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Introduction

The myth of the nation embraced all aspects of Fascism since its origins: culture and ideology, the concept of the individual and the masses, relations between the State and society, domestic policy and foreign policy, the sense of tradition and the attitude towards the future\(^1\).

These words of Emilio Gentile are particularly suited to introducing this work, which is the result of a reflection begun a few years ago during a Contemporary History course at the Faculty of Political Science of the Università degli Studi di Perugia. Ever since, I have had a strong interest in Fascism’s historical experience and, in particular, the phenomenon’s ideological dimension; a dimension that, as Roger Eatwell has stressed, has been long overlooked by scholars\(^2\).

The reason must be sought in the fact that Fascism - quoting Gentile again - ‘had as a principle of its ideology the critique of ideologies’, and preferred to emphasize its ‘practical and instrumental value’\(^3\). While keeping this caveat in mind, what cannot be ignored is that Fascism expressed a ‘project of transformation of society according to its own principles’, and that it was therefore not ‘only a set of polemic negations’\(^4\).

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\(^4\) *Ibidem*. 

Starting with this conceptual framework, I chose to focus on the theme of the nation, which immediately appeared to me to be a central feature in Fascism’s ideological universe. I thus decided to write my M.A. thesis on the idea of nation on the two most important theoretical periodicals of the *Ventennio*: namely *Gerarchia* and *Critica fascista*. After graduating, I spent several research stints in Spain studying Francoism and, in particular, Falangism, the ‘Spanish Fascism’. This field survey led me to ponder the concept of ‘generic Fascism’ and to question the scientific validity of this heuristic category that, in some historians’ opinion, is very useful in defining a European - if not global - phenomenon, in which various national experiences can be subsumed\(^5\).

Bearing in mind Renzo De Felice’s brilliant remarks on the possibility of formulating a general theory of Fascism, I began to focus on the historical problem at the centre of this research, which can be summarised like this\(^6\): Was the nation actually one of Fascism’s constituent factors? Specifically, was the nation a ‘fascist minimum’, a common denominator in Italian Fascism and Spanish Falangism\(^7\)? What concept of the nation did the two movements have, and how did it change over time? Did it undergo a metamorphosis during Mussolini’s dictatorship and Franco’s regime? Secondly, to


\(^7\) The expression ‘fascist minimum’ was coined by Roger Griffin to indicate a minimum common denominator that can be traced in all the various national manifestations of the Fascist phenomenon. In R. Griffin, *Fascism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 1.
what extent did the Fascists’ and Falangists’ particular concepts of the nation influence the choices they made in both domestic policy and foreign policy? Did the nation have a universal mission to accomplish, and was it to some extent logical that it aspired to become an empire? Also: was the nation considered a spiritual reality, was it related to tradition, ancestry or explicitly to race? Finally, what role did the camicie nere (black shirts) and the camisas azules (blue shirts) envisage for the Italian and Spanish nations in the new European National Socialist order?

As a launchpad, before getting to the heart of the matter, it is necessary to contemplate the modern idea of nation. In an enlightening comparison of the historical experience of France and Great Britain, Roberto Vivarelli has said that ‘the nation simply corresponds to the set of citizens’\(^8\). If one accepts this interpretation, one must conclude that the nation ‘is born after the State’. In fact, without the State, there is no public right; so it is not possible to attribute this qualification. At the same time, the national State is a State whose sovereignty no longer resides in ‘the legitimacy of a monarch or some oligarchy, but in all citizens’. But who were these?

Determining exactly who these ‘new political subjects’ were is by no means simple, since the possession of political rights was not enough. Indeed, as the British and French cases show, ‘one could be a citizen of a national State even without personally enjoying the right to vote’. The central issue in the reflections of Vivarelli, therefore, consists more in identifying ‘who [had] the right to be recognized as belonging to the national community’\(^9\).

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\(^9\) *Ibidem*, pp. 75-76.
In this connection, he has recalled the famous lesson of Federico Chabod, who said there were two different concepts of the nation: one French, and the other German. The former evoked the Rousseauian concept of \textit{volonté générale} (general will), indicating the ‘will of action’ of the individual who feels part of a national community and \textit{consciously} decides to be part of it\textsuperscript{10}. The latter, on the other hand, was characterized by its naturalistic feature. It presumed that belonging to the nation was essentially dependent on nature, which gave different nations ““permanent” physical characteristics [...] on the basis of blood (that is, the generation) and the “soil” to which that particular blood remains attached\textsuperscript{11}.

Chabod’s thesis was first criticized by Gaetano Salvemini and then by Lewis Namier, who highlighted the inherent complexity of the German idea of the nation. In his view, the main weakness of the voluntary concept of the nation was that it was founded on the principle of peoples’ self-determination. But this principle, as seen in the aftermath of the Great War, was the cause of deep discord, if not open conflicts\textsuperscript{12}. With this in mind, Namier came to the conclusion that the nation could not be based on ‘subjective criteria’ or on a ‘supposed ancestry’, but only on the ‘solid concreteness of territorial boundaries’, as was the case in Switzerland and Great Britain\textsuperscript{13}.

Following Namier’s reasoning, Vivarelli has noted that ‘the British nation is composed of all those [...] who reside within the territorial boundaries and are to the same extent citizens’. It is therefore a ‘nation that aggregates’, as it ‘bestows the status of Briton on every individual’, including those who - like the inhabitants of Wales and

\textsuperscript{13} R. Vivarelli, \textit{I caratteri dell’età contemporanea}, p. 77.
Scotland - are ‘different by tradition or ethnicity from the majority English nucleus’.\textsuperscript{14}

In Vivarelli’s opinion, the most obvious limitation of Chabod’s thesis is that he did not adequately take into account the relationship between the State and the nation. To be a true community of citizens, the nation could not have a voluntary or naturalistic foundation, since both were insufficient to ensure that there were free and stable institutions. A community presupposes the existence of ‘a common heritage of values’ and involves ‘the acceptance of rules that, in the life of a State, are the laws’\textsuperscript{15}. In summary, what constitutes the essence of a national State is the ‘quality of civil values with which each national community identifies itself’; a quality that, as the Normale of Pisa historian has argued, is ‘above all in the answer that every national State has been able to give to the pivotal problem in the history of modern institutions’: namely the problem of freedom\textsuperscript{16}.

Roberto Vivarelli’s conceptualization is of exemplary clarity, but it must be noted that the national State he refers to is the liberal-democratic State. So it is about understanding how Fascism related to this State model and how it planned to replace it. In this connection, it is essential to reflect on the thoughts of Alfredo Rocco, who played a vital role in building the legal organization of the Fascist State. According to Rocco, who was Italy’s Minister of Justice from 1925 to 1932, the liberal-democratic State had two main features: first, it placed on the same level, and protected equally, all ‘living forces’ in a country; second, it did not have ‘its own ideals’, meaning it welcomed all ideals and programmes. Without possessing its own ‘idea to


\textsuperscript{15} R. Vivarelli, \textit{I caratteri dell’età contemporanea}, p. 81.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibidem.
impose’, such a State became a ‘field open to the struggles of all the currents and forces existing in the country’. So it was not surprising that the ‘almost complete triumph of liberalism and democracy’ had brought Italy to the ‘edge of the abyss’.

The Fascist jurist acknowledged that, for the Anglo-Saxon peoples and in France, the liberal-democratic experience had yielded good results. But he felt this was due to the presence in those countries of a ‘great national tradition’ and a strong ‘idea of the State’, which in time had succeeded in affirming its ‘supremacy’. Things in Italy had gone differently, since the Roman tradition - nurtured by the Catholic Church and based on the ‘principle of discipline, hierarchy and the submission of individuals to the State’ - fell apart because of ‘Germanism’, ‘medieval anarchy’ and ‘foreign servitude’. This last feature, in particular, had led the State to be regarded as an ‘instrument of oppression’ of external powers, which had caused a certain ‘spirit of mistrust and revolt against public authority’ in the Italian people. The liberal-democratic State should have tamed this incessant fire of rebellion through a systematic process of ‘political education’ and ‘State discipline’, but it was ‘spiritually and materially incapable’ of doing so. Precisely because of this failure, the Italian masses inevitably showed the unified national State the same mistrust and aversion they had towards foreign domination.

The fact that in such conditions the liberal State had survived for more than sixty years was almost miraculous, but for Rocco it was only a matter of time before it crumbled, since he was convinced that, ‘at the first great blow, that State larva would be shattered’. During the Great War, the ‘intimate virtue of race’ and the ‘people in arms’

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saved Italy from the crisis, but once the hostilities ended, the country precipitated into a condition of ‘total anarchy’. It became ‘a shadow of itself’ and had ‘to look on impassively at the onset of civil struggles, helpless to curb and control them’. So it was evident, for the Fascist jurist, that the experience of the liberal-democratic State had exhausted Italy, and that the March on Rome represented the ‘historical consecration of the collapse’.

Once Mussolini took over the reins of the country, the building of the Fascist State began: an entity distinctly different ‘in content and form’ from the liberal-democratic one. It was ‘the juridical organization of society’, having its own ‘function’, its own ‘will’ and ‘its own goals, superior to those of individuals, to which the goals of individuals [had to] be subordinated’. Of course, it was a ‘national State’, with its ‘morals’, its ‘religion’, its own idea of ‘social justice’, and a precise ‘economic task’. But in the Italy of tomorrow, it could become an ‘imperial State’, because ‘its political mission in the world’ was great. It was, in short, a ‘truly sovereign’ State, meaning that, if its goals were superior, the means to realize them were superior too.

In Rocco’s formulation above, the individual was an instrument, while the State was the ultimate goal. In this sense, Angelo Ventura is certainly correct when he writes, in an important essay, that this paradigm overrode an entire political tradition beginning with the ‘hated principles of 1789’, in which ‘man is the end, the State the means’. Ventura has given a good account of Rocco’s contribution to the development of Fascism’s political doctrine, and also has focused on the two principles which, in his opinion, characterized its ideology from the beginning: namely hierarchy and nation. After

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19 Ibidem, p. 15.
21 A. Ventura, La svolta antiebraica nella storia del fascismo italiano, in Rivista storica italiana, CXIII, I, April 2001, p. 41.
recalling the famous definition of the State - considering it the ‘juridical incarnation of the nation’ - Ventura quotes Mussolini, who said: ‘Fascism rejects the idea that a nation is an accidental and temporary grouping of individuals, and asserts instead that the nation is an organic and living entity that continues from generation to generation with an intangible physical, moral and spiritual heritage’ 22.

