⁸ To the “Dictator B. Mussolini”, it warned that Italy was not a state that could be governed “with the stick and with the pistol”.¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, as Dominicis noted, Mussolini was a new Napoleon, born out of a time of

¹¹³ Ercole Dominicis, “I due puledri”, *La Trinacria*, 3 November 1922, 1. Note- Signed E. D., assumed to be Dominicis.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ “Contro la Guerra Civile: L’Esempio di Nonantola”, *La Trinacria*, 20 October 1922, 1, 4.

¹¹⁸ Dominicis, “I due puledri”.

¹¹⁹ “Il nuovo governo”, *La Trinacria*, 3 November 1922, 5.

fear and disorder; if *il Duce* fixed all of Italy's problems, then her people would forgive all the illegalities.¹²⁰ However, the more plausible outcome was that good would win in the end, just as Christ's monuments now sit atop Nero's ruins.¹²¹

La Trinacria claimed impartiality, but it was in fact anti-Fascist in 1922, contrary to the initial analysis. Like *Il Cittadino*, the most vocal complaint against the movement was its lack of legality and the use of violence. Condemnation of the party's platform was rare, rather the Pittsburgh paper was opposed to its methods rather than its principles. While the previous four papers surveyed were either philo-Fascist or moderate, *La Trinacria* was undoubtedly anti-Mussolini in October and November 1922.

Unlike the previous five newspapers, historians have indentified this last source, Detroit's *La Voce del Popolo*, as hostile towards Fascism.¹²² The paper was founded in 1910 by Monsignor Joseph Ciarrocchi as a counter to Detroit's criminal underworld. Msgr. Ciarrocchi's work brought him into contact with labor leaders, and thereafter, allied with the left-leaning worker's movement, he became an outspoken critic of Fascism after its creation in Italy. From 1933 to 1935, he and *La Voce del Popolo* led a noted campaign against the newly-appointed pro-Fascist vice consul of Detroit, which eventually ended with the diplomat being removed and reassigned. His anti-Fascist position was unique within the Catholic clergy, and his church superiors often ordered him to refrain from denouncing Fascism too loudly.¹²³

¹²⁰ Ercole Dominicis, "Il Fenomeno 'Mussolini'", *La Trinacria*, 10 November 1922, 1.

¹²¹ Dominicis, "I due puledri".

¹²² Nazzaro, 61; John P. Diggins, "The Italo-American Anti-Fascist Opposition", *The Journal of American History* 54, no. 3 (December 1967): 580. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2937408> (accessed 30 October 2011).

¹²³ Philip V. Cannistraro, "Fascism and Italian-Americans in Detroit, 1933–1935", *International Migration Review* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 33–38. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3002528> (accessed 30 October 2011).

Even before Mussolini was appointed prime minister, *La Voce del Popolo* observed the threat of Fascism. When it reported on the Fascist rally in Naples that occurred a few days prior to the march, the newspaper printed not the facts of the meeting but instead points of aggression. The Blackshirts assaulted the offices of the pro-Francesco Nitti newspaper *Il Mondo*, and the paper implied that there was little state control over the situation because the local military commander, who was disliked by the Fascists, was conveniently absent from the scene. The article continued by quoting Mussolini as saying that his followers would take the government by force if necessary, to which the paper responded: “When it is that Italy were reduced to be at the mercy of a party there is no more to say, unfortunately, than Poor Italy!”¹²⁴ Yet, *La Voce del Popolo* also understood that Fascism had grounds for complaint. It was an “ethical-social phenomenon” that arose because of poor economic conditions and a perceived weak state.¹²⁵ Without elections there was no outlet for discontent besides through the Fascists; this meant, as quoted from Nitti, that the lack of immediate voting in some ways “legalize[d] the possible fascist actions”.¹²⁶

In the issue after the March on Rome, *La Voce del Popolo*, like all the ethnic papers, devoted a large section to summarizing the remarkable events that occurred in Italy over the past week. The article began with an overt commentary under the appropriately subtitled “The Advent of Fascism: Our Thought”.¹²⁷ Ciarrocchi’s publication made no effort to conceal its opinion: “What do we think of fascism to power? First of all we think that it arrived to us with a method most dangerous –

¹²⁴ “Il Congresso dei Fascisti”, *La Voce del Popolo*, 27 October 1922, 1.

¹²⁵ “Nitti e il Fascismo”, *La Voce del Popolo*, 27 October 1922, 5.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “Il Trionfo del Fascismo: Il Nuovo Ministero Fascista all’Opera”, *La Voce del Popolo*, 3 November 1922, 1.

force”.¹²⁸ Like *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts*, which compared the march to the revolt of the Praetorian Guard, the Detroit paper also found similarities in the situation. The use of force to further political ambitions “led to the definitive ruin [of] the roman empire”, making for an unkind analogy to the Italian state of affairs.¹²⁹ *La Voce del Popolo*, like *La Trinacria* and *La Tribuna*, also used the historical comparison of Napoleon’s coup d’état, of course agreeing more with the negative connotations found in the Pittsburgh paper’s evaluation than the savoir image offered by its Chicago counterpart. This was a terrible precedent, the article said, because of fascism’s “expansionistic and militaristic tendency”.¹³⁰ The Fascists were too violent and too aggressive. The paper cited a report sent from a *Corriere della Sera* representative to illustrate the fact. During a meeting between some government functionaries and four Fascist leaders, including the notorious Roberto Farinacci, the Blackshirts treated the officials with undue disrespect. The paper asked readers to keep in mind “that they [spoke] with [an] imperious voice to a civil governor, to a general, to a prefect, to a commissioner”.¹³¹ In addition, the Association of the Italian Press filed a formal complaint with Mussolini’s government claiming “[t]he fascists invaded the offices and the printing presses of various newspapers”.¹³²

Although decisively anti-Fascist, *La Voce del Popolo* was still realistic enough to understand that the political situation had no obvious solution. The previous government was weak and the state unstable; people wanted law and order, the ability to work, and to provide for themselves. They required a leader with a “*mano di ferro*” (an iron hand),

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ “Basso Impero”, *La Voce del Popolo*, 3 November 1922, 5.

¹³² “Il nuovo ministero all’opera”, *La Voce del Popolo*, 10 November 1922, 5.

and received Mussolini.¹³³ While the Detroit publication believed this was dangerous, it also admitted that “it would [have been] a disaster for Italy [to have] a counterrevolution”.¹³⁴ In some ways, Mussolini’s ministry was acceptable; he was willing to normalize relations with Yugoslavia and he was applauded for announcing some action in response to the Italian press’s concerns.¹³⁵ However, a Fascist government was still a setback for Italy and promised more than it could ever deliver, leading to the conclusion that “Mussolini, in contact with reality, will probably put much water in his wine”.¹³⁶

La Voce del Popolo was against Fascism; nevertheless, like the previous five sources, even this paper found it necessary to include some moderation. Fascism was a poor solution to a horrible problem, and it assumed power in a manner that was insidious. Yet, as terrible as it was in both theory and reality, any immediate action against Mussolini’s government would have only compounded the situation by further destabilizing the nation. Even in a paper that detested Fascism and everything that the ideology represented, there were still opinions printed that helped moderate the overall tone of the newspaper’s perspective.

Evaluation, Trends, and Observations

All of this information provides for some very interesting observations. First, the previously held belief that the Italian-American media was overwhelming pro-Fascist is false, at least when considering its positions in October and November 1922. Certainly

¹³³ “Il Trionfo del Fascismo”.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ “Il nuovo ministero all’opera”.

¹³⁶ “Il Trionfo del Fascismo.”

one would not expect these philo-Fascist attitudes to all resemble the post-March on Rome exaltations displayed by *La Tribuna*; however, bearing in mind the previous interpretations of scholars, one would expect responses similar to those found in *La Gazzetta*. The Boston paper did not praise Mussolini with the almost religious fanaticism found in its Chicago counterpart, but it still displayed a healthy dose of justification for the episode.

Instead, the positions of the six news sources formed a spectrum with *La Tribuna Italiana Trans-Atlantica* as a paradigm of the expected response based on Diggins's work and *La Voce del Popolo* anchoring the anti-Fascist end of the range. However, it is also important to note that that no source contained a completely bias interpretation during the month surrounding the March on Rome. Even the two papers defined as the two pillars to the scale made some comments against their own beliefs: for *La Tribuna*, this was accepting that the Fascists had no real ideology or platform that differentiated them from other parties; and for *La Voce del Popolo*, it was admitting the temporary necessity of Mussolini's party for stabilizing the nation. The four newspapers between them, *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts*, *La Capitale*, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, and *La Trinacria*, all provided opinions and support for both sides of the argument to some degree.

When all articles are tallied for each publication, weighing the negatives against the positives, there emerge three groups. The first consists of *La Tribuna* and *La Gazzetta*. Although both offered some questioning before the March on Rome, after its peaceful conclusion, these sources generally supported Mussolini as was to be expected. The second group is comprised of *La Capitale* and *Il Cittadino*. They offered some promotion of Fascism, but also expressed contempt related to the movement and its

methods. Any source that adds doubt to the reader's mind must be taken as neutral at the best. Finally, the third category included the two anti-Fascist periodicals *La Trinacria* and *La Voce del Popolo*. While a partial justification was offered based on the situation, each paper's editorial section clearly denounced the Fascists. When these six sources are taken together to provide one encompassing perspective for the entire group of Italian-American ethnic papers around the time of the March on Rome, the outcome is a very moderate view of Mussolini, his party, and its ideology.

Another interesting trend is that historians defined most of the newspapers as philo-Fascist. *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts*, *La Capitale*, and *La Trinacria*, were all considered sources friendly to Mussolini based on the secondary interpretations of their publishers, their general editors, or the content of the paper. In addition, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano* had many of the traits that one would expect to find in a pro-Fascist source: emphasis on the Republican Party and an allegiance with Italian-American fraternal societies, specifically the Sons of Italy. *La Tribuna* was captained by an editor whose own ideas prior to the period reflected some of the attitudes of the Fascists. Thus only one of the six sources, *La Voce del Popolo*, was defined as unquestionably anti-Fascist by the academic community or by its traits. This of course makes the idea of moderation in 1922 even more remarkable since five-sixths of the media – a ratio close to that proposed by Diggins – surveyed should have praised the ascension of the Blackshirts.

The manner in which the print news interpreted the events also provides a few patterns that help explain the disjunction. The most vocal criticism was not Fascist ideology, although some sources clearly disagreed with the party's positions, but rather

the violence and illegalities associated with the Blackshirts. In this chapter's samplings, half of the sources specifically used the term "coup d'état" to refer to either the March on Rome or the consequences that arose from the threatened rally.¹³⁷ Allusions to Napoleon Bonaparte's seizure of power and Rome's decline due to armed governmental usurpation were also popular.

Newspapers were far less concerned with what the Fascists wanted to accomplish because many Italian-Americans sought the same outcome as proposed by the Blackshirts. The role of *italianità* cannot be lessened in this context. If the violent and illicit nature of Fascism was removed, then most editors' arguments would have been over the technicalities of solutions rather than the methods used. Although Fascism was radical in the sense that it proposed a new emphasis on national identity above all, it is important to note that in many ways the system was conservative for rejecting class revolution; it was an aggressive middle-class movement meant to protect the group's position and secure its rights.¹³⁸ Evidence has led to the inclusion of "an unusual number of landowners, shopkeepers, clerical workers and, above all, students" into the constituency.¹³⁹ While these people desired a strong Italy, they also wanted to keep their own standing in society, contrary to the class equality that the communists envisioned. As many newspapers pointed out, stability at any cost was necessary. They deplored a radical restructuring of Italy; in this sense, stability meant fixing the broken (such as the political system or state monopolies) and in the process keeping the status quo for the time being. For most Italian-American publications, their negative assessment of

¹³⁷ "Come i rappresentanti dei Fascisti andarono al potere", *La Capitale*, 11 November 1922, 8; "Il Congresso di Napoli", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 28 October 1922, 1; "Il Trionfo del Fascismo: Il Nuovo Ministero Fascista all'Opera", *La Voce del Popolo*, 3 November 1922, 1.

¹³⁸ Clark, 262-264.

¹³⁹ Clark, 262.

Fascism arose not from Mussolini's new conceived Italy, but rather the harsh means being used by the Blackshirts to achieve that dream.

Finally, one last trend appears: the interconnectedness of the Italian-language press to other sources for information. Italians in the United States were separated by thousands of miles from events in Italy. Without first-hand information, the press relied on outside sources for news on which to provide commentary. Each different viewpoint provided another piece to understanding the entire situation abroad. Information gained from Mussolini's *Il Popolo d'Italia* was compared and added to perspectives offered by men like Labriola, Giolitti, and Nitti in publications like *La Stampa* or *Corriere della Sera*. Loss of these alternative sources would have left Italian-American editors in a vacuum and unable to analyze properly the political events in Italy. As long as these existed, which the subsequent chapter shows they did well into 1924, then the ethnic press generally offered a complete, balanced, and moderate picture of the Fascists to Italian-Americans.

Chapter Four: Tracing Moderation

Il Cittadino between Turning Points, March on Rome to the Matteotti Crisis

As concluded in the previous chapter, the Italian-American newspapers' reporting during the weeks before and after the March on Rome in 1922 displayed a noted case of moderation when considered as a whole. A few sources supported Mussolini, but others also condemned the Fascists. Those in the middle of the debate showed some tentative acceptance, yet certainly did not wholeheartedly approve of the system. However, many well-regarded period writers and historians have insisted on a pro-Fascist consensus, so there must be some truth in the evaluation. The problem originates not from poor scholarship, but rather the tendency to generalize about the entire interwar period, missing the complexity of the decades and significant changes both in the United States and abroad. When describing the American news community, John Diggins found that "the chorus did not remain constant throughout the twenties and early thirties. Actually, American opinion oscillated from time to time as particular developments in Italy elicited acclaim or censure", and there is no reason to dismiss such a critique from ethnic publications.¹ If there is some truth to these generalities and to Diggins's summary of the English-language press in the United States, then most of the Italian-language newspapers surveyed should have displayed some times of both rejection and acclaim based on external factors.

This chapter examines one of those sources, Youngstown's *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, in an effort to contextualize the phenomenon. The purpose is two fold. First,

¹ John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 29.

it shows that reporting around 28 October was not an anomaly, or temporary moderation created by shock associated with the gravity of the situation. Distrust lingered well after the initial reporting. Second, it provides some deeper insight for reasoning. The period from late 1922 to fall 1924 was a perilous time for the young Fascist government. As evidenced even in the Italian-American press, Mussolini and his Blackshirts had many politically powerful enemies. Worse, the previous four years, 1918–1922, experienced five different men in turn leading Italy; the probability that *il Duce* could have escaped this revolving door was slim. This early stage of Mussolini's rule contained a few very significant events, making them models for later embodiments. For instance, how the press interpreted Mussolini's actions during the Corfu Incident exemplified its response to strong nationalism, foreshowing probable reporting during the Ethiopian War. By broadly examining the first few years of Fascist rule, one better understands the patterns and trends prompted by the six-paper survey and the publishers' justifications for certain stances.

Il Cittadino: An Integral Part of the Community

Why use the Youngstown paper? The answer is simple: moderation. As mentioned previously, *Il Cittadino* collaborated with local Italian-American societies to print club news and voiced its support for the Republican Party; both were traits commonly associated with pro-Fascist publications. Yet, *Il Cittadino* contained a noted ambivalence during the March on Rome and thus fell in the middle of the spectrum established in the previous chapter. For any proper assessment, it is imperative to avoid extremes and use examples that catered to the mainstream. Socialist-backed publications,

like Carlo Tresca's *Il Martello*, contained thoughtful critiques, but they tell later researchers little about the average Italian-American's thoughts.

Another reason to use *Il Cittadino* is stability. Newspapers were commercial enterprises, and, like any business, were founded, dissolved, or sold depending on market conditions. For the period 1884–1920, 267 Italian-language papers were created in the United States, but another 176 ceased operations.² A new owner could also affect the position of the paper. For example, *L'Opinione* was the largest circulating Philadelphia Italian newspaper on the eve of the Great Depression. By 1932, economic conditions forced Charles Baldi, Jr. to sell his enterprise. The purchaser was none other than Generoso Pope, the same man with the obvious political agenda discovered by Pearl Drubeck's high-school Chicago class.³

By contrast, *Il Cittadino* spent much of its existence during Fascism under the ownership of Celestino A. Petrarca. Born in 1872 in the Aquila province of Italy, Petrarca first resided in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, northeast of Pittsburgh, before settling in Youngstown around 1913.⁴ On 9 October 1920, Petrarca assumed control of the paper from E. A. Buonpane, who was proprietor of *Il Cittadino* for the previous two decades, possibly since its founding on 21 August 1902.⁵ Although a few other individuals appeared infrequently, such as the short tenure of C. Ferraro as a general

² Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, Americanization Studies Series (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922), 313.

³ Stefano Luconi, *From Paesani to White Ethnics: The Italian Experience in Philadelphia*, SUNY Series in Italian / American Culture, ed. Fred L. Gardaphé (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 80.

⁴ "C. A. Petrarca Dies at 91; Printed Italian Paper Here", *Youngstown Vindicator*, 10 February 1964, 12, city edition.

⁵ "La Nuova Amministrazione del 'Cittadino Italo-Americano'", 9 October 1920, 1; Mary Virginia Foley, "A Tribute To a Blessing: Which the Italian-American People Have Found in *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 20 August 1932, 1.

business manager, Petrarca's paper was generally family-run, with the exception of Carlo Caselli.⁶

Caselli was born in Naples, Italy in 1882. Well-educated for his time, he attended the University of Naples and graduated in civil engineering before becoming a journalist. From 1907 to 1910, Caselli wrote for *Il Giorno* while also contributing to the humor section of another periodical. He then worked for a short time in the civil engineering department of the Ministry of Public Works in Calabria before immigrating to the United States. Caselli eventually found employment with *Il Cittadino* for much of the 1920s as an editor and the author of the humor section.⁷

Most importantly, both men were well-respected members of the Italian-American community. Unlike radical newspapers, in which the editor or publisher often laid on the fringes of society and was not taken seriously by a mainstream audience, *Il Cittadino*'s staff cooperated both professionally and recreationally with Youngstown's Italians. Petrarca established the local N. Colaanni lodge of the Sons of Italy and sponsored the first Italian Day in the area.⁸ In 1927, he served as a trustee for the Italian-American Citizens Political Association.⁹ Caselli also had "a vigorous interest in local and national politics".¹⁰ He was president of the Duca degli Abruzzi Society in 1932 and 1933, and taught Italian at Youngstown's East High School from 1929 until his death in 1937.¹¹ Neither Petrarca nor Caselli operated within a vacuum; through their interchanges with other prominent members of the ethnic and native-born communities,

⁶ "Years Ago", *Youngstown Vindicator*, 8 November 1979, 14, city edition.

⁷ "Carlo Caselli, East High Teacher of Italian, Dies", *Youngstown Vindicator*, 10 November 1937, 6; Carlo Caselli, "Carissimi Lettori ed Amici", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 10 April 1920, 1.

⁸ "C. A. Petrarca Dies at 91; Printed Italian Paper Here".

⁹ "Italian Citizens Install Officers", *Youngstown Vindicator*, 19 January 1927, 22.

¹⁰ "Carlo Caselli, East High Teacher of Italian, Dies".

¹¹ Ibid; "Le Elezioni Sociali della Societa' Maschile Duca degli Abruzzi Colombo", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 10 December 1932, 1.

both men heard the opinions of others. Such interactions meant that not only were the owner and editor accepted by their peers, but that they were cognizant of the political leanings of Youngstown's Italian-American population.

Keeping in mind that commercial newspapers are businesses, *Il Cittadino* had to present a position acceptable to a diverse and large community of readers. Indeed, this idea is affirmed by the fact that it was generally the only Italian-language newspaper for the city. Another, relatively unknown publication, *La Nuova Italia*, existed from 1919 or 1920 to 1923; but while *Il Cittadino* survived, the other perished.¹² Perhaps this notion of being the community's reflection is best expressed by the paper itself for its own thirtieth anniversary announcement:

IL CITTADINO has fought a hard fight through many a battle, (political and business). It is true that we fought with all sincerity in the interesse [sic] always of the majority. It is true that our determined policy - - - our sincerity won for us the glory and the praise of the Italian people.¹³

Subscribers agreed with this statement and recognized the newspaper's function for its anniversary. *Il Cittadino* always advertised itself as the official organ for Italian-American societies in both Ohio and western Pennsylvania, and in return received congratulatory ads and writings from a dozen different clubs and lodges. Other letters of support came from prominent members of the community, such as Caselli and Dr. A. Rosapepe, the local Italian consul agent.¹⁴ Youngstown Mayor Mark E. Moore also sent his regards telling readers

¹² *Youngstown Official City Directory: Supplemented by Directories of East Youngstown, Struthers and Girard, 1920* (Akron, Ohio: Burch Directory Company, 1920), 1172; *Youngstown Official City Directory: Supplemented by Directories of East Youngstown, Struthers and Girard, 1923* (Akron, Ohio: Burch Directory Company, 1923), 1336.

¹³ "Success comes to those where Merit is Deserved", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 2 July 1932, 1.

¹⁴ *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 20 August 1932, 1-8

the foreign press in any community is essential, and indispensable in moulding opinion... It is my honest belief that your publication...performs a worthy and commendable service in this city, and as such is justly entitled to full recognition from all civic agencies and prominent individuals.¹⁵

Another twenty businesses and professionals offered praise, including lawyers, doctors, and the Italian department of the Dollar Savings & Trust bank.¹⁶

Il Cittadino was widely circulated. In 1922, Petrarca's publication claimed itself as "one of the oldest Italian Newspapers in Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. ...[and that it was] read in almost every Italian home and business place and [was] sent from New York to San Francisco from Canada to the Southern States".¹⁷ This statement was undoubtedly exaggerated, but it also contained some legitimate points. The Youngstown source was one of only 39 Italian-language papers in the United States when it was established in 1902.¹⁸ *Il Cittadino* declared that it had over 30,000 readers,¹⁹ at a time when Youngstown proper contained only 5,538 foreign-born Italians.²⁰ Although this number seems absurd, it is actually quite plausible, and probable, given the newspaper's wide circulation. To entice advertisers, the weekly estimated that its service area included almost 50,000 ethnic Italians in 1924.²¹ *Il Cittadino* had many representatives

¹⁵ Mark E. Moore, "Lettera del Sindaco", letter to the editor, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 20 August 1932, 4.

¹⁶ *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 20 August 1932, 1-8. The examples surveyed are not all-inclusive. For instance, more can be found in the 27 August 1932 and 6 August 1932 issues of *Il Cittadino*. The 20 August publication was the official anniversary commemoration.

¹⁷ *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 18 February 1922, 5.

¹⁸ Park, Table XVIII: Number of Papers in Foreign Languages in the United States for Each Year, 1884–1920, supplemental chart pullout.

¹⁹ Masthead, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 24 April 1920, 1.

²⁰ *U.S. Census 1920*, "Population, vol. III – Table 12 – Country of Birth of the Foreign-Born White, for Counties and for Cities of 10,000 or More", 796.

²¹ "Mr. Advertiser!", *Il Cittadino-Italo Americano*, 9 August 1924, 1. Census records show that in 1930 Youngstown's home Mahoning County and neighboring Trumbull County contained over 33,000 Italian-Americans. When other cities outside these two counties are added, a 50,000 member strong community is a likely estimate. See *U.S. Census 1930*, "Population, vol. III, part 2 – Table 18 – Foreign-Born White by Country of Birth, for Counties and for Cities and Villages of 10,000 or More", 501; *U.S. Census 1930*,

in smaller communities outside of Youngstown. Some of these included Ferruccio Ronchetti for Bridgeville, Falco De Vitis for Delmont and Export, Antonio Calantuono of New Castle for Lawrence County (all in Pennsylvania) and Giuseppe Liberatore for Wellsville, Ohio.²² The paper also periodically printed news for Alliance, Ohio and Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, to name a few other places. Both of these cities are located twenty-five miles from Youngstown; Delmont and Export are even further, about seventy-five miles, lying due east of Pittsburgh. The peak circulation was between 7,500–7,800 copies.²³

Even if the majority of the ethnic population did not read *Il Cittadino*, a good portion did and even non-subscribers knew someone influenced by Petrarca's publication. For most readers, unlike those residing in places like New York or Philadelphia, it was the only Italian-language news source available, giving it disproportional power in the community. Finally, those that operated *Il Cittadino* were integral members of Youngstown society, and as a result, their opinions offer a good representation to the thoughts of the masses.

A Deeper Look: *Il Cittadino* and the Early Days of Fascism

Il Cittadino's initial reporting on Fascism was not a one-time phenomenon. For weeks, if not months, Petrarca's newspaper cautiously evaluated the new ministry. It agreed with some of Fascism's fundamental ideas related to national identity and

"Population, vol. III, part 2 – Table 19 – Native White of Foreign or Mixed Parentage, by Country of Birth of Parents, for Counties and for Cities and Villages of 10,000 or More", 505.