Ventura has made incisive observations on this passage, which merit quoting in full. The historian has asked, not without reason: ‘But what is this nation that does not identify itself with the community of citizens, and indeed rises above it? How is this State defined, whose sovereignty and legitimacy do not depend on citizens’ consensus? How can one theoretically determine and impose on the collective consciousness these abstract entities - the nation and the State - that live in themselves above the will and the very existence of individuals?’ 23. Indeed, as Roberto Vivarelli has acknowledged, Ventura has made a crucial point, since the idea of nation that does not just want to be a ‘community of citizens’ but evokes ideal models, ‘tradition, culture, ethnicity [...] implicitly contains the danger of not respecting the rights of minorities, as it subordinates the freedom of the people to the interests of the State’ 24.

This latter reference allows the resumption of the thread of this work’s initial discourse, that is, to contemplate early Fascism’s concept of the political community. In the congress held in Rome at the Augusteo theatre on November 7, 1921, when the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento became the Partito Nazionale Fascista (National

22 La nuova Italia, in Il Popolo d’Italia, no. 186, August 6, 1926, reproduced in Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, edited by E. Susmel and D. Susmel, Firenze, La Fenice, 1951-1963, vol. XXII, p. 188.
23 A. Ventura, La svolta antiebraica nella storia del fascismo italiano, pp. 41-42.
Fascist Party or Pnf), Mussolini explicitly stated that Fascism was ‘in favour of the nation’\footnote{L. Di Nucci, Lo Stato-partito del fascismo. Genesi, evoluzione e crisi (1919-1945), Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009, p. 109.}. Analyzing the relationship between the nation and the State, the Duce declared: ‘We want, [...] through a [...] process, to identify the nation with the State. Therefore, we want the State - the supreme interpreter of the national soul and will - to establish without delay its authority that must be valid for all and against all. Otherwise it will lead to an indefinite fractionation of factions and individuals, and to chaos\footnote{La seconda giornata del Congresso Fascista. Il trionfale discorso di Mussolini all’Augusteo, in Il Popolo d’Italia, November 9, 1921, p. 1.}.

As can be seen, Mussolini’s position was clear, and could be summed up in the formula: nation versus internationalism. In fact, as Roberto Vivarelli once again has observed in the third volume of his work on the history of the origins of Fascism, the ‘irreconcilable contrast’ between Socialists and Fascists in post-war Italy had to do with economic interests but, above all, with two very different ways of understanding the political community\footnote{R. Vivarelli, Storia delle origini del fascismo. L’Italia dalla grande guerra alla marcia su Roma, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012, vol. III, p. 182.}. For the Socialists, the aspect that characterized this community was class, ‘which established a bond of solidarity - far beyond national boundaries - with all those who possessed the quality of proletarians, and excluded all those defined as bourgeois’. For the Fascists, the political community coincided with the nation, conceived not as ‘an undifferentiated community of citizens’ but as a ‘community of believers [...] in a religion of the homeland which time and ideas had transformed into a religion of State reason, in any case an interclassist community’. It was obviously two antithetical interpretations of the political

\[\text{\footnote{La seconda giornata del Congresso Fascista. Il trionfale discorso di Mussolini all’Augusteo, in Il Popolo d’Italia, November 9, 1921, p. 1.}}\]
community, that made ‘Socialists the enemies of the national State and Fascists its defenders’28.

In other words, in Vivarelli’s opinion, the ‘common goal’ of Fascists - since their appearance on the country’s political scene - ‘was and remained the defence of national values’29. But the claim to being the sole representatives of those values denied ‘any effective freedom of dissent even to those who respected national values but intended them differently’. Hence ‘the radically illiberal nature of Fascism as its unique and indelible ideological trait’30.

Certainly, one can argue that Fascism had only one and well-known ‘ideological trait’. But it is significant that Vivarelli, in identifying one, has chosen the monopoly on the idea of nation. This becomes even more relevant when one notes that - regardless of the diverse methodological approaches used by various scholars - there is now a general historiographic consensus in identifying the nation as a central element in Fascist ideology. Thus, for example, George L. Mosse has said nationalism was the ‘bedrock’ on which all the various Fascist movements were formed31. Stanley G. Payne has spoken of Fascism as a form of revolutionary ultra-nationalism32. Zeev Sternhell has seen in ‘tribal nationalism’ one of the constituent elements of the ‘essence’ of the Fascist phenomenon33. Roger Eatwell has emphasized its ‘holistic nationalist’ character, while Roger Griffin has identified in

30 Ibidem.
31 G.L. Mosse, The Fascist Revolution. Toward a general theory of fascism, p. XI.
the rebirth of the nation the ‘mythic core’ of his model of ‘generic Fascism’.\textsuperscript{34}

If these interpretations are accepted, it is not only possible but very useful on the heuristic level to resort to the idea of nation and its evolution as a parameter to compare diverse Fascist experiences. Hence the choice to use in this research the ideological construction of the nation as the ‘property’ of comparison: namely the yardstick to identify affinities and dissimilarities between the ‘objects’ to be compared, which in this case are the Fascist and Falangist political-ideological components within Mussolini’s and Franco’s regimes respectively\textsuperscript{35}.

A note of caution is needed here, however: this study is not a comparison of the Italian and Spanish dictatorships. As it is well known, Fascism and Francoism developed concurrently only partially. Furthermore, they were very different regimes, which makes it difficult to compare them in a scientific analysis. As the Valencian historian Ismael Saz has argued, there has been confusion for a long time between the caudillo’s regime - mistakenly considered the Spanish manifestation of Fascism - and the real Spanish Fascist movement: namely the \textit{Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista} (Spanish Phalanx of the Councils of National Syndicalist Offensive or Fe de las Jons). So the question of the presence of Fascism in Spain has often been reduced to the problem of the dictatorship, ignoring the fact that ‘the ideology of the Spanish


Fascist movement was essentially exactly this: a wholly modern and secular [...] Fascist ideology.\textsuperscript{36}

If, therefore, comparing Fascism and Francoism is misleading - given the intrinsically different nature of the two regimes - what can be compared is Italian Fascist ideology and Spanish Falangist (or National syndicalist) ideology. In other words - using an expression dear to Saz - what can be compared is the Fascist political culture that was present in the two countries, with the term meaning ‘the set of representations that link a human group in the political field: that is, a shared vision of the world, a common reading of the past, and a projection into a future to be lived together’.\textsuperscript{37}

After this definition of what Cafagna calls the ‘elementary categories of comparison’, it is now necessary to clarify some basic methodological issues.\textsuperscript{38} First, it must be pointed out that, although this research focuses on ideologies, it is ‘anchored’ on empirical data. Vivarelli’s lesson must be kept in mind. He has urged caution in evaluating the role that ideas have played in the historical process, particularly in the study of Fascism: a political phenomenon that arose mainly from a ‘situation’ and not from ‘previous ideas’.\textsuperscript{39}


\textsuperscript{38} L. Cafagna, \textit{La comparazione e la storia contemporanea}, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{39} R. Vivarelli, \textit{Le leggi razziali nella storia del fascismo italiano}, p. 756. See also what Emilio Gentile wrote about Fascism as ‘anti-ideological ideology’ in E. Gentile, \textit{Fascismo. Storia e interpretazione}, pp. 77-80.
historian’s opinion, ‘ideas in themselves do not go anywhere’\textsuperscript{40}. It is thus essential to analyze how they combined with facts and practically translated themselves into domestic and foreign policy choices, following a trend that was ‘logical [...] as well as necessary’\textsuperscript{41}.

The second point to note concerns the two objects of comparison and, in particular, the differing fortune of the Spanish Fascist ideology compared to the Italian Fascist one. As is well known, Falangism never succeeded in becoming a regime. The Falange was always only one of the components of the Francoist dictatorship, and the \textit{camisas azules’} attempts to make a revolutionary breakthrough in the \textit{generalísimo’s} regime ultimately failed. Franco could not allow National syndicalism to prevail over the other components of his \textit{authoritarian compromise} and to threaten his leadership. So, every time the party gained ground on the national political scene, the caudillo cut them down to size\textsuperscript{42}. The merger of the Fe de las Jons with the \textit{Comunión tradicionalista} imposed by Franco in 1937 has to be regarded in this sense, along with the exit from government of various exponents of radical Falangism both in the spring of 1941 - following the failed attempt to accentuate the process of the regime’s fascistization - and after the Begoña incident in August 1942\textsuperscript{43}. That

\textsuperscript{40} R. Vivarelli, \textit{Le leggi razziali nella storia del fascismo italiano}, p. 755.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibidem.


\textsuperscript{43} In August 1942, during the commemoration of the Carlist fallen in the Civil War, held at the Basilica de Nuestra Señora de Begoña in Bilbao, there were clashes between Carlists and Falangists. These clashes degenerated and two hand grenades were launched by the Falangist Juan Domínguez, falling a few feet away from General Varela, the Army Minister, who attended the memorial. He remained unharmed but two persons were injured. Some Falangist ministers tried to diminish the fact. However, Franco not only condemned to death the actual responsible for that act, but, under Varela’s and the high military hierarchies’ pressure, dismissed the Falangist ministers from their duties, not least his brother-in-law, the pro-Falangist and sympathizer of the Axis, Ramón Serrano Suñer, at the time Minister for Foreign Affairs. On the spring 1941 crisis and the facts of Begoña of August
was when, in the biennium 1941-1942, the Falangist project of nationalization (not the party itself) ended and was replaced by that of the other prominent political culture in the regime: the national Catholic one.

Nevertheless, underestimating the importance that the Falangist project had up to that point would be a mistake, especially considering the Falange’s significant impact on the Francoist regime from the outbreak of the Civil War until the early 1940s. It must be kept in mind that not only did the Fe de las Jons become the ‘main mass party of nationalist Spain’ during the conflict, but also that, in 1939-1941 - which Saz has indicated was ‘the highest point in terms of the fascistization of the regime’ - the ‘facade’ of the dictatorship was ‘completely, or almost completely, Fascist’. The single party - in the person of Serrano Suñer, flanked by some of the most radical blue shirts - held the reins of the Interior Ministry and, later, the Foreign Affairs Ministry. The press and propaganda were controlled by two prominent exponents of Falangism: Antonio Tovar and Dionisio Ridruejo. Unions, paying special attention to the university, acted in the wake of a ‘genuine Fascist radicalism’. The symbology adopted by the regime was that of the Fe de las Jons, which not only organized ceremonies and public demonstrations, but also committed itself with


44 It is often believed that the beginning of the Falange decline in Spain coincides with the defeat of European Fascisms in the period 1943-1945. Indeed, as already mentioned, the causes of such decline were, at least initially, endogenous and date back to the biennium 1941-1942. Cf. I. Saz Campos, Fascismo y franquismo, Valencia, Universidad de València, 2004, pp. 163-165; Id., Política en zona nacionalista: la configuración de un régimen, in Ayer, no. 50, 2003, p. 83; Id., El primer franquismo, in Ayer, no. 36, 1999, pp. 215-216; R.O. Paxton, *Franco’s Spain in comparative perspective*, in Falange, las culturas políticas del fascismo en la España de Franco (1936-1975), p. 21.