²² "Nuovi Rappresentanti del Nostro Giornale", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 11 March 1922, 5; "I Nostri Agenti", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 1 September 1923, 2.

²³ "C. A. Petrarca Dies at 91; Printed Italian Paper Here"; *N. W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1928), 882. Petrarca's obituary claims 7,500, while *N. W. Ayer* cites 7,800.

stability, but it was unable to approve wholeheartedly of a party that often resorted to violence and lacked control of its members. Nevertheless, a trend also developed. As long as political squabbling and interparty fighting remained cordial and without physical confrontation, then criticism declined. *Il Cittadino* looked not to induce the reader's condemnation of the Fascist Party, but rather reported faults as they occurred. The paper pushed no specific agenda, and offered praise and denunciation when due, based on individual circumstances and situations.

A few weeks after Benito Mussolini's appointment, *Il Cittadino* was still ambivalent towards the regime. On 18 November 1922, it reprinted a lengthy editorial written by A. Casalini that originally appeared in *La Rivista Popolare*.²⁴ The article summarized many of the Youngstown paper's own ideas from the previous month. Casalini began by telling readers that he was not a Fascist, but rather a republican in the ideological sense of the word. Unfortunately, Italy never lived up to Mazzinian ideals, and "for the first time after the republican defeat of the Risorgimento, there [was] in Italy a formidable force [Fascism] that deal[t] as [an] equal with the institutions".²⁵ Admittedly, people showed concern over the absolutism of Fascism and many of Mussolini's undemocratic declarations, but Casalini reminded readers, for good or bad, that *il Duce* "had no systematic ideas".²⁶ Like any social movement, his was a party of action, responding to genuine problems. An ideology would form later.²⁷

In fact, most in Italy were misjudging the situation. The monarchy was so concerned with placating Mussolini's followers that it ignored the fact "that fascism

²⁴ A. Casalini, "Il Fascismo ed il Problema del Regime", 18 November 1922, 1-2, 5-6.

²⁵ Ibid, 1.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, 1-2, 5-6.

[was] a dangerous friend”.²⁸ Moderate parties tended to follow leftist thought and simplified Fascism as “militaristic bourgeois”.²⁹ Instead, Fascism was created as a response to Bolshevism when the monarchy and Italian government failed in their job to curb disorder.³⁰

In short, the entire political system was bankrupt. However, Casalini believed that “fascism [would] flow into the republic” by contributing a new aristocracy based on valor rather than wealth or family.³¹ For this to occur, it needed outside help. Fascism had “its defects and its dangers but the defects [did] not correct themselves”.³² While there were some negative elements, the political system needed to move forward and cultivate Fascism’s virtues while stopping its excesses.³³

In subsequent weeks, after it was certain that the Fascists were to remain in government, *Il Cittadino* began to better understand the long-term political importance of the event. The relatively youthful Mussolini’s appointment “mark[ed] the end of the political life” of the geriatric class of previous politicians.³⁴ A new generation entered the political arena with much different ideas from the old. Perhaps, the paper continued, the government needed the negative shock of the March on Rome in order to correct its faults, much in the same way that the defeats at Caporetto and Adwa led to the victories of Vittorio Veneto and Libya.³⁵

²⁸ Ibid, 1.

²⁹ Ibid, 2.

³⁰ Ibid, 1-2, 5-6.

³¹ Ibid, 5.

³² Ibid, 5-6.

³³ Ibid, 1-2, 5-6.

³⁴ “Echi dell’Apertura del Parlamento Italiano”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 25 November 1922, 1. For example, Giovanni Giolitti served his first term as prime minister in 1892, thirty years prior to the article.

³⁵ Ibid.

For any change to occur in Italian politics, it needed to come from outside the system. Parliament was not a national creation; rather, it was the original Piedmontese establishment transferred to the unified state. The government shifted to the left after 1876, but it too was filled with men like Agostino Depretis and Giovanni Giolitti of the old ruling class. Later politicians were ineffective, and so Parliament remained stagnant. The only exception was Francesco Crispi, a “solitary giant... [whose] predictive politics” were being rediscovered in Italy.³⁶ Crispi, although he belonged to the Italian Left, remained outside the system, much in the same manner that Fascism owed no allegiance to old parliamentary authorities. “It [was] born from the people”, rather than from the political class, and Petrarca’s paper wished for the movement to become “the triumph of that democracy”.³⁷

There was, however, still much criticism of Mussolini by the other parties. The paper once more compared him to Napoleon or Cromwell, because he gained a vote of confidence from the deputies by “making use of the same method with which he guided the black shirts to Rome”.³⁸ Enrico De Nicola, President of the Chamber of Deputies, threatened to resign due to the unending quarrel between the Socialists and the Fascists. Socialist representative Filippo Turati responded with accusations against the PNF’s opportunism and reaffirmed his party’s roots in resistance to the bourgeoisie.³⁹ He and the other Socialists refused to trust a man who “point[ed] pistols and bayonets to the [opposition’s] throat”.⁴⁰ Turati affirmed socialism as a compromise between Fascism and communism, promising to remain against Mussolini while making sure the party

³⁶ “Un Funerale Allegro”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 9 December 1922, 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Politica Italiana”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 25 November 1922, 1.

³⁹ Ibid, 1, 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 6.

“[was] extraneous to any form of bolshevism”.⁴¹ Even those who voted in confidence of the new ministry may not have spoken honestly. *Il Cittadino* noted that while Giolitti publically favored *il Duce*, his news organ, *La Stampa* (Turin), decried Fascist methods.⁴²

Petrarca’s newspaper was not against the manifestation of Fascism, but really in opposition to its methods. To reiterate what *Il Cittadino* believed before, the entire political system was broken and did not represent the public. Fascism was fundamentally a movement by the people to express their frustration; as pointed out by Casalini, it was not about ideology but about action. From this, the Youngstown paper resembled Diggins’s description of the American press, “cautiously friendly and hopeful” about the possibility of change.⁴³

Yet, it could not condone Fascist methods. They were violent, authoritarian, and devious. There was a possibility for change, but Mussolini’s system also added to political divisions, the one thing *Il Cittadino* hated most. If the repression and debates stopped, or at least went unreported, then the PNF would have been generally accepted.

The Corfu Incident was the first great test of Fascism in the Italian-American media. On 27 August 1923, a survey team under Italian General Enrico Tellini was ambushed and killed near Janina, Greece. The inter-Allied Boundary Commission had sent the team to mark the post-war Albanian border. Mussolini quickly blamed the Greeks for what he believed was a blatant act of terrorism. While the Greek government deferred to the League of Nations, Mussolini, for matters of Italian prestige, refused to

⁴¹ “Il Fallimento del Blocco Estremista”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 9 December 1922, 1.

⁴² “Echi dell’Apertura del Parlamento Italiano”.

⁴³ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 30.

consent to the involvement of outside parties.⁴⁴ For the first time, there was a consensus in Italy under *il Duce*, and it was hold firm. When Mussolini occupied the island of Corfu in retaliation, there was very little opposition.⁴⁵ Since condemnation of the Fascist government in the Italian-American press often arose not because of its ultimate goals for Italy, but how it planned to accomplish them, Corfu provided an interesting case. With most in agreement over the desired outcome to the event and the necessary methods to achieve it, Mussolini's strong stance against Greece was accepted with little objection abroad as well as at home.

Il Cittadino's reporting started with the facts of the situation, accompanied by strong language, and finished with its position. "Mussolini acted without hesitation" to issue a seven point ultimatum to Greece for the "*eccidio*" (massacre).⁴⁶ The newspaper believed the event "was premeditated" by the Greeks to cause international trouble specifically with Italy.⁴⁷ After confronted with the crime, they passed the responsibility for negotiations onto the League of Nations instead of dealing solely with the wronged party. When the Greek nation "refused to render honor to the Italian flag in the form desired by Mussolini", a proper resolution to the Corfu episode became a symbol of pride and *italianità*.⁴⁸

In fact, the paper noted, the importance of the event was much larger than a diplomatic dispute between Greece and Italy. By invoking the League of Nations, Greece brought the United Kingdom and France into the conflict. For generations Italy

⁴⁴ H. James Burgwyn, *Italian Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period, 1918–1940*, Praeger Studies of Foreign Policies of the Great Powers, ed. B. J. C. McKercher and Keith Neilson (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 23-24.

⁴⁵ Peter Neville, *Mussolini*, Routledge Historical Biographies Series, ed. Robert Pearce (London: Routledge, 2004), 92-93.

⁴⁶ "Timori di guerra tra l'Italia e la Grecia", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 1 September 1923, 1.

⁴⁷ "Nefasti Greci: Et crimine ab uno Disce omnes", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 8 September 1923, 1.

⁴⁸ "Timori di guerra tra l'Italia e la Grecia".

was “always disposed to wait for orders from England and from France before taking an international political resolution”, and now the state under Mussolini wanted to settle the incident as a first-rate power, without supervision.⁴⁹ While France, still preoccupied with Germany, was only partially engaged, the British threatened to blockade the Italian peninsula and flex their power.⁵⁰

Contrary to all previously reported Fascist actions, *Il Cittadino* unilaterally applauded Mussolini’s conduct during the Corfu Incident. To the proposed British naval action, the leader responded “that England’s threats frighten no one”.⁵¹ In many ways, *il Duce* terrified the old European powers, which never expected such a response from Italy. Petrarca’s paper noted positively the energy and the behavior of Mussolini during the crisis, a trait reminiscent of Crispi. “France feared Crispi”, *Il Cittadino* asserted, and now it needed “to fear Mussolini”.⁵² There was only one acceptable solution to the Corfu situation, and that was to stand firm against the Greeks and any intervening nation.⁵³ Mussolini accomplished both and Italian-Americans commended him for it.

This is important because given the right situation, *Il Cittadino* was willing to change its moderate, ambivalent stance to full acceptance. Tragedy often solidifies patriotism, and during the Corfu episode, Italians abroad looked to the government, which happened to be Fascist, for leadership during the crisis. Since many non-Fascists agreed with Mussolini’s actions, there appeared to be temporary unity; opposition quieted and an aura of governmental cohesion prevailed. While the Corfu crisis reigned supreme

⁴⁹ “Certa Stampa a Gazzarra Finita”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 29 September 1923, 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid; “Rivista Politica”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 29 September 1923, 1.

⁵¹ “Certa Stampa a Gazzarra Finita”.

⁵² “Nefasti Greci: Et crimine ab uno Disce omnes”, 4.

⁵³ “Timori di guerra tra l’Italia e la Grecia”; “Nefasti Greci: Et crimine ab uno Disce omnes”, 1, 4; “Certa Stampa a Gazzarra Finita”.

in Italian politics, Italian-Americans overlooked party and ideological stances. A pro-Mussolini position was possible in the ethnic media, given the right circumstances. However, this was a fragile, temporary acceptance which needed only another catalyst to reopen the stitched, but unhealed, wound. That catalyst was the assassination of Giacomo Matteotti.

Back to the Beginning: Moderation and Matteotti

In the weeks prior to the Matteotti murder, it was clear that *Il Cittadino* was not completely inclined towards Fascism. It spoke highly of Mussolini the previous year, but it had yet to reconcile the merits and flaws of the system. If discrepancies existed within the minds of Italian-Americans, then Petrarca's paper allowed both sides to argue their positions. In April 1924, a series of letters to the editor showed the divisions within the community and acted as a prelude to later Matteotti-related reporting. While not written by *Il Cittadino*, Petrarca's decision to print them proves that his newspaper was undecided and still willing to present reasoning from all parties.

On 16 April 1924, the Duca degli Abruzzi society of Youngstown sponsored a conference on Fascism with Luigi Quintiliano as its speaker and guest of honor. Quintiliano was a well-known anarchist from New York and a confidant of Carlo Tresca. They worked together during the Sacco and Vanzetti case, and Quintiliano served as secretary for the Italian Committee for Political Victims. In addition, he was the regular

contributor for Sacco-Vanzetti news in Tresca's *Il Martello*. Around sixty people attended the lecture to hear his views.⁵⁴

Over the next four issues of *Il Cittadino*, a debate raged about both Quintiliano's speech and the nature of those who attended. It began with a statement written by Cesare Amadio, who, by the end of the decade, worked at the Dollar Bank of neighboring Struthers, Ohio as the director for the foreign department.⁵⁵ In his opinion, Quintiliano's remarks were both unnecessary and slanderous. What was supposed to be a discussion about Fascism turned into "a beastly outburst against the house [of] Savoy, the Italian Army, the Pope, and Religion".⁵⁶ When Quintiliano's discussion turned to Mussolini, the leader was described as a "papier-mâché Napoleon" and denounced.⁵⁷ As proof, the speaker pointed to "isolated episodes of fascist violence", which were readily accepted by the predominantly radical and criminal audience, but dismissed by Amadio as lies and exaggerations.⁵⁸

Four witnesses to the event – P. Petrillo, L. Strallo, T. Lucente, V. Ficocelli – published a response two weeks later as an answer to the allegations. They were not all criminals or radicals for agreeing or at least considering some of Quintiliano's points. In fact, Amadio "overlooked all the arguments expounded by the speaker".⁵⁹ Instead of listening with an open mind, he assailed Quintiliano without offering any real points of

⁵⁴ Cesare Amadio, "Per una Conferenza", letter to the editor, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 26 April 1924, 2; Nunzio Pernicone, "Carlo Tresca and the Sacco-Vanzetti Case", *Journal of American History* 66, no. 3 (December 1979): 540-544. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1890294> (accessed 20 July 2013).

⁵⁵ Laura Cuppone, "Silent Presences: Italian-American Women's Experiences in the Mahoning Valley, 1880-1930" (MA Thesis, Youngstown State University, 2008), 82. *OhioLink*, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=ysu1210604919 (accessed 20 July 2013).

⁵⁶ Amadio, "Per una Conferenza".

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ P. Petrillo, L. Strallo, T. Lucente, and V. Ficocelli, "Riposta, a proposito di una conferenza", letter to the editor, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 10 May 1924, 2. Note- In Amadio's response, L. Strallo is spelled as L. Strollo. Author is unsure which is the typographical error.

contest. Amadio was a “new maramaldo” with an attitude “so imitating the fascist system, that to reason, to logic, and to the right of the people, [he] substitute[d] castor oil, the club, and the pistol”.⁶⁰

The debate continued for the next two weeks. Amadio defended his personal honor, Italy, Italian institutions, and reiterated the fact that subversive elements, like socialists and anarchists, existed within the Youngstown community. Most attendees not only considered Quintiliano’s ideas, but fully agreed when “they frantically applauded the orator”.⁶¹ Petrillo authored another response, this time longer than the first, in which he disputed many specifics, including the inconsistent nature of Mussolini himself.⁶²

While this small political clash is just a footnote in the history of Fascism, it is very useful as a scholar’s tool to evaluating *Il Cittadino*. As explained in the previous chapter, *La Trinacria* printed a pro-Fascist letter to the editor under a careful warning that such views did not represent the newspaper, thus reminding readers of Ercole Dominicis’s stance against Mussolini.⁶³ Petrarca instead informed his Youngstown clientele, perhaps realizing that such attacks were not news but rather a type of political advertisement, that the newspaper would only print subsequent slanted letters for a fee.⁶⁴ Nowhere was there talk of defending or asserting *Il Cittadino*’s position. This permission of both anti-Fascist and Fascist comments, under the stipulation that the writer compensate the publication for the print space, implies that Petrarca’s paper was

⁶⁰ Ibid. The new Maramaldo statement referred to the notorious *condottiere* Fabrizio Maramaldo. After capturing the wounded leader of the Florentine Army, Francesco Ferrucci, in battle, Maramaldo personally executed the unarmed man contrary to the rules of war at that time.

⁶¹ Cesare Amadio, “Ancora per una conferenza”, letter to the editor, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 17 May 1924, 2.

⁶² P. Petrillo, “Al Sig. Cesare Amadio”, letter to the editor, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 24 May 1924, 3, 6.

⁶³ “Il Fascismo”, *La Trinacria*, 20 October 1922, 3.

⁶⁴ Petrillo et al., “Riposta, a proposito di una conferenza”.

unaligned in early 1924, and would show uncertainty during the next important Italian event.

The Matteotti crisis reopened the discussion. Giacomo Matteotti was a reformist Socialist deputy and a constant critic of the Mussolini regime. On 30 May 1924, he delivered a speech to Parliament in which he denounced Fascist illegalities during the previous elections. On 10 June, he was abducted by Fascist agents, killed, and his body dumped in a ditch outside of Rome. Matteotti's corpse was not discovered until 16 August 1924.⁶⁵

The journalistic importance of the event was that it brought the subject of Fascism back to the forefront of ethnic news. Both sides in the conflict had some points of contention. The Socialists and other opposition parties used the assassination as another example of unnecessary Fascist brutality. Mussolini's supporters claimed it was not a conspiracy and put blame on a few party radicals operating outside of *il Duce's* control. Therefore, similar to the March on Rome, *Il Cittadino* and the rest of the ethnic press had a variety of viewpoints and opinions to amalgamate into a critique.

When the news broke, *Il Cittadino* reverted to its moderate position, quite similar to that during the March on Rome. Once more, there was a chaotic situation in Italy. New York's *Corriere d'America* reported that Italian authorities had discovered the body, followed by information the next day that they had not. Although listed as kidnapped, he was presumed dead. The only certainty was that "[f]alse voices raced in Italy".⁶⁶ Worse, Italy seemed to be regressing back to the political atmosphere of 1922. While Don Sturzo's People's Party and ex-Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando offered their sympathies

⁶⁵ Martin Clark, *Modern Italy: 1871 to the Present*, 3rd ed. (Harlow, Great Britain: Pearson Longman, 2008), 269-270.

⁶⁶ "Il sequestro dell'On. Matteotti", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 21 June 1924, 1.

to Matteotti's family, Mussolini vowed to counter any possible revolution. Blackshirts burned the offices of the anti-Fascist *Il Mondo*, and opposition parties proposed a parliamentary boycott to stall the entire political system.⁶⁷

Il Cittadino was quick to make its stance known to readers. The assassination was a "political crime" not attributed to Fascism, but was "the result of the lack of the party's discipline".⁶⁸ The blame rested not on the ideology or platform, but on the structure, of the *Partito Nazionale Fascista*. Surprisingly, Petrarca's paper admitted that political violence was at times acceptable, such as in cases related to state security in response to extremists. In fact, both prisons and the electric chair were technically methods of state violence. The government's responsibility was to protect law and order above all; accordingly, if some repression was necessary to preserve society, then the means justified the ends.⁶⁹

Excesses were not to be tolerated, which included assassination. The indiscriminate violence, completely unwarranted in the case of Matteotti, was the PNF's fault. In *Il Cittadino*'s opinion, "[h]e who committed [the crime], in his barbaric ignorance believes he rendered a recommended service to fascism", which was completely mistaken.⁷⁰ Instead, the paper evoked the image of the literary character Don Rodrigo and asked readers "Are we returning perhaps to the vile times of the Middle Ages?"⁷¹

⁶⁷ "Brevi notizie sul caso Matteotti", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 21 June 1924, 1.

⁶⁸ "Il sequestro dell'On. Matteotti".

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid. Don Rodrigo is the sinister, repressive nobleman and antagonist from Alessandro Manzoni's novel *I Promessi Sposi*.

Although Matteotti was a Socialist, the crime was an intraparty issue, and therefore much of the blame rested on *il Duce*. According to the Youngstown source, Mussolini was not responsible for the murder, but he was liable for the party's radical factions. He was supposed to be "*l'uomo di ferro*" (the man of iron), but failed to discipline the PNF.⁷² *Il Cittadino* wanted the good Fascist division to pressure the bad out, while keeping the whole party system intact.

In the following issue, the paper clarified its position. Many within the Fascist Party were too independent, and viewed themselves as Mussolini's equals. These were the people who resorted to castor oil and weapons, and they were the ones responsible for the killing. They claimed to be helping Italy, but in actuality hurt the nation. Readers were reminded "that many arditi entering into restaurants, were paying the bill [by] showing bombs and daggers", clearly forgoing the needs of the nation for their own profit.⁷³ Mussolini should have countered them with a type of controlled violence, or audacity. Both George Washington and Giuseppe Garibaldi used "their audacity in service of their homelands", a necessary trait which Mussolini needed to adopt.⁷⁴ Although it was an unfortunate act of murder where responsibility ultimately rested on Mussolini as the party leader, *Il Cittadino* believed some good would derive from the situation. The Fascists were still a powerful force in Italian politics, and this crisis would allow the PNF to purge radical and extremist elements and put reforms in place.⁷⁵

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "Il Discorso di Mussolini Avanti la Maggioranza Parlamentare", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 28 June 1924, 1. In this context, the author probably intends arditi to have two meanings. First, it may refer to the "ardent" supporters of the Fascist cause. It can also be a reference to Italy's specialized shock troops during the First World War. After the conflict, many Arditi joined Fascism and formed the core of the paramilitary *squadristo* movement that fought the socialists and communists in the countryside and cities.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Petrarca's paper watched with interest the events unfolding in Italy, and many reinforced the newspaper's initial thoughts. Rumors continued with fervor. *Il Mattino* (Naples) considered the possibility that the kidnappers disposed of Matteotti's corpse in the Tiber River.⁷⁶ The same source also claimed that one accomplice had already fled to Uruguay and was hiding somewhere in Montevideo.⁷⁷ Although Mussolini used the opportunity to initiate studies for eventual police and gun law reforms, it was clear that such measures would have increased state control.⁷⁸ According to information from *Il Giornale d'Italia* (Rome), there was talk of many moderate politicians and parties deserting the Fascist camp. They feared that the PNF's plans for normalization would not stabilize a free Italy; instead, they "would reaffirm the dictatorial fascist tendencies expressed clearly in the fascist assemblies".⁷⁹ The resignation of some members of Mussolini's cabinet further hurt the image.⁸⁰

Yet, for all the optimism *Il Cittadino* expressed about the tragedy bringing real solutions to Italian problems, the paper could not help but feel disappointed that the country seemed to slide back into turmoil after the discovery of Matteotti's body. Reporting related to the recovery of the deputy's corpse was scarce; the publication told its readers that Matteotti was found only seventeen kilometers from Rome and that more information could be gained from other newspapers. The editors castigated "the racket between journalists... [who threw] hypothesis on hypothesis about the causes of the

⁷⁶ "I nuovi sviluppi del procedimento Matteotti a Roma", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 26 July 1924, 1.

⁷⁷ "Un Uccisore di Matteotti a Montevideo?", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 26 July 1924, 1.

⁷⁸ "Le Riforme alla Legge di Polizia in Italia", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 5 July 1924, 2. Note- The typeset for this issue was mistakenly set as 5 Giugno 1924 (5 June 1924).

⁷⁹ "Larvata minaccia dei predecessori all'On. Mussolini", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 19 July 1924, 1.

⁸⁰ "I Ministri d'Italia Si Dimettono", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 5 July 1924, 2. Note- The typeset for this issue was mistakenly set as 5 Giugno 1924 (5 June 1924).

crime” without consideration for the grieving family.⁸¹ Instead of perpetuating the hearsay, *Il Cittadino* ended the article with a touching response for the affirmation of the Italian spirit: “And we are full of admiration for the most noble letter addressed from the widow Matteotti which erects itself over some human pettiness and in the name of the late husband invites [Italians] to national harmony”.⁸²

Trend Reaffirmed

This case study of the Youngstown-based ethnic newspaper not only clarifies many observations first proposed in the previous chapter, but it also provides some insight to reconciling the papers’ positions to the philo-Fascist historical standard. To begin, reporting during the March on Rome was not a single abnormal episode in the media. Most owners and editors did not instantaneously decide to ally themselves with Fascism after Mussolini’s peaceful ascension to the premiership. Instead, they continuously evaluated the new ministry and party, offering support when warranted and criticism when necessary.

The most important realization from this case study is the reasoning as to why Italian-American journalists evaluated Fascism in the manner presented. Their dilemma was seldom related to the ideology of the movement; rather, their judgment derived from the dissection of Fascist illegalities and violence. Referencing back to the anti-Fascist *La Trinacria*’s village of Nonantola example, the model set by the townspeople was never to exclude different opinions. They invited all the parties to cooperate, and in exchange asked for the right to express themselves freely through speech and vote without

⁸¹ “La Lotta Politica: Il Rinvenimento del Cadavere dell’On. Matteotti”, *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 23 August 1924, 1.

⁸² Ibid.

reprisal.⁸³ Fascist methods – violence, intimidation, assassination – became points of contest, not what the PNF sought to accomplish.