45 I. Saz Campos, Política en zona nacionalista: la configuración de un régimen, p. 61; Id., Fascismo y franquismo, p. 162.

46 I. Saz Campos, Fascismo y franquismo, p. 162.
all its strength to fascistizing the masses, especially youth and women, through the \textit{Frente de Juventudes} (Youth Section or Fj) and the \textit{Sección Femenina} (Feminine Section or Sf) respectively. Also, at that time, the \textit{Junta Política} (Political Committee) of the party played a leading role on the national scene, to the extent that - from the end of the Civil War until the first two years of the 1940s - it seemed to be the ‘main body of the regime’s political direction’\textsuperscript{47}.

In light of what has been said so far, it is evident that the nationalization project that the Falange sought to implement represents a stage in the evolution of Spanish nationalism that is far from negligible. It was integral to the process of totalitarian appropriation of the idea of nation by Fascisms in Europe between the two World Wars. Therefore, the fact that it happened in a fascistized but not a \textit{de facto} Fascist regime does not constitute an impassable borderline, but rather makes the phenomenon of Falangist nationalism even more interesting and deserving of deeper study\textsuperscript{48}.

The third point to clarify is the timeframe of this research, which dates from the early 1930s to the early 1940s. The choice to focus on this historical period was determined by the fact that it was a decade of great political effervescence both in Italy and in Spain, as well as internationally. Indeed, although the Italian Fascist Party had already existed for some time - while the Spanish one was taking its first steps - the decade saw a significant acceleration in the process of the fascistization of the two States. This was due both to endogenous factors, the most glaring examples of which were Mussolini’s decision to launch Italy into a quest for empire, as well as the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War; and also to exogenous factors, primarily the

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibidem}. See also R.O. Paxton, \textit{Franco’s Spain in comparative perspective}, pp. 18-20.

\textsuperscript{48} On the definition of Francoism as a fascistized regime see I. Saz Campos, \textit{Fascismo y franquismo}, pp. 79-90.
appearance on the European scene of National Socialist Germany led by Hitler. The study concludes in the biennium 1942-1943. It was in 1942 that, as mentioned above, the project of Falangist nationalization of the Spaniards effectively ended. This was akin to what happened in Italian Fascism the following year, when Grandi’s Order of the Day on July 25 not only heralded the collapse of Mussolini’s regime, but also the shattering of the dream to realize a great Fascist nation.

The research was conducted mainly on primary sources. Firstly, the texts and certain discourses of doctrinal value of the main leaders and theorists of Fascism and Falangism were studied systematically. Among them were those of Benito Mussolini, Giovanni Gentile, Alfredo Rocco, Giuseppe Bottai, Camillo Pellizzi, Carlo Costamagna, Paolo Orano, Roberto Pavese, in the Italian case; and those of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, Onésimo Redondo Ortega, Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, Antonio Tovar, Dionisio Ridruejo, José Antonio Maravall, Felipe Ximénez de Sandoval, in the Spanish case.

Secondly, press sources were examined and, specifically, all the issues of the most important theoretical periodicals related to the two countries’ Fascist movements, published in the timeframe of this study. These were, for Italy: Gerarchia, official periodical of Fascism founded by Mussolini; Critica fascista, the fortnightly founded by Giuseppe Bottai; Educazione fascista, which became Civiltà fascista, the monthly of the Istituto Nazionale Fascista di Cultura (National Fascist Institute of Culture); L’Oltremare, the monthly directed by Roberto Cantalupo; Rivista delle colonie, the monthly published by the homonymic Ministry; L’Azione coloniale, a publication of the Istituto Coloniale Fascista (Colonial Fascist Institute or Icf); La difesa della razza, the periodical directed by Telesio Interlandi; L’Universale, the fortnightly founded and directed by Berto Ricci; Libro e moschetto, the organ of the Gruppi Universitari Fascisti.
(University Fascist Groups or Guf); and Vincere. Passo romano, a periodical of the Gioventù Italiana del Littorio (Italian Youth of Littorio or Gil). Il Popolo d’Italia, the newspaper founded by the young Socialist Mussolini in 1914, was also analyzed.

The following were examined in the Spanish case: Libertad, the national organ of the Fe de las Jons, founded by Onésimo Redondo, and subsequently replaced by the weekly Igualdad; La Conquista del Estado, the weekly founded by Ramiro Ledesma Ramos; JONS, the theoretical organ of the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista; F.E., the official organ of the Falange Española (Fe), directed by José Antonio Primo de Rivera; El fascio; Arriba, the weekly edited by the Delegación Nacional de Prensa y Propaganda (National Delegation of Press and Propaganda) of the Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (Spanish Traditionalist Phalanx of the Councils of National syndicalist Offensive or Fet de las Jons); Jerarquía, la revista negra de la Falange, founded by Fermín Yzurdiaga; Vértice, the national periodical of the Fet de las Jons; Destino, the weekly of the Falangist Catalan intellectuals; Escorial, the monthly founded by Pedro Lain Entralgo and Dionisio Ridruejo; Revista de estudios políticos, the organ of the Instituto de Estudios Políticos (Institute of Political Studies), a homologue of the Istituto Nazionale Fascista di Cultura; and, finally, the weekly El español. To these must be added the periodical Acción Española - in which, despite its conservative character, Spanish Fascism figures published some interesting articles - and the newspaper Pueblo. Diario nacional del trabajo. Along with these press sources, programme documents of the Pnf and the Falange, some diaristic sources and normative texts were also analyzed.

As for secondary sources, there was a constant interaction with the works of the most prominent contemporary Italian and Spanish
historians of Fascist and Falangist phenomena. Emilio Gentile’s and Ismael Saz’s contributions, in particular, proved fundamental. Their studies on the discourse of the nation by the two Fascist movements and parties are genuinely pioneering, and represent essential points of reference for all researchers interested in this subject. The analysis of articles appearing in the main Italian, Spanish and international journals on contemporary history in the last thirty years completed the overview of sources for this work.

In summary, through the examination of all this documentation, an attempt has been made to compare Italian and Spanish Fascism in an organic and systematic manner on the basis of a guiding idea - the idea of the nation and its evolution - never used in such a comparison before. This thesis develops following a narrative thread in four scans, each relating to a particular phase in the evolution of the idea of nation in Fascist ideology.

The first chapter investigates the origins of the idea of nation in Fascism and Falangism, and the ways in which it was articulated in the *destruens* and *costruens* phase of the two movements. The second examines the theme of the empire and whether it represented a natural outpouring of the nationalist ideology of the Pnf and the Falange. The third analyzes the nature of the relationship between nation and race. Finally, the fourth chapter highlights the Fascist and National syndicalist positions on the ‘New European Order’ that, at the end of the 1930s, appeared to be on the verge of coming to fruition; and the role that, according to the *camicie nere* and the *camisas azules*, Italy and Spain should have played in it.
Chapter I

The ideology of the nation in Fascism and Falangism

1. A look back at the past: the roots of the Fascist and Falangist nations

La parola popolo [...] per noi indica non già la nazionalità sociologica ma l’elemento umano dello stato, manifestantesi non nella moltitudine degli individui, ma in una sostanza metafisica, la cui ragione di essere è fondata nella storia e che genera la nazione in quanto si realizza nello stato. La comunità nazionale sorge dalla coscienza di questa realizzazione del popolo nello stato, cui la giovane letteratura spagnola della falange designa col termine: “El sentido unitario del pueblo” (Benéyto Pérez, El nuevo estado español, 1938).

This was how Carlo Costamagna summed up the essence of the nation for Fascism and, specularly, for Falangism. Considered the soul of the State and the engine of the country’s energies, the nation represented a pillar in the ideology of the Pnf and the Falange, as well as one of the most extraordinary tools of legitimacy in their possession.

1 Nazione, in Dizionario di politica edited by Partito Nazionale Fascista, Roma, Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana, 1940, vol. III, p. 264. [Author’s translation: ‘For us, the word “people” [...] does not indicate a sociological nationality but the human element of the State, manifesting itself not in the multitude of individuals, but in a metaphysical essence, founded in history, that generates the nation. This latter fully realizes itself in the State. The national community arises from the consciousness of this achievement of the people in the State, which the young Spanish literature of Falange defines with the term: “El sentido unitario del pueblo”, that is, the unitary sense of the people.’]
The exaltation of the nation and the more or less successful attempts to monopolize it fascistically were a constant in the complex ideological process undertaken by the black shirts in Italy and the blue shirts in Spain who, from their origins, sought to bring back this lost ideal.

This recovery effort was due to a conviction that an authentic national conscience had been lost over time or, in Italy’s case, never really existed. Whether it was the ancient and glorious Spanish empire or the newborn Italian State, Falangist and Fascist theorists faced the same huge historical challenge: instilling in the people a strong sense of belonging to the national community in their respective countries. They were convinced, indeed, that their citizens would sway one way or the other, depending on which direction the political winds blew. But what was intolerable in their eyes was not so much or not just this disorientation, but the fact that the Italians and Spaniards’ political actions were not being taken while bearing in mind the nation’s values; and did not recognize the superior ideals of the Fatherland, transcending narrow interests and selfish individual satisfaction.

This confusion in the minds of the intellectual elites in Fascism and Falangism occurred within the wider context of the general European crisis at the end of the 19th Century. The rejection of rationalism that began in the revolutionary period at the end of the

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18th Century; the disappointment with liberal governments unable to keep up with changes imposed by modern society; the cultural and socio-political decline that appeared to invest indiscriminately great imperial countries as well as recently unified and independent States: these were, very briefly, the factors that Pnf and Falange ideologues felt had led to the general chaos that overwhelmed Europe between the 19th and 20th Centuries.