Debate centered on whether or not the illegalities were justified by conditions, or even whether they occurred at all. When describing the conference with Luigi Quintiliano, Cesare Amadio specifically countered the speaker's assertion of repression with the idea of "isolated episodes of fascist violence".⁸⁴ Were minor incidents being used by the opposition to secure its own political fortunes, or was the foundation of the PNF violence? It was on this issue, how to reconcile these two views, that *Il Cittadino*, like many Italian-Americans, struggled.

However, this case study also offers a foreshadowing of what was to come. When the seriousness of the Corfu Incident temporarily silenced the opposition, reporting in *Il Cittadino* suddenly became favorable to *il Duce*. Fascist hegemony, whether created temporarily by a national crisis like Corfu or purposely by the party, could stifle moderation in the Italian-American press. While journalists between 1922 and 1924 fluctuated in interpretation as they actively processed reports of different events in Italy, changing conditions would eventually shift the evaluation to pro-Fascist.

⁸³ "Contro la Guerra Civile: L'Esempio di Nonantola", *La Trinacria*, 20 October 1922, 1, 4.

⁸⁴ Cesare Amadio, "Per una Conferenza".

Chapter Five: Motions for Change

Hegemonic Factors Contribute to a New Pro-Fascist Bias

On 22 May 1936, Galeazzo Ciano, director of the Ministry for the Press and Propaganda, presented a speech to the Italian government in which he summarized the work, accomplishments, and difficulties his agency:

Our aim has been and is to cast a true light upon the activity of Fascism, and to provide the world with a daily documentation on the trend of thought and the creative work of the Regime. This is becoming more and more necessary as the ranks of foreigners who are drawing nearer to Fascism begin to swell, while barriers, consequently raised by opponents to hinder the trend of new and highly successful ideas require to be smashed.¹

According to Ciano, the Fascist government was actively seeking a better image for itself abroad. Not only did his ministry promote positive news, it also repressed any information deemed counter to the requirements of the state, which by this time was synonymous with Fascism.

Thus far, two things have been proven: 1) The Italian-American media in general did not automatically accept Mussolini, and 2) it offered praise and condemnation when due, willing to change to fit the circumstances. When editors were provided news from all sources, including anti-Fascist, the result was a moderate ethnic press. As long as reports of doubt existed – and they did at least until 1924 – then the status quo remained. Changes in a newspaper's political stance thus came from alterations of the journalistic environment (external factors), rather than some sudden Fascist awakening of ethnic editors.

¹ Galeazzo Ciano, "Speech delivered in the Senate on May 22nd, 1936, by H. E. Galeazzo Ciano, Minister for the Press and Propaganda, in *In Fascist Italy: The Ministry for the Press and Propaganda* (Rome: Società Editrice di Novissima, 1936), 16-17.

As evidenced by Ciano's speech, many of these changes derived from the Fascist government. Over the decade, Mussolini's regime slowly transformed Italy into a totalitarian state. Politicians and intellectuals who criticized the PNF were exiled or imprisoned and the press came under party control. The Fascist state, both directly and indirectly, exerted pressure on the American press, including the ethnic one. Eventually, this created an atmosphere not conducive to anything but a friendly stance towards Mussolini's Italy.

Il Duce's Concern

Benito Mussolini understood that success as a political figure, even as a self-styled dictator, was built atop a base of positive popular opinion, or at the very least the passiveness of the people. American reporter George Seldes readily identified *il Duce's* preoccupation with his public image and commented that men such as him

sitting in... their Palazzos always have time to look into some reporter's dispatches! But almost every one who has ever interviewed Mussolini... will remember the colored pencil scanning the columns of the local or foreign papers. These great men seem to care so much for public opinion!²

And, as Seldes pointed out, Mussolini was not only concerned with domestic attitudes, but also with the sentiments held by the foreign presses. He realized that for him and his Fascist government to be successful he needed to not only pacify the Italian media, but also to achieve a positive international image.

This was especially true in the United States. In the aftermath of the Great War, Italy required foreign capital and investments that at the time were only obtainable from the U.S. In addition, Mussolini's territorial ambitions around the Mediterranean and in

² George Seldes, *You Can't Print That!: The Truth Behind the News 1918 - 1928* (New York: Payson & Clarke, 1929), 71. *Internet Archive*, <http://archive.org/details/YouCantPrintThat> (accessed 11 May 2012).

Africa prompted him to seek cordial relations with the Americans in order to mute criticism against expansion.³ Related to both of these was the immigration issue. Beginning in 1921, the United States capped the influx of people from Italy. Immigration had long been used as a means to rid the country of a surplus population that was too large to fully employ at home, and the closing of the American border guaranteed a rise in unemployment.⁴ It also threatened the flow of remittances back to Italy. Just prior to the First World War, Italians living abroad sent an average of 1,030 million lire home per year.⁵ With the United States being an important destination, any possible schism would have threatened a good portion of this incoming capital. Without the ability to export people, the Fascist government needed to find them work elsewhere, preferably with a long-term solution to the predicament. Colonization was one possibility. The second option was to funnel more workers into Italian industry, a plan that needed investments than could not have been supplied by domestic bankers.⁶ Both solutions therefore needed the tentative backing of the American government and people.

Just as the actions and stature of Italy reflected on the Italian-American community, the ethnic population also represented the image of its homeland to native-born Americans. Mussolini's initial plan was to utilize directly the immigrant population. Disregarding the issue of legal citizenship, *il Duce's* government considered all Italian-Americans as "a potent political force to protect and promote Fascist Italy's interests".⁷

³ David F. Schmitz, *The United States and Fascist Italy, 1922–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 85-110.

⁴ Pellegrino Nazzaro, *Fascist and Anti-Fascist Propaganda in America: The Dispatches of Italian Ambassador Gelasio Caetani* (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 7-26.

⁵ Walter B. Kahn, "The Italian Economic Situation", *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 3, no. 4 (April 1921): 88. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1928801> (accessed 22 June 2013).

⁶ Nazzaro, 7-26.

⁷ Monte S. Finkelstein, "The Johnson Act, Mussolini and Fascist Emigration Policy: 1921–1930", *Journal of American Ethnic History* 8, no. 1 (Fall 1988): 47. *JSTOR*,

Ethnics were encouraged to retain their *italianità* and to become Fascist supporters. To Mussolini, emigrants were still Italians, separated only physically from the motherland, so the state thus had the right, or even perhaps the responsibility, to re-educate those living abroad.⁸

The government initially tried to influence Italian-Americans through the creation of the Fascist League of North America. Support for Fascism in the United States actually predated the March on Rome; some of the earliest *fasci* were established by proponents in New York City and Philadelphia in 1921.⁹ Similar to their early-Italian counterparts, these *fasci* lacked any coordination beyond the local level. Since Americans viewed the domestic *fasci* groups as a representation of the PNF, Mussolini's government feared that an uncontrolled movement, or even one under a nefarious leader, would reflect negatively on Italy. Therefore, Mussolini's government decided to form the Fascist League of North America (FLNA) to tame the movement and to provide political organization.¹⁰

Events in Italy also dictated the need for Fascist action. "Mussolini's concern for opinion outside [of his state] was sharpened by the Matteotti affair" in the summer of 1924.¹¹ Matteotti's murder was a blatant act of political terrorism, and it justified the position of the *fuorusciti*, the anti-Fascist exiles, who formed the base of the American anti-Fascist movement. Failed assassination attempts on Mussolini himself in 1925 and 1926 further confirmed that not all Italians viewed *il Duce* and his government favorably.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27500640> (accessed 30 October 2011).

⁸ Ibid, 47-48.

⁹ Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, ed. Philip V. Cannistraro (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977), 11.

¹⁰ Philip V. Cannistraro, *Blackshirts in Little Italy: Italian Americans and Fascism, 1921-1929* (West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera Press, 1999), 24-35; Nazzaro, 33-86.

¹¹ Alan Cassels, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 377.

In response, he became even more obsessed with his public image both at home and abroad; he approved further measures to indoctrinate Italian-Americans and to provide a propaganda campaign to shape the American media's opinion.¹²

As expected, the American public was not very receptive to what many perceived to be a foreign government striving to undermine a democratic establishment. Major Robert C. Richardson, Jr., a G-2 intelligence officer assigned to Rome, compared the situation to "a festering sore or a cancer" that the United States needed to solve with an operation.¹³ Contempt peaked in 1929 after years of accusations. In November, *Harper's Magazine* published a scathing exposé asserting that the FLNA was part of a larger international conspiracy to spread Fascism abroad. The United States government responded by calling for a Congressional investigation; however, the hearing never took place because Italian authorities prematurely dissolved the group due to public pressure.¹⁴

Mussolini's Backdoor Influence: The Italy-America Society

After the Fascist government failed to openly control the Italian-American population, it turned to less obvious methods of persuasion.¹⁵ Stefano Luconi provides

¹² Ibid, 377-381.

¹³ Robert C. Richardson, Jr., "Principal Foreign Policies: Fascista Activities in the United States", 7 February 1928, TS 10863, in National Archives and Records Administration, United States War Department, Military Intelligence Division, Correspondence and Record Cards of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to General, Political, Economic and Military Conditions in Italy, 1918-1941, Microform M1446, Roll 3, file MID 2657-E-205/14-17.

¹⁴ John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 93-94.

¹⁵ As a clarification, it should be remembered that these methods were not used to advocate a Fascist revolution; rather, the goal was to create a friendlier image of Italy, Mussolini, and Fascism. In fact, while the term *propaganda* appears in many of the primary documents, it must be noted that the Italian form does not carry the same connotation as its English counterpart and is less pejorative. This clarification is not to lessen the importance of these channels of influence, it is only meant to define their nature as deceitful, rather than insidious.

an excellent analysis of this phenomenon in *La “diplomazia parallela”*.¹⁶ Borrowing the term and the original idea from Renzo De Felice, Luconi documented the Fascist government’s attempt to use Italian-Americans for a type of “parallel diplomacy” outside of ordinary channels.¹⁷ This was generally accomplished through the promotion of Italian culture. For example, the consulates provided textbooks that advanced the glory of Fascist Italy for Italian-language schools. While such sources were not meant to advise students to overthrow the government, they did seek to create a friendly constituency.¹⁸ The ultimate goal of “parallel diplomacy” was to employ “the foreign Italian communities as pressure groups to influence foreign governments and to persuade them to carry out more favorable politics to the interests of fascism in the international field”.¹⁹

While there were many secret avenues used by the Fascists, one model should suffice as an extended example: The Italy-America Society. Although Gaetano Salvemini originally dismissed its importance as a propaganda tool because of its narrow, high-class influence,²⁰ later scholars have acknowledged the IAS’s significance.²¹ Stefano Santoro, for instance, noted that the society “is an example of the way in which

¹⁶ Stefano Luconi, *La “diplomazia parallela”: Il regime fascista e la mobilitazione politica degli italo-americani* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2000).

¹⁷ Ibid, 9-18.

¹⁸ Matteo Pretelli, “Culture or Propaganda?: Fascism and Italian Culture in the United States”, trans. Stefano Luconi, *Studi Emigrazione* XLIII, no. 161 (2006): 186-188. *Academia.edu*, <http://www.academia.edu/777193> (accessed 2 July 2013).

¹⁹ Luconi, *La “diplomazia parallela”*, 10.

²⁰ Salvemini, 135-138.

²¹ Matteo Pretelli, “Propaganda fascista negli Stati Uniti: Gli anni venti. Un quadro d’insieme”, in *L’Italia fascista tra Europa e Stati Uniti d’America*, ed. Michele Abbate (Civita Castellana, Lazio: Centro Falisco di Studi Storici, 2002), 108-113; Stefano Santoro, “La propaganda fascista negli Stati Uniti: L’Italy-America Society”, *Contemporanea* VI, no. 1 (January 2003): 63-92.

the so-called ‘parallel diplomacy’ of the political-cultural circles was known to supply support to Italian interests in the United States”.²²

The Italy-America Society was a domestic creation, founded in New York City, 9 March 1918, during a luncheon at the Century Club. It was a product of the Great War, established specifically to create closer ties between the two Allies. Given the patriotic nature of the group, it is no surprise that some very important and famous Americans presided over or attended the society’s functions. Charles Evans Hughes was appointed president. The chairman of the executive committee was William Fellowes Morgan, president of the Merchants Association, with Hamilton Holt as vice president and J. P. Morgan & Company’s Thomas M. Lamont as treasurer. Other important New Yorkers were included along with some high-ranking delegates of the Italian diplomatic corps.²³

Although some members later became ardent supporters of Mussolini, the initial incarnation of the society was in fact apolitical and focused on strengthening cultural and financial ties between the two nations.²⁴ It acted as a welcoming committee for visits by Italian royals and other prominent figures, arranged tours abroad for American students, and sponsored the exchange of American and Italian professors.²⁵ Even Salvemini, who was always quick to criticize Fascism, admitted that “the society did useful and honest work” prior to 1922.²⁶

²² Santoro, 63.