The national idea crisis was a recurring theme in the reflections of both parties. Thus, for example, one of the founders of the Junta de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista, Onésimo Redondo Ortega, wrote in 1932: ‘Who doubts that the idea of the Fatherland has fallen in Spain? The affection for homeland or the love of Spain did not fall. […] The national idea did’\(^3\). Similarly, in 1934, Giovanni Gentile, referring to the first sixty years of unitary governments in the peninsula, lamented: ‘The idea of the Fatherland decayed and life was no longer a mission and a duty, but a banquet in which everyone tried to participate in every way.’\(^4\)

Dwelling on how the idea of the homeland decayed is not necessary here. Instead, what is useful to recall is the phenomenon which, as Roberto Vivarelli noted, ‘shapes European political life since 1870’, namely nationalism\(^5\). Vivarelli wrote that patriotism and nationalism must be clearly distinguished because the first manifests ‘the will to maintain’ and the second ‘the drive to dominate’\(^6\). Significantly, the historian of the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa


also emphasized that ‘nationalism needed some years after 1870 to manifest itself fully, and even some decades to penetrate almost everywhere and become a mass phenomenon’.\(^7\)

Grasping its potential, Italian and Spanish Fascists saw in the nation a formidable tool to establish a *modus vivendi* with modernity: an instrument to counter the imbalances, insecurities and fears that modernity engendered. The aim of PNF and Falange theorists was to promote a *regenerated nation*; a *new nation* that was not an artificial edifice of a group of intellectuals, a cultural artifact unconnected with the history and soul of the country. The Fascist and Falangist nations could not take shape with an original deficit of legitimation as a foundation. So it had to be rooted in the past; a past in which the nation demonstrated its capacity for sacrifice, cohesion and heroism.

In general terms, Özkirimli is certainly correct when he writes: ‘The nationalist discourse always looks back in time’.\(^8\) The presence of ‘temporal claims’ was a constant of the Fascist, and not just Fascist, nationalist phenomenon.\(^9\) The recovery of ideological aspects relating to theories or doctrines harking back to earlier periods represented a powerful tool of legitimacy for those who resorted to them. For the political and intellectual elites, it was useful to demonstrate the ‘linear time of the nation’ - the permanent and diachronic presence of the nation - in order to justify their choices regarding the particular configuration given to the national community.\(^10\) Ultimately, the aim was to highlight every possible link between their own idea of nation and the past, reinterpreted to legitimise the present. Certainly, the choice of ideological elements to include as useful, as well as those to

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\(^7\) R. Vivarelli, *I caratteri dell’età contemporanea*, p. 124.  
\(^9\) *Ibidem*.  
\(^10\) *Ibidem*.  

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discard as irrelevant or incongruent with their own doctrine, was done in a not very objective, if not explicitly biased, way.

In that sense, the case of Italian Fascism is paradigmatic. The intellectuals of the movimento Sansepolcrista, from its beginning, spent most of their energy trying to bring back the ideal of the nation to centre stage in the political scene. In their opinion, this ideal had been forgotten in the post-Risorgimento period, and had been betrayed by liberal governments of the unified State. Mussolini and his ideologues adopted much of Italian nationalist thought on this issue, providing the doctrinal base which was sorely lacking for the actions of the black shirts and their vitalistic impulse. The ideas of Corradini, Federzoni, Rocco, Coppola, Forges Davanzati and Maraviglia, to name a few, contributed greatly to consistency in Fascist ideology which, as Francesco Perfetti wrote, was ‘culturally almost unprepared’, and needed theoretical support to accurately define its strategy to conquer the State.

Although Italian nationalism was, for all intents and purposes, an expression of the crisis that affected the Old Continent at the end of the 19th Century, it was considered an autochthonous phenomenon,

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11 On the eve of the March on Rome, during the Pnf Congress held in Naples from 24 to 26 October 1922, Mussolini declared unequivocally that the nation was one of the founding pillars of Fascist ideology. On that occasion, the head of the black shirts said loudly: ‘Our myth is the nation, our myth is the greatness of the nation! And to this myth, to this greatness, which we want to make real completely, we subordinate everything else’. Discorso di Napoli, in Il Popolo d’Italia, no. 255, October 25, 1922, reproduced in Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, vol. XVIII, p. 457.


always claiming autonomy from foreign influences\textsuperscript{14}. Its origins date back to the early 20th Century, when a non-structured, ‘aesthetic and vitalistic nationalism’ appeared in Italy, as the manifestation of a feeling rather than a true ideology\textsuperscript{15}. The official founding of a first nationalist nucleus took place in the summer of 1909 in Turin, built around the newspaper \textit{Il Tricolore}. But it was in the winter of the following year, at the first congress of the movement held in Florence, that the vast political magma that formed peninsular nationalism became a party\textsuperscript{16}.

On that occasion, those in the country who embraced a ‘nationalistic view or sentiment’ showed the will to ‘shape their fluid and elastic material’\textsuperscript{17}. Ultimately, the \textit{Associazione Nazionalista Italiana} (Italian Nationalist Association or Ani) was established in December 1910 as the formal organization of the movement, bringing together a group of heterogeneous individuals. Anti-democrats coexisted with democrats within it - although the latter left the party in December 1912 - along with imperialists and irredentists, monarchists and republicans, spiritualists and determinists, protectionists and liberals, defenders of international solidarity and supporters of the power of the nation, Israelis and anti-Semites, Catholics and anti-clerical materialists\textsuperscript{18}.

\textsuperscript{15} F. Perfetti, \textit{Il nazionalismo italiano dalle origini alla fusione col fascismo}, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibidem}, pp. 93, 107.
\textsuperscript{17} G. Volpe, \textit{Italia moderna}, p. 304.
On the eve of World War I, Italian nationalism assumed a more coherent physiognomy, favoured by the regular congressional debates. It represented the anti-democratic, anti-liberal, anti-Socialist, anti-Masonic and protectionist demands in the economic field, but without attaining complete ideological cohesion, and never succeeding in unifying the various currents within it\(^{19}\). However, despite ‘so much diversity of colours and tones’, Ani members shared a firm belief in the need to renew national politics and make Italy a strong and active nation\(^{20}\).

Presenting itself as the heir to the most genuine tradition of the Risorgimento and adopting the myth of the incomplete national revolution, Italian nationalism was the first anti-liberal and anti-parliamentary reaction to post-unitary governments, which were criticized as incompetent and corrupt. These latter, regarded as responsible for robbing the country of any ambition of greatness, were accused of failing to counteract a negative tendency: for some, membership of the political community did not equate to self-recognition in the nation, but in class\(^{21}\). Thus, fomenting the conflict that consumed the country, they were considered guilty of having buried the great project of uniting the people, for which the Fathers of the homeland had fought so hard.

This *ideology of crisis* found an opportunity for verification and confirmation in the Great War, which overturned the existing distribution of power and involved an unprecedented mass mobilization in the Italian context, that was always characterized by a


‘strong depoliticization of the popular classes’\textsuperscript{22}. The world conflict, with its violent palingenetic underpinnings, seemed to awaken the most energising forces of the people, getting them to shake off the apathy that had marked the life of the State until then. The irreversible breakdown of the post-unity liberal order caused by the war substantiated the conviction that new social, political and institutional scenarios were about to open up in the country. Nothing was the same in 1918\textsuperscript{23}.

In this traumatic historical phase in which, according to many, traditional reference points were lost, the identity of the people could be rebuilt only on the basis of the nation, for which millions of Italians had fought in the trenches\textsuperscript{24}. As Emilio Gentile wrote, the world conflict triggered the ‘sudden revelation of the reality of the nation’, sacralized by ‘proof of sacrifice’, and ‘sanctified by the blood of His children’\textsuperscript{25}. By imbuing the national myth with a mystical aura, the war ended up being a transformer of various Italian forms of nationalism, consolidating its theories. The latter constituted the ideological lode from which young Mussolini, who left the Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party or Psi) in November 1914 after embracing the interventionist cause, drew fully in the post-war period to support the revolutionary practice of the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento, founded in March 1919.

Even if it did not share nationalism’s elitist traits and rejected the ‘hard, naturalistic and positivist’ elements attributed to the nation, Fascism absorbed the nationalist doctrine before the merger of the Ani with the Pnf in February 1923\(^{26}\). In particular, by fitting into their framework the historical reconstruction of post-Risorgimento political events, Fascist ideologists asserted that a unity of intents, values and ideals did not correspond to a formal unification of the country. The State had failed in its attempt to establish a stable political order and remain steadfast in the face of the pitfalls that modernity presented. The entry of the masses on the political scene and the inability of the ‘single party’ of the liberal ruling class to channel social demands in the parliamentary arena were two of the factors that led to the crisis of the united Italian State: a State that had to deal with fragile financial structures, an underdeveloped economy, and a population that was still mostly illiterate. Disappointment with Italy’s low international standing compared to other European powers - especially after the failure of Crispi’s colonial adventure in 1896 - and the urgent need to make the Kingdom’s various normative codes uniform completed the picture.

In Fascist thinking, the creation of a heavily centralized administrative machine, which was basically the result of the extension of the Statuto Albertino and the Savoy civil and criminal law to the whole peninsula, was not a prudent decision. This not only displayed scant regard for the different realities within the territory of the State - each of which retained its unique secular traditions - but did not even promote the autonomous and original development of the

\(^{26}\) Fascism always rejected the idea, typical of romantic conservatism, that the nation was determined by native characters such as language, race, culture, customs, traditions and territory. In B. Mussolini, *La dottrina del fascismo*, Milano-Roma, Edizioni fratelli Treves, 1933, p. 6. The quote is in E. Chichiarelli, *Motivi e forze dell’universalità del fascismo*, in *Gerarchia*, no. 1, January 1937, pp. 43. Cf. E. Gentile, *Le origini dell’ideologia fascista*, pp. 218-225.
new State apparatus. The country was united only in a bureaucratic sense, and lacked a truly national political class able to face problems from a general and broader perspective. Emblematic in this regard was what Gherardo Casini wrote:

L’Italia nata dai compromessi monarchico-rivoluzionari, dalla decadenza dei piccoli Stati, per gli sforzi eroici di pochi apostoli annegò il piccolo Stato piemontese nel Paese disorientato e retrivo, economicamente primordiale, sorretto da una impalcatura sociale che aveva ancora qualche cosa del medioevale [...] Perciò lo Stato italiano fu lo Stato di nessuno, cioè l’organo amministrativo assai più che politico, degli oligarchi di una casta chiusa che s’identificò con la Nazione apparecchiando il formidabile trucco di una politica sedicente democratica e in realtà preoccupata degli interessi popolari soltanto in funzione delle proprie fortune.  

The ‘frigid’ and ‘abulic’ State lacked the ‘enlightenment of the whole people democratically considered, in the awareness of its spiritual unity’. According to Fascist ideologues, the problem had a cultural origin: in over fifty years of national life, there was not a single educational principle that built the character and conscience of all citizens. The love of country touched the population only in a casual, rough and rhetorical way. At the end of the 19th Century and

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27 G. Casini, Problema essenziale, in Critica fascista, no. 23, December 1, 1924, p. 724. [Author’s translation: ‘Italy [was] born of monarchic-revolutionary compromises, the decadence of the small States, thanks to the heroic efforts of a few apostles, drowned the little State of Piemonte in the disoriented and underdeveloped Country, economically primordial, supported by a social structure that still had something of the medieval period […] Therefore, the Italian State was the State of no one, that is, an administrative authority more than a political one, the instrument of the oligarchs of a closed caste that identified itself with the nation by organising the formidable trick of an alleged democratic politics, but actually worried about popular interests only depending on its own fortunes.’]

the beginning of the 20th Century, the great mass of Italians did not have any national feeling, except in a confused and superficial fashion. This was also due to the absence of a ‘moral conscience’, that was a basic condition for conceiving any plan to make the nation great. As Camillo Pellizzi wrote:

È la coscienza morale quella che imposta i massimi problemi della pratica, della politica; ed è inutile conoscere tutte le circostanze di fatto quando non si è precisi a se stessi su ciò che si vuol fare. Inutile anche dire che si vuole un’Italia grande quando comincia la nostra coscienza stessa a non essere grande e chiara abbastanza per concepire questa futura, troppo generica, grandezza del nostro Paese.\(^{29}\)

The 19th Century passed on to the political class of the 20th Century a free and independent State with a growing population, which for long time had been divided under foreign oppression but was not yet identifiable as a national community. Italy had become a ‘caricature’: there was moral disorder among Italians who did not recognize themselves as such, and did not have any interest in what happened in the country.\(^{30}\) As Volt wrote in an almost epigrammatical way in *Gerarchia*: ‘Actually, national self-awareness never existed.’\(^{31}\)

Based on this conviction, Fascist ideologists argued from the very beginning that ‘a pile of vices and defects’ had settled upon the

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29 C. Pellizzi, *La Nazione e l’impero*, in *Gerarchia*, no. 6, June 1924, p. 366. [Author’s translation: ‘It is the moral conscience that sets the greatest problems of practice and politics; and it is useless to know all the facts when it is not clear to yourself what you want to do. It is also useless to say that we want a great Italy when our consciousness itself is not big and clear enough to conceive this future, too generic, greatness of our Country.’]


mentality and habits of the citizens - ‘segregated by the vital currents of modern civilization’ as a result of ‘centuries of backwardness’ - and that it had made them numb. The inhabitants of the peninsula seemed to have fallen into a state of deep stupor and moral weakness from which they found it difficult to rouse themselves. A moral redemption was required, and a need was felt for a homeland prophet to appear on the horizon; a prophet that finally showed up on the political scene.

Significantly, in the opinion of the black shirts, the one who first tried to carry out the great work of the regeneration of the Italians and more than anyone else struggled to complete the process of the nationalization of the people was Giuseppe Mazzini. Defined by Giovanni Gentile as ‘the highest and most true prophet of the Risorgimento, the Ezekiel of the new Italy’, Mazzini, according to many, brought the theme of the nation back to the centre of politics.

Some great figures of Italian culture and science, close to Mussolini, attributed to him the credit for reviving the importance of

34 G. Gentile, Che cos’è il fascismo, March 8, 1925, in Id., Politica e Cultura, edited by H.A. Cavallera, Firenze, Le Lettere, 1990, vol. 1, pp. 20-27. The quote is at p. 21. According to Gentile’s interpretation of the historical events of the Risorgimento: ‘During the Italian Risorgimento, there was the individual but there was not the citizen; there was the man but there was not the nation, which, until it comes to being a State, is an aspiration, an ideal concept that has to be translated into reality. [...] This was what Mazzini saw, and this was his torment and the reason for his apostolate. He saw it better than all the protagonists of the Risorgimento who came after him, imbuing them with faith and making them march energetically on the path that he had opened to reach the goal he had affirmed. Since in Mazzini the problem of unity, the problem of the existence of Italy is renewed, is transformed, it acquires a new meaning because it finally ceases to be an abstract ideal that touches the mind and not the will of man.’] In G. Gentile, Mazzini e la nuova Italia. Discorso tenuto a Genova il 22 giugno 1934 per l’inaugurazione dell’Istituto Mazziniano, p. 581. About Giovanni Gentile’s interpretation of Mazzini, see also E. Gentile, Il culto del littorio, pp. 9-11.
the idea of homeland, which represented ‘the reason and [the] ultimate goal of the whole revolutionary action’ and the ‘absolute and indispensable law of Italian redemption’\textsuperscript{35}. Other ideologues, since the origin of their movement, boasted of a spiritual connection with the Genoese revolutionary, and recovered aspects and themes of the Mazzinian concept of the nation, which represented the foundation upon which the Fascist nationalist discourse was built\textsuperscript{36}.

The \textit{fil rouge} which, according to black shirt intellectuals, connected Fascism to Mazzinianism, was inspired by the mystical concept of the nation, that is its interpretation as a moral and transcendent entity. The latter, the intellectuals claimed, was not limited to a geographical, linguistic and cultural entity, but had an authentic spiritual dimension that went beyond liberal individualism\textsuperscript{37}. This guiding idea was already present in the Pnf programme, approved in Florence on December 20, 1921. The cornerstones of the regime were indicated in the short prologue preceding the drafting of the actual programme. Among them, together with the party and the State, there was inevitably the nation, defined as ‘the supreme synthesis of all material and immaterial values of the ancestry’\textsuperscript{38}. According to party theorists, its essence lay in a ‘mysterious and supreme \textit{quid} that summarises life’, in a ‘divine breath’, in an element ‘superior to brute matter and pure mechanics’\textsuperscript{39}. Beyond the everyday


\textsuperscript{37} G. Belardelli, \textit{Mazzini}, p. 74.


and concrete ‘coexistence of individuals in the human crowd’, the nation represented ‘the most intimate and deep spiritual coexistence’.

‘Never done but always in “fieri”’, it was not a natural or historical element, but a free, active and conscious expression of the will of the individual to belong to the life, the history and the destiny of the national community. ‘Not [...] race, nor geographically identified region’, the Fascist homeland was, rather, ‘historically perpetuated ancestry, a multitude unified by an idea that is the will of existence and power’, ‘continuity that embraces centuries, living in the life of countless generations’, united by the memory of the past and the ‘common anxiety about the future.

The voluntaristic element was another dominant aspect in the discourse on Mazzini’s nation, which was widely retrieved by the theorists of Fascism. The Genoese patriot wrote:

Se l’anima della Patria non palpita in quel santuario della vostra vita che ha nome Coscienza, quella forma rimane simile a cadavere senza moto ed alito di creazione, e voi siete turba senza nome, non Nazione; gente, non popolo.

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40 M. Pompei, Collettività e Nazione, in Critica fascista, no. 17, September 1, 1933, p. 339.
43 G. Mazzini, Ai giovani d’Italia, Napoli, 1860, p. 15. [Author’s translation: ‘If the soul of the Fatherland does not palpitate in that sanctuary of your life called Conscience, it remains like a corpse without motion and breath of creation, and you are unnamed crowd, not a nation; folk, not people.’]
Mazzinian nation was the synthesis of immanent and transcendent factors. However, it was destined to remain an empty shell if it lacked the support of the people. Hence the Fascist retrieval of the idea of the nation as the result of a deliberate choice of individuals, who recognized and realized themselves in the State, representing its ‘juridical incarnation’.

The nation was a mission, duty, and sometimes sacrifice, to which the people were to be educated. And exactly the education of the citizens in terms of love for their homeland constituted the third component of Mazzinian thought retrieved by Mussolini’s ideologues, and represented the leitmotif of their propaganda throughout the Fascist era. Therefore, if Mazzini had failed in the task of ‘redoing the soul’ of the Italians after centuries of moral decay, the black shirts were determined to carry out their historic task: building the nation of Fascism and creating the New Man.

In the cultural environment of the Pnf, in fact, there was the widespread idea that the State of the Risorgimento had emerged as a ‘political and juridical form of an inadequate spiritual substance’, and that it lacked ‘the enlightenment of all the people, democratically considered, in the consciousness of His spiritual unity’. The ideal Risorgimento existed but was an ‘immature and discordant’

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44 Programma del Partito Nazionale Fascista, p. 334.
46 F. Ciarlantini, Valore educativo dell’intransigenza, in Gerarchia, no. 8, August 1925, p. 526. See also U. D’Andrea, L’italiano di Mussolini, in Critica fascista, no. 8, April 15, 1931, pp. 159-160; P. Curciolo, Etica fascista, in Libro e moschetto, no. 4, January 26, 1935, p. 8.
phenomenon. In the interpretation given by some scholars linked to Mussolini, the liberation of Italy from foreign domination was conceived by the heroes of the Risorgimento in a superficial and rhetorical way. They looked at independence *de facto* and *de jure*, while Fascism wanted ‘the independence of souls and intentions’.

So, more than sixty years after the unification of the country, the Duce of the black shirts had to face the ancient and heavy problem of the nationalization of Italians, to which neither the Risorgimento protagonists nor the liberal government leaders could find a solution.

The essence of the Risorgimento was well summed up in the famous words: ‘Fare l’Italia!’. There is no doubt that it was a great political revolution; but, however, it represented the ‘desperate and heroic effort of an intellectual and bourgeois minority’. National consciousness did not take form as if by magic, as *Critica fascista* pointed out:

Un popolo che fino al 1915 non aveva combattuto per un’idea comune, che si era trovato dinanzi ad enormi difficoltà elementari e a dover risolver problemi superiori alle sue forze, che aveva per la grande maggioranza perduto il senso della dignità politica in un servaggio secolare, non poteva all’indomani del Risorgimento acquistare di colpo questo senso e quella coscienza.

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51 *I pochi e i molti*, in *Critica fascista*, no. 23, December 1, 1925, pp. 441-442. [Author’s translation: ‘A people who, until 1915, had not fought for a common idea, had to face enormous elementary difficulties and solve problems beyond its strengths and who had lost the sense of political dignity in a secular servitude, could not suddenly acquire this sense and that conscience in the aftermath of the Risorgimento.’]
By exalting the Risorgimento experience and exploiting the strong palingenetic and patriotic fervour of the Great War of 1915-18, Fascism committed itself to bringing to Italian life ‘the lymph of a semi-dull and dispirited national tradition’: that is, to relaunching that tradition in order to create a nation of people and to solve the great historical problem that was ‘the constant anxiety of patriots and thinkers’\(^52\).

In light of these considerations, it is inevitable to reflect on the relationship between Mazzinianism and Fascism; a relationship that was clearly discontinuous since, if it is undeniable that Fascism retrieved the ideas of the Ligurian revolutionary, it is also true that it did so extracting elements from their context, according to its own interest and political convenience. Thus Mazzini was not an apostle ‘in one piece’, but he was always an ‘apostle in shreds’, whose thought was not fully accepted, but was accurately purified of unpleasant elements\(^53\).