²³ “C. E. Hughes Heads New Italy-America Society: Organization Formed Here for the Development of Italian Affairs”, *New York Times*, 10 March 1918, 3.

²⁴ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 147-148.

²⁵ “Dinner in Honor of Envoy: Baron Avezzana to be Guest of Italy-America Society”, *New York Times*, 18 February 1920, 17; “Welcome to Italy’s New Ambassador: Envoy Cites Work of His Country and America for Stricken Austria”, *New York Times*, 15 April 1921, 3; “Dine Signor Tittoni: Italy-America Society Entertains President of Italian Senate”, *New York Times*, 10 September 1921, 10; “Students’ Italian Tour”, *New York Times*, 6 February 1921, section 6, 7; “Italian Professor Coming: Plan Completed for First Exchange between the Two Countries”, *New York Times*, 22 May 1921, section 2, 3.

²⁶ Salvemini, 135.

Fascist subversion of the IAS can be traced to Thomas Lamont. Lamont was one of the executives of the J. P. Morgan financial house, and he specialized in overseas economics. After the First World War, he concluded that the United States required foreign markets to continue its post-war economic growth. However, the conclusion of open hostilities also ended financial support from the U.S. government to the Allies, which meant that the loss needed to be offset by private investors.²⁷ While Mussolini desperately sought American funds, Lamont was more than willing to provide them to a stable capitalist state. When he first met Mussolini in May 1923, they discussed the financial issue. Lamont urged the Fascists to first make a good impression through international cooperation and domestic improvement, and after achieving a good image, they could apply for loans.²⁸ Two years later, Lamont felt confident enough for Morgan Bank to invest. On 20 November 1925, the bank approved a \$100 million bond for the Italians.²⁹ Unfortunately, most of the bonds were still unsold by the following summer, a problem that was attributed to negative press arising from growing suppression as Mussolini's government turned Italy into a totalitarian state.³⁰

Lamont, like any good banker, wished to see investments grow for his client; he naturally became receptive to the Italian government's desire to have a good world image. He realized that the problem for Mussolini's government was that it could not counter the media in the United States, so he recommended a press campaign to build

²⁷ Thomas W. Lamont, "Capital Needs of Foreign Trade", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 87 (January 1920): 100-105. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1014385> (accessed 14 April 2012).

²⁸ Edward M. Lamont, *The Ambassador from Wall Street: The Story of Thomas W. Lamont, J. P. Morgan's Chief Executive* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1994), 192.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 215-221.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 221-223.

support.³¹ Fortunately for *il Duce*, the pro-Fascist Lamont was unanimously elected president of the Italy-America Society on 26 January 1925.³² The IAS would be the conduit to that goal.

Thomas Lamont's suggestion for a publicist to promote Italy was eventually passed to Finance Minister Giuseppe Volpi and then to Ambassador Giacomo De Martino. In May 1927, De Martino defined the role that he believed the Press Office would play. The publicist was to read and follow all local newspapers, as well as important Italian publications. He would note any false news reported about Italy or the Fascists within the American media. The publicist would personally befriend journalists, and he would use his relationships with them, along with any other means necessary, to correct malicious reporting.³³

Although the first attempt failed when the man hired left the agency before starting, Lamont still convinced De Martino that a press office would be an invaluable asset. Fearing that an Italian-sponsored publicist would be viewed as another Fascist instrument within the U.S., De Martino and Lamont decided to establish a press service, officially titled *servizio di informazioni italiane ai giornali*, under the umbrella of the apolitical Italy-America Society.³⁴

As head of the agency, officials chose a young, but well-known, Italian poet and lecturer. Lauro De Bosis came from a prominent family, was educated and charming, and, most important, spoke fluent English. He was not a true Fascist, but he supported

³¹ Ibid.

³² Italy-America Society, "Mr. Thomas W. Lamont Elected President", *News Bulletin of the Italy America Society*, no. 35 (March 1925): 3-4. *GoogleBooks*, <http://books.google.com/books?id=36YnAQAAIAAJ&dq=Italy%20America%20Society%20Bulletin%20Lamont&pg=PT118#v=onepage&q=Italy%20America%20Society%20Bulletin%20Lamont&f=false> (accessed 14 April 2012).

³³ Santoro, 76-77.

³⁴ Ibid, 77.

Mussolini's Italy for patriotic reasons and because he detested communism due to his conservative, high-class upbringing. Popular with American audiences, he served a total of sixteen months as a lecturer in the U.S. on two separate tours.³⁵ Besides the issue of De Bosis's politics, he had all the credentials needed for an American publicist.

On 12 June 1928, De Martino sent a memorandum to Mussolini about the state of the news service project. The ambassador was in close contact with Lamont and he followed many of the banker's suggestions. He also impressed upon Mussolini the significance of the IAS's Press Office. The Italy-America Society "[had] a high influence...and whoever [was presented] in its name [had]...a strong indisputable moral position".³⁶ The association with the IAS thus gave any released reports more clout within the media than if the same stories were sent from Italy. De Martino also understood that the Press Office had the ability to accomplish the Fascists' goal of receiving positive media coverage in the United States while not being directly involved like with the FLNA. The IAS was a private society created by Americans, and thus it did not "[hold] an official character" like many earlier Fascist experiments.³⁷ The ambassador concluded that the undertaking had "a great importance to avoid the accusation and the suspicion that the Italian Government [wanted] to exercise undeserved pressures on the American press".³⁸ He obviously understood that the Press Office

³⁵ Jean McClure Mudge, *The Poet and the Dictator: Lauro de Bosis Resists Fascism in Italy and America*, Italian and Italian American Studies Series (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 9-41.

³⁶ Giacomo De Martino to Benito Mussolini, "Servizio informazioni italiane ai giornali", 12 June 1928, TS 3109/787, in National Archives and Records Administration, Personal papers of Benito Mussolini together with some official records of the Italian Foreign Office and the Ministry of Culture, 1922-1944, received by the Department of State, T-586, Microform 815, Roll 33, Frame Numbers 015871-015875. (Hereafter cited as Mussolini Papers, R.33).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

provided the backdoor influence to American public opinion that *il Duce* had sought for the previous six years.

Over the next few months, De Martino finalized the plans. The original price estimate for the failed attempt stood at \$36,000 per year, which was then cut back to \$15,000 for De Bosis's press service.³⁹ \$13,000 had already been allocated, so the first year of service only cost the Italians an addition \$2,000.⁴⁰ After the agency became established, the funds were set at \$550 per month.⁴¹ In October 1928, De Martino welcomed De Bosis as the Executive Secretary of the Italy-America Society's Press Office.⁴²

The ambassador's original plan was for a friendly publicist to watch for and correct media information that the Italian government deemed slanderous. Lauro De Bosis and his successor Beniamino De Ritis expanded this platform to take a more proactive role in distributing information. Not content to only correct the media, both men engaged in propagandizing the American press and public. Working closely with the Italian Embassy through De Martino, the Italy-America Society's Press Office allowed *il Duce* a direct but secretive connection to the foreign audience.

This influence did not occur overnight; rather, it took months, if not years, to form the Press Office into a smoothly functioning machine. Initially, De Bosis was aided by Martin Egan, head of the J. P. Morgan Press Office, to establish the apparatus. While the IAS's news service improved gradually, the two men believed that the greatest restriction

³⁹ De Martino to Mussolini, "Servizio informazioni italiane ai giornali", 8 August 1928, TS 4011/996, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015868–015870. \$15,000 in 1928 is equivalent to a little over \$200,000 today.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Royal Ministry of Finance, "Italy America Society – Sovvenzione Ufficio Stampa", 8 April 1932, TS 1985/7, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015976–015977.

⁴² De Martino to Mussolini, "Italy America and Dr. De Bosis", 17 October 1928, TS 4968/1272, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015867.

they faced was not a hostile public or uncooperative journalists, it was the lack of information coming from Italy.⁴³ This was understood by the Italians as “the weak point of [De Bosis’s] work... [because] the difficulty of receiving from the Kingdom a sufficient quantity of news and materials suitable to make articles... to supply to American newspapers” limited the Press Office’s effectiveness.⁴⁴ By summer 1930, De Bosis was receiving all of the newspapers and seven of the magazines from a requested list of over sixty periodicals.⁴⁵

Even with such minor problems, De Bosis’s Press Office already had a few successes by summer 1929. The news service was working on sending mimeographed reports weekly to between eight and nine hundred papers. De Bosis planned to expand the service in the near future from one to three pages, and to include information about Italian finances along with the tourist and general news that was already being sent. The Press Office was also contacting “all the major American periodicals offering [its] services for the sending of articles, photographs, and other informative materials regarding Italy”.⁴⁶ In keeping with De Martino’s original plan, De Bosis sent corrections to newspapers that printed negative stories and he formed cordial relationships with some journalists and notables. For example, the Press Office sent notes to Dr. Percy Winner to support his debate against Gaetano Salvemini during a Foreign Policy Association event.⁴⁷ For those who requested more general information, the news service distributed copies of H. Nelson Gay’s *Strenuous Italy*, a work that one period reviewer described as

⁴³ Lauro De Bosis to Count Alberto Marchetti, 9 May 1929, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015858–015859.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Pro Memoria”, 13 May 1930 [?], in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015714.

⁴⁵ De Bosis to De Martino, 18 March 1930, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No.015706; “Abbonamenti per l’Italy America Society”, ND, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015710–015711.

⁴⁶ Lauro De Bosis to Count Alberto Marchetti, 9 May 1929, No. 015858–015859.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

riddled with “signs of the author’s admiration for the present leadership in Italy”.⁴⁸ In terms of in-house publications, De Bosis inserted stories of Fascist reforms and institutions in the *IAS Bulletin*. He also gave lectures about such topics.⁴⁹

The Executive Secretary certainly steered the Press Office in the right direction, but in time it became clear that De Bosis was not ideologically Fascist enough to fit the needs of *il Duce*’s government. Irene Di Robilant, an Italian countess working for the IAS, quickly recognized De Bosis’s lack of political enthusiasm and expressed her concerns to Martin Egan: “There is a certain part [of the society’s publicity work], such as writing to papers and preparing articles for magazines that [De Bosis] cannot do, and in which the Italian Government is especially interested”.⁵⁰

De Bosis’s inability to fully push the Fascist issue is illustrated in an episode that took place in fall 1929. *Books Abroad* was a quarterly that reviewed foreign publications for an American audience. Although De Bosis had joined the staff the year prior, the senior editor had not been able to reach the Italian for months, and so he wrote directly to Mussolini for help.⁵¹ De Bosis blamed scheduling conflicts and promised De Martino that he would intensify his work in the future.⁵² Yet, the damage had already been done; *Books Abroad* presented an excellent opportunity to suggest writings favorable to the Fascist cause. Since De Bosis sat on the editorial board, he was in a position to potentially block critical reviews while advocating the more promising. If De Bosis had

⁴⁸ Ibid; Thorsten Sellin, review of *Strenuous Italy*, by H. Nelson Gay, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 139 (September 1928): 218. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1017536> (accessed 24 April 2012).

⁴⁹ Lauro De Bosis to Count Alberto Marchetti, 9 May 1929, No. 015858–015859.

⁵⁰ Irene Di Robilant to Martin Egan, 22 October 1928, The Martin Egan Papers, Archives of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City, quoted in Mudge, *The Poet and the Dictator*, 79.

⁵¹ Roy Temple House to Mussolini, 8 October 1929, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015694.

⁵² De Martino to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, “Books Abroad”, 3 December 1929, TS 5554/1712, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015693.

followed through, *Books Abroad* would have represented the perfect propaganda tool for passing philo-Fascist material from Italy to what would have been considered by many readers as a neutral American publication. However, De Bosis failed to take advantage of the opportunity presented to him.

It was clear that the Press Office needed a manager with more Fascist vigor. In May 1929, Beniamino De Ritis was hired as a solution.⁵³ Deemed “one of the cleverest Fascist agents” by Salvemini, De Ritis was a journalist who originally came to the United States to work for the *Corriere d’America*.⁵⁴ De Ritis became involved in the FLNA as a member of the Central Committee for Press and Propaganda, and later served as a foreign correspondent for the *Corriere della Sera*. The man thus had an impeccable reputation as a Fascist, plus a background in media and propaganda work.⁵⁵ De Bosis stayed at the IAS until the following May when he departed for Italy.⁵⁶

De Ritis continued much of De Bosis’s original plan, but on a broader scale meant to influence an even wider audience. In particular, De Ritis’s press service had much success sending clarification articles across the United States, which eventually reached 810 American papers.⁵⁷ This was an important victory since in many of the publications “often appeared the most strange absurd fantasies on Italy and Fascism” prior to the press

⁵³ Mudge, 79.