In the Fascist discourse on the nation, for example, there was no trace of that ‘humanitarian Catholicism’ with which the doctrine of Genoese patriotism was impregnated\(^54\). For Mazzini, the struggle for the realization of national unity assumed a providential meaning, since it represented a mission desired and legitimized by God. This project, as Giovanni Belardelli argues, was ‘a mix of divine intent and popular choice, determinism and freedom’\(^55\). The formula ‘God and people’, however, did not fit into Fascism, that was faithful only to the civil

\(^{52}\) Ibidem.
\(^{53}\) S. Levis Sullam, L’apostolo a brandelli. L’eredità di Mazzini tra Risorgimento e fascismo, p. VIII. Cf. also G. Belardelli, Mazzini, pp. 245-246.
\(^{54}\) G. Mazzini, Fede e avvenire ed altri scritti, edited by L. Salvatorelli, Roma, Einaudi, 1945, p. 50.
\(^{55}\) G. Belardelli, Mazzini, p. 74.
creed of the homeland\textsuperscript{56}. Therefore, if Mussolini embraced the spiritual and mystical interpretation of Mazzinian nation, he was careful not to include the Christian character that was central to the original formulation.

The grandiose operation of appropriating Mazzini’s thought by the theorists of Fascism also went through the rejection of the democratic ideological component to which it was firmly and indissolubly tied\textsuperscript{57}. Indeed, even if he subordinated freedom to the needs of the community, the Genoese patriot never ceased to profess, sometimes contradicting himself, the sacredness of the individual and the inviolability of his interests and rights\textsuperscript{58}. After all, he grew up and developed his views within the culture of 19th Century European democratic radicalism which, as is well known, did not gain any favour among Pnf ideologues. The latter attributed to the nation an unquestionably greater value than individual freedom, which was systematically sacrificed to patriotic needs\textsuperscript{59}. The individual had no rights except as a member of the national community, that constituted the first condition of the life of citizens - inconceivable outside it - and their only source of integral realization. As indicated in the item ‘Fascism’ in the Italian Encyclopedia of Science, Letters and Arts:

L’uomo del fascismo è individuo che è nazione e patria, legge morale che stringe insieme individui e generazioni in una tradizione e in una missione, che sopprime l’istinto della vita chiusa nel breve giro del piacere


\textsuperscript{59} R. Vivarelli, \textit{Fascismo e storia d’Italia}, pp. 124, 129.
per instaurare nel dovere una vita superiore libera da limiti di tempo e di spazio: una vita in cui l’individuo, attraverso l’abnegazione di sé, il sacrificio dei suoi interessi particolari, la sua stessa morte, realizza quell’esistenza tutta spirituale in cui è il suo valore di uomo.

Giovanni Gentile argued that the only possible freedom was freedom within the State. But it is evident that the philosopher referred to the newborn Fascist authoritarian State, certainly not to the liberal State that Mussolini had systematically dismantled and that, with all its defects, was the result of the sacrifice of thousands of women and men who had fought for the unity and independence of the homeland.

Still, in the eyes of the black shirt theorists, the opinion of those who accused them of representing the denial of the spirit of the Risorgimento was of little concern. In 1934, an article published in the journal of the *Gruppi Universitari Fascisti, Libro e moschetto*, read as follows:


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60 *Fascismo*, in *Enciclopedia italiana di scienze, lettere ed arti*, p. 847. [Author’s translation: ‘The man of Fascism is an individual who is nation and homeland, a moral law that holds together individuals and generations in a tradition and a mission, that suppresses the instinct of life focused on pleasure in order to establish a superior life, free from the limits of time and space: a life in which the individual, by self-abnegation, the sacrifice of his particular interests and his own death, realizes that spiritual existence in which his value of man lies.’]


In peremptory terms, ten years earlier, Camillo Pellizzi stated: ‘For us, the Risorgimento is a milestone; if there is anti-Risorgimento, it is to be sought not in Fascism but, rather, among its opponents’\textsuperscript{63}. According to this interpretation of the historic events of the Risorgimento, the unity and independence of the nation had not been denied at all. Indeed, ‘after a parenthesis of tiredness and inward withdrawal of Italy’, they were improved by Fascism which, in Mussolini’s ideologists view, had the great merit of ‘making Mazzini’s voice heard again in his deeper meaning’\textsuperscript{64}. So, from the beginning, Fascists declared that they wanted to change the liberal-democratic organization of the State, which had failed to complete the process of the country’s effective unification because it was unable to carry out the moral reform of the Italians.

Reinvigoration of the people’s soul had to be the crucial step in realizing also the resurgimiento of the Hispanic nation, which was a central topic in Spanish Fascist literature as much as it was for the black shirts. ‘Stop falsifying!’ wrote Falange founder José Antonio Primo de Rivera, who proposed completing the historic mission of ‘giving an authentic national enthusiasm back to Spain’\textsuperscript{65}. The camisas azules identified the total debasement of the ideal of the nation as the evil that afflicted society. The moral imperative they

\textsuperscript{63} C. Pellizzi, AntiRisorgimento, p. 539. Cf. also Anno XIV, in Civiltà fascista, no. 11, November 1935, pp. 934-937; P. Curaiolo, Etica fascista, p. 8.


\textsuperscript{65} España estancada, in Arriba, no. 1, March 21, 1935, reproduced in J.A. Primo de Rivera, Escritos y discursos. Obras Completas (1922-1936), Madrid, Instituto de estudios politicos, 1976, p. 582.
fought for from the beginning was the rebirth of a genuinely national consciousness, as the only way to revive the ‘languid, poor and exhausted life’ of the country.\(^{66}\)

If the goal of Fascism and Falangism was the same, the historical, political and institutional context in which they operated was clearly different. After gaining power, Mussolini had to rule a recently unified country without a well-established State tradition, in which the Italians’ nationalization process was just beginning, assuming it had really begun, in the first place. Instead, in the Spanish case, Falange ideologues envisioned a grandiose hegemonic project in which their planned new political order would be imposed on a very large territory, constituted in a State over four centuries old. This State, having become a global imperial power at the beginning of the 15th Century, was initially supported by a strong national conscience, which had contributed, for its part, to the realization of epic feats. But at the dawn of the 20th Century, nothing remained but its memory.

Therefore, while the Pnf programme considered essential to complete the process started by Risorgimento but never concluded - finally giving Italy a national identity and nationalizing Italians under the insignia of the *Fascio littorio* - in Spain the Falangist task was completely different. It was necessary to reverse the negative trend that, starting from the 17th Century, had led the country to ruin, and to bring back the nation, which was certainly crippled but unquestionably still alive. ‘Reincorporate the people into the nation’ and ‘reconcile it with tradition’: these were the primary goals of the blue shirts.\(^{67}\)

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\(^{67}\) O. Redondo Ortega, *La tradición y el pueblo*, January 30, 1933, in *El estado nacional*, p. 105.
The appeal to tradition was a recurrent theme in Falangist literature, because it represented one of the elements constituting the ‘spiritual protoplasm’ of the homeland. However, the National syndicalists certainly did not have a conservative intent. The ideal revival of a glorious past - which was sometimes transfigured to the point that it became mythical - did not imply any anachronistic will of restoration. Redondo Ortega wrote with great accuracy:

El problema no está en rendir acatamiento a la idea de la restauración hispana [...]. El problema consiste en adaptar esas afirmaciones doctrinales a la actuación de cada día, con posibilidades ciertas de triunfo.

Clearly, the Spanish Fascist nation could not duplicate the magnificent Spain of the Reconquista, which achieved its national unity under the banner of the Catholic kings and successfully embarked on conquering souls and ultramarine territories. However, Falangist ideologues were well aware of the importance of evoking those legendary times, since doing so produced a dual effect of legitimation. On the one hand, a glorious history represented one of the constituent factors of Falangist identity. And, on the other hand, that past could be used to garner citizen consensus. That is why the camisas azules presented themselves as pursuers of that golden age in the country’s history, and claimed to be the sole representatives of the authentic nation; a nation that, after enduring humiliation for

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68 Ibidem.
69 Ibidem, p. 102. On this topic see M. Tomasoni, El caudillo olvidado. Vida, obra y pensamiento de Onésimo Redondo (1905-1936), Granada, Comares, 2017, pp. 157-171. [Author’s translation: ‘The problem is not rendering respect to the idea of the Hispanic restoration […] The problem is adapting these doctrinal statements to everyday action, with sure possibilities of triumph.’]
centuries, would return to a new splendour under the insignia of the yoke and arrows of the Fe de la Jons.\footnote{The yoke and the arrows constituted the emblems of the Catholic kings. Specifically, the first one represented Ferdinand of Aragon, and the second one Isabel of Castille. They were initially used by \textit{Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista}, and then, after the fusion of Jons with the \textit{Falange Española} in February 1934, they became the symbols of the flag of the new party. In G. Ranzato, \textit{L'eclissi della democracia. La guerra civile spagnola e le sue origini 1931-1939}, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2012, p.180.}

National rebirth was closely linked to the palingenesis of Spanish society, which seemed to have lost any point of reference in the 19th and 20th Centuries, and was devoid of direction. This disorientation was accurately described by Primo de Rivera:

España se ha perdido a sí misma, ésta es su tragedia. Vive un simulacro de vida que no conduce a ninguna parte. Dos cosas forman una patria. Como asiento físico, una comunidad humana de existencia; como vínculo espiritual, un destino común. España carece de las dos cosas.\footnote{España estancada, reproduced in J.A. Primo de Rivera, \textit{Escritos y discursos. Obras Completas (1922-1936)}, p. 773. [Author’s translation: ‘Spain lost itself: this is its tragedy. It lives a simulacrum of life that leads nowhere. Two things form a homeland: as a physical element, a human community of existence; and as a spiritual bond, a common destiny. Spain lacks both things.’]}

For his part, Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, co-founder in October 1931 of \textit{Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista} together with Redondo Ortega, wrote in 1935: ‘It seems that, for two hundred and more years, Spain is looking for the best way to die.’\footnote{R. Ledesma Ramos, \textit{Discurso a las juventudes de España}, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2003, p. 52.} The Spain which the Fascist theorist referred to was the country that started its descending parabola in the late 16th Century. It was the Spain that had been spiritually weakened by Protestantism and exhausted both economically and commercially by the antagonistic English and French empires.
Ledesma Ramos retraced historical events and argued: ‘The elevation of Spain was so great, so fast and so triumphal, and so long-lasting was its decline’\textsuperscript{73}. Indeed, according to the interpretation of the national past given by blue shirt ideologists, the phase of decay of the nation was so perdurable that it continued during the entire 19th Century. Initially, there was the struggle for liberation from Napoleonic occupation in 1808-1814 and the Hispano-American wars of independence, causing the loss of almost all colonies in the ultramarine territories of Central and South America. Then followed the Bourbon Restorations of 1814 and 1875 led by a political class considered totally self-absorbed, with no confidence in the country and in Spaniards. These historical events represented for the camizas azules the last moments of a tragic drama, which led to the dissolution of the nation and culminated in 1898\textsuperscript{74}. That year, Spain was defeated by a great power, America, which would carry on dominating the international political scene in the 20th Century. At the end of the war, the Spaniards had to accept the independence of Cuba and were forced to cede Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines to the United States, losing the last pieces of their ancient and glorious empire.