⁵⁴ Salvemini, 29.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 28-29; Santoro, 82.

⁵⁶ Mudge, 87. Although this was the end of Lauro De Bosis’s work for the IAS, his real historical notoriety came from events that would take place in the next few years. Increasingly disillusioned by Mussolini and his government, De Bosis formed the National Alliance in an effort to restore the Italian constitution. Wanting to appeal to the average Italian, he hatched a plan to drop thousands of anti-Fascist leaflets over Rome. De Bosis succeeded in the ploy, but died on the return flight 3 October 1931 when his plane crashed into the Mediterranean. See Mudge, *The Poet and the Dictator*, 93-179 for a more detailed account.

⁵⁷ Beniamino De Ritis to De Martino, 18 February 1932, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015959–015964. Note- This source may be misdated. The first page is marked February 18, 1932 while subsequent pages are dated 2/18/31.

service's involvement.⁵⁸ Most of these newspapers were located in the American South and West in places absent of a strong Italian-American voice and regular AP or UP reports. Of course the list included a few of the more popular dailies, such as *The Boston Globe*, the *Detroit Free Press*, and *The New York Times*, but also receiving releases were newspapers located in towns unfamiliar to people in Italy, such as Paris, Idaho, Kinston, North Carolina, and Edgemont, South Dakota. While forty percent of American papers were part of media chains, the remaining sixty percent were independent and generally relied on releases from the IAS.⁵⁹ From these facts, De Ritis concluded that the Press Office created "an advertisement to the works of Fascism... [with] appreciable results and favorable effects".⁶⁰

De Ritis was correct to assert the positive influence in light of the subject matter and tone of the forwarded articles. Common topics included social advances, corporatist theory, and references to historical events. "Illiteracy Vanishing in Italy", for example, told the story of educational reform and claimed that due to the increased enrollment figures "illiteracy [was] about to disappear completely" from the peninsula.⁶¹ Italy was also presented to Americans as conquering the Great Depression through the fortitude of the people and the wisdom of corporatism in "Free Medical Aid to Farmers in Italy", "Demographic and Economic Movement in Italy", and "Farming Aids Employment in Italy".⁶² The pieces informed the audience that "Italy [was] resisting the possible influences of the economic depression" through cooperation and "self-sacrificing

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ De Ritis to Marchetti, "Releases, Current Work and Expenses", 27 April 1931, in Mussolini Papers, R. 33, No. 015910–015918.

⁶² Ibid.

action[s]” on the part of the people.⁶³ The Fascists even managed to break the centuries-old *latifondi* and reassigned the farmland to individuals or cooperatives. In addition, they pioneered new technology and pushed current advances to their limits, such as in air travel where “under the powerful impulse of Mussolini” the nation sought “the undertakings of a heroic vanguard of aviation”.⁶⁴ Squadrons under the command of Italo Balbo experimented with long-distance group journeys. While audacious, the IAS reported that the Italian aviation program would certainly succeed due to the “virtue of its organization, its wealth in machines, and the courage of its personnel”.⁶⁵ With such reports released under the legitimate banner of the Italy-America Society, it is easy to understand the influence such propaganda-laden works would have had on the opinions of the average American.

The Press Office also continued De Martino’s original plan to correct negative stories. In fact, during De Ritis’s tenure, workers at the Royal Consulates in the United States were encouraged to forward hostile articles to the press service for correction.⁶⁶ For instance, after *The Sun* (Baltimore) ran a story about an alleged Fascist-Soviet alliance, De Ritis wrote to the editor protesting the “unwarranted affirmations”.⁶⁷ In another response, he denounced a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article titled “The Perpetual Belligerent” that portrayed Italy as an unreasonable aggressor state.⁶⁸ While not always successful, such criticisms at the least caused newspapermen to reconsider their audience

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Royal Embassy of Italy, Washington to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, “Servizio informazioni presso la Italy-America Society”, 28 August 1930, TS 5281/1690, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015729.

⁶⁷ De Ritis to the Editor of *The Sun* (Baltimore), 26 August 1930, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015727.

⁶⁸ De Ritis to the Editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 August 1930, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015728.

and the repercussions of their stories. In the best scenario, De Ritis's objection letter would be printed in a following edition of the paper.⁶⁹

Although the Press Office's most important function was to deal with newspapers, De Ritis did not limit his agency to dailies. For example, he assisted the editors of *Weedon's Modern Encyclopedia* for the entry on Italy.⁷⁰ The final product was a romanticized history of the state.⁷¹ When the article finally progressed to the post-war period, it did not deviate from the accepted Fascist narrative:

Strikes of a revolutionary character took place throughout Italy from 1919 to 1921, and in some of the northern cities workmen took over the factories. Benito Mussolini organized the Fascist movement to combat the communists, and undertook to put down communism by force. In a short time Fascism has taken on the proportions of a political party and at the end of 1922 Mussolini was accepted as premier by the king, Victor Emmanuel III. ...Under Mussolini's dictatorship material progress is in evidence; and a new interest has been aroused in the ancient Roman ruins of Italy, which are being rapidly excavated and restored.⁷²

In addition, some of De Ritis's work was also requested to be quoted in a series of ten pamphlets printed by the Bureau of Publications of Teachers College, Columbia University. The prospect was especially significant because the booklets were to be used as educational materials by high-school teachers. Like the press releases, the excerpts chosen were full of pro-Fascist sentiments, such as "the Italian nation [was] grateful to the Fascist government that succeeded in solving the problem" of diseases within the region around Rome.⁷³

⁶⁹ George Soule to De Ritis, 26 August 1930, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015726.

⁷⁰ De Martino to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 09 February 1932, TS 1008/462, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015953 – 015954.

⁷¹ "Italy: With a Celebrated Past As Ruler of the World She Builds for the Future", *Weedon's Modern Encyclopedia*, vol. 4 (Cleveland: S. L. Weedon Company, 1931), 1778-1785.

⁷² Ibid, 1785.

⁷³ De Martino to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Italy America Society", 26 May 1932, TS 3834/1745, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015897–015902.

Finally, De Ritis, like his predecessor, did not limit his activities only to print, and he frequented many lectures and conferences as a representative of the Italy-America Society. In 1931, for instance, he attended three separate events hosted by institutes on public affairs. In Cleveland, he spoke opposite to Pierre de Lanux from the Office of the League of Nations headquartered in Paris. De Ritis's next appearance was at a conference at the University of Georgia in Athens, where he gave a speech that rebutted the one given at the same site the year before by Salvemini. For the third event, he was asked to speak on the topic "The Ninth Year of Fascism" at the College of William and Mary. This last affair was extremely important for De Ritis because William and Mary's proximity to Washington meant that many diplomatic and political figures, such as Pierre Boal, the head of the Western Europe Division of the State Department, attended the lecture.⁷⁴ Conferences allowed De Ritis to not only speak about the benefits of Fascism, but also to meet and befriend American elites.

Other Channels for Hegemony

The Italy-America Society's Press Office was not the only means of altering opinions in the United States, and it operated in conjunction with a variety of other factors to reshape the American journalistic atmosphere. Salvemini, for example, documented a number of "transmission belts" within New York City. Besides the aforementioned IAS, Catholic clergy, and Sons of Italy, he included the Dante Alighieri Society, the Italian Chamber of Commerce of New York, and the Italian Historical

⁷⁴ De Martino to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Ufficio Stampa della I. A. S. e Dott. de Ritis", 8 January 1932, TS 138/60, in Mussolini Papers, R.33, No. 015944-015946.

Society as a few more examples of philo-Fascist entities in the U.S.⁷⁵ Columbia University's Casa Italiana under the directorship of Giuseppe Prezzolini was also an important organization on this list.⁷⁶ And, of course, the dissemination of information was not confined to only print media or personal contacts. Both radio and cinema eventually became mediums for Fascist influence.⁷⁷

An exhaustive study of all the components that affected opinions about Fascism in the United States would easily fill a book, probably with multiple volumes. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, it is necessary to include at least a few to understand fully why the Italian-American press moved closer to Mussolini.

Unlike the large American newspapers, the size and circulation of most Italian-language publications limited many of their resources. While *The New York Times* and the like were able to afford personal representatives abroad, the ethnic newspapers relied mostly on secondary information. Many of the articles from both chapters three and four were either cited or reprinted from sources in the United States or Italy. If either of these sources turned pro-Fascist, then the ethnic press would have been fed propaganda, which is generally what happened.

The IAS's Press Office was not the only means of pushing for a positive Fascist image in American newspapers. For publications that were able to afford foreign correspondents, the conditions in Italy eventually assured that information sent to the United States would not criticize *il Duce*. The Fascist government began by offering free

⁷⁵ Salvemini, 91-164.

⁷⁶ Daria Frezza Bicocchi, "Propaganda fascista e comunita' italiane in USA: La Casa Italiana della Columbia University", *Studi Storici* 11, no. 4 (October – December 1970): 661-697. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20563909> (accessed 23 July 2013).

⁷⁷ Stefano Luconi and Guido Tintori, *L'ombra lunga del fascio: canali di propaganda fascista per gli "italiani d'America"* (Milan: M&B Publishing, 2004), 61-148.

cable services to journalists in Rome, and by the end of the decade, the unofficial bribes had increased. American correspondents were invited to join the foreign branch of the press syndicate, which offered complimentary train and theater tickets, tax benefits, and better housing. Mussolini also granted many personal interviews. As an ex-newspaperman himself and exemplary public speaker, *il Duce* usually made an excellent impression. Few could critique the man or his government after such an experience and honor.⁷⁸

For those who did not conform, deportation was a possibility. Perhaps the most famous example was George Seldes. After Matteotti's assassination, Seldes insisted on continuing the story, including Fascist implications, in the American media. He was warned multiple times, and the Fascist government eventually evicted him. For many, according to Seldes, the possibility of deportation was enough to guarantee that most refrained from writing anti-Fascist or questioning articles.⁷⁹

This rule also applied to the American wire services. According to one Associated Press correspondent: "The AP says as a basic maxim that the Government in power must be presumed to be right... AP must never run any chance of being kicked out of any important new center".⁸⁰ In fact, both Salvatore Cortesi and Thomas B. Morgan, heads of the Rome offices for the AP and United Press respectively, had a cordial relationship with *il Duce* and normally supported the Fascist government.⁸¹ Friendly

⁷⁸ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 42-49.

⁷⁹ Seldes, 69-83.

⁸⁰ Percy Winner to George Seldes, 9 January 1935, as quoted in Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 45.

⁸¹ Philip V. Cannistraro and Brian R. Sullivan, *Il Duce's Other Woman* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1993), 351.

dispatches from either agency carried much weight considering the reach of the services.⁸²

Reports from Italian sources were no less biased. After the Matteotti murder, Mussolini used the crisis to set the foundation for a one-party state that included control of the press. The Press Law of December 1925 made it illegal for non-registered journalists to publish. Since the PNF controlled registration, anti-Fascist reporters were banned from writing.⁸³ The law also allowed the police to seize publications “which attack[ed] the government in the foreign policy, or which injure[d] the national credit at home or abroad, or which alarm[ed] the people without justification”.⁸⁴ Ultimately, editors were cleared and appointed by the state, which also held the power to dismiss them after proper warnings.⁸⁵ For the Italian-American press, which from 1922 to 1924 drew information from sources like *Il Paese* (Rome), *Il Lavoro d'Italia* (Bologna), and *La Stampa* (Turin) to judge Italian politics, the loss of non-Fascist publications meant news about repression and illegalities ceased.

This coincided with the stifling of all opposition parties. Non-Fascists were badgered either into silence or into an alliance with the PNF. For those who defied the system, like Antonio Gramsci, arrest and then confinement was the usual outcome.⁸⁶ Others fled before the possibility of persecution. Filippo Turati, whose accusations

⁸² For the AP, this number stood at 1,297 newspapers in 1931. See “Associated Press Has 1,297 Papers: Membership in Co-operative Organization Is Largest in Its History”, *Youngstown Vindicator*, 21 April 1931, 13.

⁸³ Peter Neville, *Mussolini*, Routledge Historical Biographies Series, ed. Robert Pearce (London: Routledge, 2004), 66-67; Martin Clark, *Modern Italy: 1871 to the Present*, 3rd ed. (Harlow, Great Britain: Pearson Longman, 2008), 277.

⁸⁴ *Italian Press Law of 1925*, no. 10, as quoted in *Seldes*, 84.

⁸⁵ Fritz Morstein Marx, “Propaganda and Dictatorship”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 179 (May 1935): 214-215. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1020298> (accessed 20 July 2013).

⁸⁶ Clark, 276-289.

against Mussolini appeared in *Il Cittadino* in winter 1922, settled in France. Don Luigi Sturzo, *La Trinacria*'s perfect candidate, went to London and finally the United States. Being outside of the government, and sometimes even outside of the country, old political rivals to the Fascists were no longer able to speak with any authority, so their usefulness for the press disappeared.

Official lines of communication were no less tainted. As mentioned previously, the American government generally sided with Mussolini. In the 1920s, the State Department saw the Italian leader as both an effective counter to communism and a willing economic ally. This was especially true of Richard Washburn Child, the ambassador to Rome at the time of the threatened march. During their first meeting on 3 November 1922, Mussolini pushed the idea of amicable Italian-U.S. relations. Child responded by telegraphing the State Department that Benito Mussolini asked him "to inform the American press that he had made... [a] 'hearty expression of friendship for America and of faith in mutual frankness in all exchange of views and in complete sincerity and similarity of the political and economic aspirations of the two nations'".⁸⁷ These sentiments appeared in the next issue of *Il Cittadino* as released from Washington.⁸⁸ During the 1930s, although Franklin Roosevelt's administration was upset about hostilities in Ethiopia, the Department of State considered Mussolini indispensable for peace in Europe, especially after *il Duce*'s role in the Stresa Front

⁸⁷ Richard Washburn Child to U.S. Secretary of State, 3 November 1922, TS 711.65/10, in National Archives and Records Service, United States Department of State, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Political Relations between the United States and Italy, 1910–1929, M-529, Roll 1, File 711.65/10.

⁸⁸ "Colloquio tra Mussolini e l'Ambasciatore degli Stati Uniti", *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, 11 November 1922, 2.

against Germany.⁸⁹ The U.S. State Department thus had a special relationship with Fascist Italy, and aided, rather than harmed its image.

Finally, if none of these indirect methods worked, the Fascist government had some immediate, but passive, means of persuasion at its disposal related to culture. It helped organizations in the United States sponsor lectures and concerts. Mussolini's government also pushed for the recognition of Italian-language programs and clubs in schools to lure the youngest generation of Italian-Americans closer to the Fascist camp. Both funds and materials were sent from Italy, and a select few were chosen for a type of study-abroad program, where they often met *il Duce* himself.⁹⁰ Among the materials sent to the U.S. were special textbooks containing pro-Italy and Fascist entries.⁹¹ Dedicated teachers and community leaders received awards and medals from the Italian government in appreciation.⁹² One of the honorees was *Il Cittadino*'s former editor Carlo Caselli for his work in teaching the Italian language and for founding two cultural clubs at Youngstown's East High School.⁹³

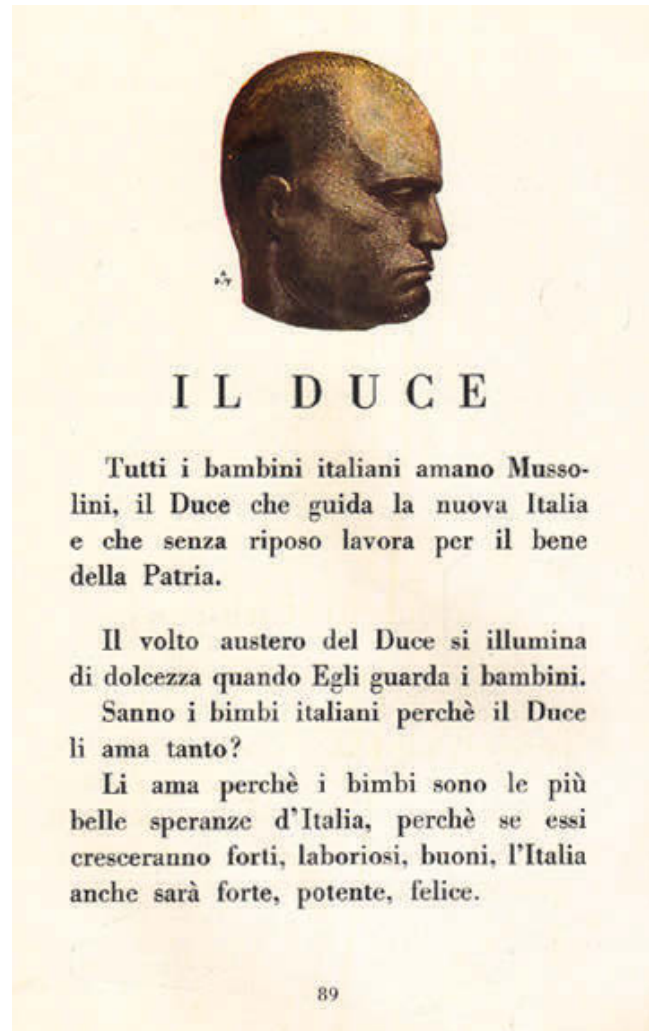
⁸⁹ Schmitz, 36-190.

⁹⁰ Pretelli, "Culture or Propaganda", 177-184.

⁹¹ Clementina Bagagli, *Lecture Classe Prima*, Scuole Italiane All'Esterio Series, (Milan: Alfieri & Lacroix, 1933); Clementina Bagagli, *Lecture Classe Terza*, Scuole Italiane All'Esterio Series, (Milan: Alfieri & Lacroix, 1933).

⁹² Pretelli, "Culture or Propaganda", 183.

⁹³ "Carlo Caselli, East High Teacher of Italian, Dies", *Youngstown Vindicator*, 10 November 1937, 6.



An example of a pro-Fascist textbook entry for grade-school children. The first line reads: "All the Italian children love Mussolini, the Leader that guides the new Italy and that without rest works for the good of the Motherland".

From Clementina Bagagli, *Lecture Classe Prima*, Scuole Italiane All'Esterio Series, (Milan: Alfieri & Lacroix, 1933), 89.

A Tainted Atmosphere

Conditions both in the United States and abroad worked together to make a time of news hegemony in the media by the end of the 1920s. Early attempts for overt control over the Italian-American community failed; however, from the disappointment of the Fascist League of North America debacle emerged a better plan for influence, the Italy-America Society's Press Office. Working within journalistic and scholarly American circles, both Lauro De Bosis and Beniamino De Ritis used the authority of the IAS to build a favorable image of Fascism in America. Between news releases, rebuttals sent to

editors, public lectures, and private contacts, the press agents allowed the Italian government a discreet avenue towards altering the American media.

A variety of other factors eventually contributed to the shaping of the Italian-American press. Draconian publication laws in Italy first stifled, and then silenced, critics of the regime. Fascist officials bribed, cajoled, and eventually threatened American journalists and wire agents to conform. Even cultural endeavors in the U.S., like Italian-language classes, were used to reshape opinions.

The influence of the Fascist government slowly restricted the flow of opposition-tainted stories or even neutral reporting. Without such a counter, Italian-American newspapers operated in a type of vacuum. While critics like Luigi Quintiliano were able to cite specific instances of repression to support their views prior to 1925, the methods of suppression that developed throughout the decade eventually denied them valuable sources. Since many native opponents either fled or went underground, opposition appeared to those outside of Italy as only external and thus threatening to the legitimate government.

For publications like *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, that were cautiously hopeful for a good political outcome, the perceived end of remonstrance was easily accepted. By the close of the decade, the lack of opposition became a sign of endorsement for the government. The newspaper's most vocal complaint, violence, seemed to be extinct and replaced by cooperation. With radical sources, like Tresca's *Il Martello*, providing the only anti-Fascist reports, the Italian-American media willingly, albeit unintentionally, repeated much of the same discourses from Rome. The final result was a journalistic atmosphere conducive only to philo-Fascist reporting.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Italian-American newspapers changed their perspectives about Benito Mussolini and Fascism in a process that spanned the 1920s. Contrary to commonly-held notions, the Italian-American ethnic press was not always supportive of *il Duce* and his government during the first few years of the regime. Instead of a consensus, Mussolini faced a divided foreign press that often could not even decide the true meaning of Fascism, let alone hold clear convictions about its leader. This problem was only overcome by altering conditions both in the United States and in Italy to move sentiments into the Fascist camp.

During the March on Rome in 1922, newspapers around the globe hung in suspense over whether the event would conclude peacefully or if it was the beginning of a revolution, not unlike the countless others that plagued Europe in the aftermath of the First World War. In the generally accepted historiographical narrative, scholars previously asserted that Italian-American publications accepted Fascism during this time with few objections. However, primary evidence shows that the story is more complicated. Based on a survey of six papers, most of which have been described as philo-Fascist during some point in the interwar period, the interpretation is not valid. Certainly, a few sources celebrated Fascism's rise to power, but when viewed collectively, the ethnic press showed a noted moderation.

That ambivalence continued over the next two years. As evidenced by Youngstown's *Il Cittadino Italo-Americano*, the biggest criticism of the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* was its methods. For reasons of *italianità*, few Italian-Americans

disagreed with Mussolini's emphasis on nationality and improvement of the state. They accepted the necessity of a strong ruler whose diplomacy was sometimes belligerent in return for perceived national progress. They would not, however, condone the subjugation of Italian democracy or political freedoms. The parliamentary system, with the freedom of others to speak without fear of bodily harm, needed to be upheld. If Italians decided that the Fascist Party was the best and only option for their government, then Italian-Americans papers accepted that choice, so as long as the people decided freely.

Unfortunately, the Fascist government resorted to tactics of deception and propaganda that made it appear to those outside of the state that such a decision had happened. Using its influence both at home and abroad, it altered the journalistic atmosphere to the point where the only justified interpretation of Fascist Italy was that Mussolini gave the public what it wanted. Beginning with press laws and then by dispensing with political opposition, the PNF guaranteed that any information from Italy that reached outside commentators was positive. In addition, through various means, the party also silenced most criticism from Americans operating within Italian borders. In the U.S., the Fascist government used a type of backdoor influence through creations like the Italy-America Society's Press Office to ensure a well-poised image.

The real novelty in this interpretation is not that such actions occurred, but rather the relationship between subjects, forming a type of cause and effect. While many scholarly works document specific aspects of the phenomenon, there is still an obvious lack of interconnectedness between all the themes contained in this composition. This thesis, of course, is only the beginning of the conversation.

One of the fundamental questions during any historical investigation is why is the subject significant? For example, why should historians care about what the Italy-America Society's Press Office was tasked to accomplish? Any government can draft policies, but the importance lies in whether such plans are implemented and their effectiveness. This is where scholarship is missing currently. Many have crafted the narrative of the IAS, but few have systematically linked the implementation of plans to their outcomes. Beniamino De Ritis was told to promote a good image of Fascism in American publications. That assignment is only half of the story. To understand the true historical importance of De Ritis's work, it is imperative that scholars look to books like *Weedon's Modern Encyclopedia* to evaluate whether his agency met the goals of the program. In other words, are these diverse topics connected? In this case, the answer is a clear yes; an affirmative that serves as an indication for the direction that scholarship must follow.

The history of the IAS is just the beginning. Mussolini's government used dozens of pathways to shape Italian-American opinions, but since each method fits into one larger plan, historians must begin to evaluate all these pieces as part of a larger puzzle. If the Italian-American media was not pro-Fascist in 1922, then what caused it to change? Only by linking such inquiries with the research already accomplished on methods of Fascist transmission does the information become more historically useful.

In many ways, this is what John P. Diggins sought to do when he published *Mussolini and Fascism* in 1972. After studying different groups in the United States, he applied that information to the larger picture about the view of *il Duce*. Unfortunately, the breadth of his project forced him to draw generalizations. Since then, ethnic

historians have worked to expand many of his points and ideas, but few have repositioned the subject once more into the much larger narrative.

The future therefore holds two avenues of research for Fascism in the United States. The first will be to continue looking for specifics, and the second will be how to apply each piece of information to the mosaic that is currently being created. It is only by using a source like *Il Cittadino* as an extended case study that some deeper evaluation of Italian-American interpretations of Fascism can be established. Once this is accomplished, the research can be integrated into a new narrative. The result will not only clarify how and why the ethnic community viewed Fascism in a particular light, but also change scholars' own perceptions of *il Duce* and his government.

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