This event, going down in history as el desastre, intensified all the anguish and frustration infesting the Spanish soul in the 19th Century. There seemed to be no way to end the downward spiral until nationalism appeared on the political scene and finally showed the way forward. In building their Falangist model of the nation, the blue shirts recalled the trauma of the end of the previous century. In doing so, they revived, at least partly, the discourse on national decay and hopes of the homeland’s resurrection, presented in particular by the

\textsuperscript{73} Ibidem, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{74} On this topic see E. Herández Sandoica, En torno a un centenario y su historiografía la Restauración, la política colonial española y el desastre del ’98, in Intorno al 1898. Italia e Spagna nella crisi di fine secolo, pp. 15-38.
literary generation of 1898. This theme was thoroughly examined by Ismael Saz Campos, who identified the modernist regenerationism of the young Unamuno, Baroja, Azorín and Maeztu as the most important ideological contribution to ‘Fascist ultranationalism’.

Analogous to the Italian case and as it happened in other European countries between the 19th and 20th Centuries, there was a widespread conviction among intellectuals that there was only one way to arrest the decay of the State and overcome destructive tendencies damaging Spanish society: invoking the supreme ideal of the nation, which had been set aside for too long and not seriously addressed.

The regenerationist topic had already been debated by some men of culture belonging to the previous generation and bound to the liberal world, such as Joaquín Costa, Lucas Mallada and Macías Picavea. Aware of the country’s critical situation, especially after the failure of the Democratic Sextenian experience (1868-1874), their confidence in democracy started to waver and they began to worry about the homeland’s destiny, to the extent that they hoped for a ‘cirujano de hierro’ (‘iron surgeon’) to bring about order and stability. However, although the theme of the nation’s decline and regeneration was a recurring topic in their writings, in no case did they deal with arguments beyond the boundaries of liberal culture, in which they were recognized themselves and with which they never severed.

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ties. According to Saz, their ‘liberalism of the crisis’ at some moments acquired the shades of a ‘nationalism of the crisis’, without ever assuming an authentically radical character77.

The literary generation of 1898 - immersed in the climate of social, political and cultural effervescence typical of the crisis at the end of the century - developed further the regenerationist discourse previously begun. These so-called modernists, much more aware than their predecessors, started considering how deep the deterioration of society was: a society that was the victim of a strong ‘atomism’ and a serious ‘mental anaemia’78. Spanish ‘spiritual misery’, an issue dear to the noventayochistas, was absorbed entirely into the doctrine of the Falange79. In a letter written in April 1934, José Antonio Primo de Rivera began with the phrase ‘Nos duele España chata de estos días’, which openly retrieved the famous expression used eleven years earlier by Miguel de Unamuno: an expression encapsulating all the suffering and discouragement regarding the destiny of the Fatherland80.

In the historical reconstruction of the 1898 generation intellectuals, which the camisas azules assimilated in great measure, the decline of the country was attributed mainly to the loss of youth’s vital impulse and the lack of a genuine spirit of association; namely, to

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80 J.A. Primo de Rivera, Nos duele España, in José Antonio y la Revolución nacional, edited by Agustín del Río Cisneros, Madrid, Ediciones del Movimiento, 1971, p. 51. The expression ‘Me duele España’ was used for the first time by Unamuno in November 1923, and is contained in a letter that the writer sent to a Spanish professor living in Buenos Aires. The text of the letter was transcribed in a fragmentary way in the Argentinian periodical Nosotros in the following December. See Un grito en el corazón: Hermosas palabras de un hombre libre, in Nosotros, no. 175, December 1923, p. 521.
the disappearance of those qualities that, in previous centuries, motivated Spaniards to proudly identify themselves as a distinct group, and that made Spain great. As Unamuno wrote, ‘there is a true Spanish homeland when we freely feel the need to be Spanish, when we are all Spanish because we want to be [...] Wanting to be something is not resigning yourself to be something.” In other words, the impasse in which the country found itself could be overcome in only one way: by regaining the pure Spanish essence - castaza - of Unamuno’s intrahistoria. This required searching for the ‘eternal tradition in the present’, that is, looking to the past with the hope of finding a compass of orientation for today and tomorrow.

Modernist intellectuals, as mentioned above, dreamed of a Spain that activated a process of renewal and purification of society; had strong mystical and spiritual characteristics; and was both populist and essentialist, as well as Castilianist. This was the model of nation that inspired the blue shirts when they began to dream of the new Spain: a clearly Fascist Spain.

As Saz argues, establishing this ideal connection did not mean, of course, that some form of proto-Fascism could be found in men of the 1898 generation. In fact, although they adopted a critical approach to the liberal culture in which they had grown up and developed, they always remained bound to it. These intellectuals, in short, were never exponents of a radically authoritarian and breakthrough nationalism; this was then the Falangist position. Nevertheless, their impact, and especially that of Unamuno, was very relevant to the doctrine of

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81 M. de Unamuno, *En torno al casticismo*, pp. 155 e 158.
82 Ibidem, p. 64. [Author’s translation: ‘There is a real Spanish homeland when we feel the necessity to be Spaniards, when we are Spaniards because we want to be Spaniards [...] Wanting to be something is not the same as just resigning oneself to being something.’]
83 Ibidem, pp. 35-57. The quote is at p. 55.
Spanish Fascism, which found in the modernist homeland the ideological foundations on which to build its own national project\(^{84}\).

If 1898 represented a sort of earthquake that hit the Fatherland, the socio-economic and political turmoil caused by the Great War touched neutral Spain also and conferred to the issue of the nation - for which solutions always further from the precepts of liberal-democracy started to be outlined - a centrality that it never had before.

At this stage, the most eminent exponent of a more intransigent nationalism, with a clear Barresian inspiration, was the Spanish philosopher and writer José Ortega y Gasset, whose ‘prophetic voice’ became in time so dear to the Falange\(^{85}\). Strongly marked by the decadentist thought of the end of the century, he appropriated the pessimism of Nietzschean matrix that characterized the previous generation and brought it to the highest levels\(^{86}\). ‘Spain [was] destroying itself’, he wrote\(^{87}\). Evoking the image of the defeat, Ortega expressed all his disappointment with a society in which the anarchist and undisciplined masses were overwhelmed by disintegrating impulses. At the same time, he could not hold back his anger with a

\(^{84}\) I. Saz Campos, *España contra España. Los nacionalismos franquistas*, pp. 77-78.
\(^{86}\) I. Saz Campos, *Paradojas de la historia, paradojas de la historiografía. Las peripecias del fascismo español*, p. 159.
Spain that was not able to be a nation and to impose itself as a community because it did not have a high purpose to pursue\(^88\).

Starting from a Castilianist and essentialist position, Ortega - like the *novenatyochistas* - hoped for the regeneration of Spain through a rehabilitation and then a strong relaunch of the national ideal. The nation that the philosopher had in mind, with clear mystical features, represented a *‘quid divinum’* that realized itself in a ‘suggestive project of a life in common’\(^89\). With this expression, the Madrid intellectual indicated a collective mission that had to be carried out both within and outside Spanish territorial boundaries; an historic feat that acted as glue for the community and countered the threat of separatism, which was dividing the country into a ‘series of watertight compartments’\(^90\).

Ortega wrote:

> Repudiemos toda interpretación estática de la convivencia nacional y sepamos entenderla dinámicamente. No viven juntas las gentes sin más ni más y porque sí; esa cohesión *a priori* sólo existe en la familia. Los grupos que integran un Estado viven juntos para algo: son una comunidad de propósitos, de anhelos, de grandes utilidades. No conviven *por estar* juntos, sino *para hacer* juntos algo. [...] No es el ayer, el pretérito, el haber tradicional, lo decisivo para que una nación exista. [...] Las naciones se forman y viven de tener un programa para mañana\(^91\).

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\(^90\) *Ibidem*, p. 65.

\(^91\) *Ibidem*, pp. 33-34. [Author’s translation: ‘We have to repudiate the static interpretation of national coexistence and understand it dynamically. People do not live together without a reason; that type of cohesion *a priori* exists only in the family. Groups that integrate the State live together for something: they are a community of purpose, of desires, of great profit. They do not live together just to stay together, but to do something together. [...] It is not yesterday, the past, the traditional, the decisive thing for a nation to exist. [...] Nations are formed and live because they have a programme for tomorrow.’]
In order to realize the project of nationalization of the Spanish people and institutions, Ortega did not hesitate to take positions that were certainly unorthodox from a liberal-culture point of view. Firstly, he did so by legitimizing the use of the ‘force of arms’, that he saw as ‘the great historical surgery’ and an indispensable element of that ‘divine inspiration that […] the creative and imperial peoples possess’; secondly, by revealing a certain contempt for the masses, that he considered anarchist and rebellious by nature. In his view, these latter could be saved only in an authentic national setup and only if guided by an exemplary and select minority leading the rebirth of the nation. Indeed, it was precisely the people’s docility and the ‘absence of the best ones’ to which the philosopher attributed the ‘pathology’ of the homeland.

Ortega’s thought, as well as that of the 1898 intellectuals, did not contain intrinsically Fascist elements, although it was more openly critical of liberal theory than that of the previous generation. With this said, the Madrid writer’s ideas proved to be in time adaptable to a more authoritarian interpretation. Between the late 1920s and the early 1930s, in fact, they were of great interest to some intellectuals who had begun to be enamoured of Fascism. The first among them was Ernesto Giménez Caballero. A young man belonging to the literary avant-garde and an admirer of Mussolini’s Italy - which he got to see on a 1928 trip - he is considered the prophet of Spanish Fascism. As Ortega’s pupil, he developed his master’s thought in a more anti-liberal way, arriving at a non-conformist, vitalist, audacious and

92 Ibidem, pp. 36, 34, 38.
94 I. Saz Campos, España contra España. Los nacionalismos franquistas, pp. 105-118.
imperialist nationalism that defended the Catholic tradition (insofar as it represented the Latin and imperial tradition of Rome, culminating in Fascism)\textsuperscript{95}.

He influenced some Jonsist and Falangist theorists, even before their fusion in February 1934 in Fe de las Jons, orienting in Fascist sense the thought of the philosopher of Madrid, which they had gleaned\textsuperscript{96}. Therefore, for example, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, boasting a direct line of descent from the Orteguian ‘illustrious soul’, wrote in 1935: ‘A generation that almost aroused Spanish anxiety under the sign of Ortega y Gasset has imposed upon itself, also tragically, the mission of vertebrate Spain’\textsuperscript{97}. Imbibing the ideas of the philosopher of Madrid, the Falange attributed a central role to the retrieval of the national ideal\textsuperscript{98}. The founder of the Fe became a

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96 Ernesto Giménez Caballero collaborated on the creation of Ramiro Ledesma Ramos’s magazine La Conquista del Estado in March 1931; he joined Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista; he participated in the publication of the periodical Il Fascio (whose unique issue was sequestered by the Government in March 1933); and he supported the fusion of the Jons with José Antonio Primo de Rivera’s Falange. Because of the disappointment at the failed attempts of Fe de las Jons to mobilize the masses and the bad relations with the leader José Antonio, Giménez Caballero left the party in January 1935. After the victory of the Popular Front, he approached the Falange again to get then re-marginalized once more. He was among the supporters of the unification of Fe de las Jons with the traditionalists in April 1937, under Franco’s total control. In G. Alvarez Chillida, Ernesto Giménez Caballero: unidad nacional y política de masas en un intelectual fascista, pp. 278-280. Cf. also I. Saz Campos, España contra España. Los nacionalismos franquistas, pp. 98-99; L. Delgado Gomez-Escalonilla, Imperio de papel. Acción cultural y política exterior durante el primer franquismo, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1992, p.170.
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97 Homenaje y reproche a Don José Ortega y Gasset, reproduced in J.A. Primo de Rivera, Escritos y discursos. Obras Completas (1922-1936), p. 831.
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98 Only apparently it may seem contradictory that José Antonio did not want to proclaim himself a nationalist and refused to attribute this connotation to his party. ‘We are not nationalists’, he declared in November 1935 during the speech at the Cinema Madrid in the capital; ‘we are Spaniards, that is one of the few serious things that we can be in the world’. More than an effective denial of nationalism tout court, this position was due to the aversion of two specific types of nationalism: on one hand, Romantic nationalism of Herderian origin, to which the founders of the
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speaker for what he liked to call a ‘misional nationalism’, claiming in the famous expression ‘unidad de destino en la universal’ (‘unity of destiny in the universal’) the frankly genuine character of the Spanish nation.\textsuperscript{99}

Retrieving clearly the Orteguian notion of a ‘suggestive project of a life in common’, José Antonio did not introduce a new element in the ideology of the blue shirts, but undoubtedly gave it a centrality it never had until then.\textsuperscript{100} Already included in the initial plan of the \textit{Falange Española} of December 1933, it became the second of the twenty-six programme points of Fe de las Jons, published in November of the following year.\textsuperscript{101} With the expression ‘unidad de destino en lo universal’, the Falangists traced the nation back to a harmony of purpose, a ‘historical permanence’, a high feat that would unite all Spaniards in future as it had done in the past.\textsuperscript{102} Rejecting, as the Italian Fascists did, the romantic concept of the nation that


\textsuperscript{100} J. Ortega y Gasset, \textit{España invertebrada}, pp. 31, 33.


flattened its mystical connotations on mere physical factors, the Falangist leader asserted:

Un pueblo no es nación por ninguna suerte de justificaciones físicas, colores o sabores locales, sino por ser otro en lo universal; es decir, por tener un destino que no es el de las otras naciones. Así, no todo pueblo ni todo agregado de pueblos es una nación, sino sólo aquellos que cumplen un destino histórico diferenciado en lo universal.\(^{103}\)

By adopting Ortega y Gasset’s historical reconstruction of the decomposition of the Spanish nation, the blue shirts accepted the call of the Madrid philosopher, who urged making Spain great again and bringing the national ideal - trampled for too long - back on top. With the outbreak of the civil conflict, the abstract projects and ideological constructions that till then did not have any concrete implementation found fertile soil to take root in, and a great opportunity for realization. Similar to what happened for the black shirts in Italy with the Great War, the Falangists saw in the fratricidal conflict that took place in 1936-1939 the cathartic event that, after centuries of

\(^{103}\) Ensayo sobre el nacionalismo, reproduced in J.A. Primo de Rivera, Escritos y discursos. Obras Completas (1922-1936), p. 124. Cf. also ¿Euskadi libre?, in F.E., no. 1, December 7, 1933; Discurso de proclamación de Falange Española de las J.O.N.S. pronunciado en el Teatro Calderón de Valladolid el día 4 de marzo de 1934; Discurso pronunciado en el frontón Betis de Sevilla el día 22 de diciembre de 1935, in Arriba, no. 25, December 26, 1935. The three texts are reproduced in J.A. Primo de Rivera, Escritos y discursos. Obras Completas (1922-1936), respectively at pp. 229-230, 327-333, 864-867. About this topic see I. Saz Campos, Las Españas del franquismo: ascenso y declive del discurso de nación, in Discursos de España en el siglo XX, edited by C. Forcadell, I. Saz Campos, P. Salomón, Publicacions Universitat de Valencia, 2009, pp. 153-154. On the Falangist rejection of the naturalistic interpretation of the nation, see J.A. Primo de Rivera, Revolución nacional, Ediciones prensa del Movimiento, 1949, p. 122; R. Fernández Cuesta, El concepto falangista del Estado, p. 34. [Author’s translation: ‘A people is not a nation by any sort of physical justification, local colours or flavours, but because it has a destiny that is not that of other nations. Thus, not every people or aggregate of peoples is a nation, but only that who fulfil a historical destiny differentiated in the universal.’]
indolence, released the vital energies of true Spain, thanks to its purifying violence. This latter, in fact, as Ortega argued, was not a ‘brute force, but a spiritual force’, playing an important ‘auxiliary’ role ‘in the great processes of national incorporation’\(^\text{104}\).

Based on the reconstruction up to here, it can be asserted that the concept of nation proposed by the Pnf and the Falange was not an extemporaneous invention of ideologues close to Mussolini and José Antonio Primo de Rivera. On the contrary, it was a complex Fascist re-elaboration of the various nationalisms that had begun to sprout in the previous century. Inspired by it, the black shirts and the blue shirts began to shape the idea of the homeland, adding to it a pragmatic, radically revolutionary and strictly anti-liberal charge that lacked nationalist thought until then\(^\text{105}\).

However, it must be emphasized, this happened in the two countries at different times. In Italy, a first Fascist response to the problem of constructing the nation came as early as after the Great War, when it was clear that it was no longer possible to stem the change hitting society. In Spain, the response came during the 1930s when - once Miguel Primo de Rivera’s authoritarian experience ended and the republican phase began - all the political and social ferment that had been contained during the dictatorship, even if with some difficulty, re-emerged overwhelmingly and with disruptive effects.

Once Fascism and Falangism appeared on the political scene, they celebrated themselves as the legitimate heirs of the purest national tradition: a tradition that, in the Italian case, was relaunched and politically renovated by the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento, while in Spain it was brought to light and reinvigorated under the symbol of the yoke and arrows. The nation of the Pnf and the nation of the

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\(^{104}\) J. Ortega y Gasset, España invertebrada, pp. 36, 38.

\(^{105}\) Ibidem, p. 99.
Falange would be born out of an extraordinary operation of palingenesis and civic education of the citizens, which would ultimately lead to the ‘realization of the people in the State’ as Costamagna advocated, and to the birth of that ‘unitary sense of the people’ dreamed by Beneyto Pérez\textsuperscript{106}.

Still, before beginning the phase of positive construction of the nation, it was deemed necessary to clear the ground of all obstacles to its implementation, which ultimately meant undertaking the systematic moral and physical elimination of all those who opposed the Fascist and Falangist projects. Precisely because they believed in a different idea of homeland compared to that of the black shirts and blue shirts, they were denounced as ‘anti-nationals’, namely enemies of the nation who had to be vanquished.

2. The fight against the ‘anti-nation’ as an historical mission

Il grido della vostra esultanza pienamente legittima si fonde con quello che sale da tutte le città della Spagna ormai completamente liberata dall’infamia dei rossi e con quello degli antibolscevichi di tutto il mondo. La splendida vittoria di Barcellona è un altro capitolo della storia della nuova Europa che noi stiamo creando. Dalle magnifiche truppe di Franco e dai nostri intrepidi legionari non è stato battuto soltanto il governo di Negrín: molti altri tra i nostri nemici mordono in questo momento la polvere. La

parola d’ordine dei rossi era questa: “No pasarán”; siamo passati e vi dico che passeremo.\(^{107}\)

This was how Mussolini, on the balcony of the Hall of the Globe in Palazzo Venezia, addressed the crowd gathered in the square on January 26, 1939, to celebrate ‘the entrance of the nationals’ in the Catalan capital under the command of the generalísimo.\(^{108}\) The fall of Barcelona, which was one of the last strongholds of the Popular Front, represented a great victory both for the insurgent military formation and the Duce of Italian Fascism. This was not only because it rewarded the support that the black shirts of the Corpo Truppe Volontarie (Corps of Volunteer Troops or Cvt) had given since the first weeks of the Spanish Civil War. It was also not only a payback for the stinging setback - which had a strong symbolic and propaganda value - suffered in March 1937 in Guadalajara by the militias led by Mario Roatta, who supported the weight of the operation to a great extent.\(^{109}\) Above all, it was the triumph of the true and only Spanish nation, the fascistized nation of Francisco Franco, against the anti-nation, fed by Socialism, of the liberal-republican governments.

\(^{107}\) Siamo passati e vi dico che passeremo, in Il Popolo d’Italia, no. 27, January 27, 1939, reproduced in Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, vol. XXIX, pp. 228-229. [Author’s translation: ‘The shout of your fully legitimate exultation fuses together with the one rising from all the cities of Spain, that now are completely liberated by the infantry of the reds, and with the shout of the anti-Bolsheviks from all over the world. The wonderful victory of Barcelona is another chapter in the history of the new Europe we are creating. Franco’s magnificent troops and our intrepid legionnaires did not defeat only Negrín’s government; many others among our enemies at this moment are biting the dust. The watchword of the reds was this: “No pasarán”; we passed, and I tell you we will pass.’]

\(^{108}\) Ibidem.

Mussolini’s speech was genuinely paradigmatic because it highlighted an important element in the ideologies of both the Pnf and the Falange: the fierce struggle against the ‘anti-national enemy’ until its annihilation. This was a political constant in the two Fascisms, since it referred to a common historical mission.

In Italy, since the years preceding the March on Rome, the movimento Sansepolcrista had built its political fortunes on presenting itself as the bulwark against widespread Bolshevism. As Roberto Vivarelli pointed out, Mussolini succeeded because the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento and then the Pnf appeared to many as defenders of the national State, whose values were denied by Socialist maximalism, which drew inspiration from Soviet Russia as its own elective homeland\(^{110}\). The campaign against the anti-national enemies was from the beginning a merciless battle, whose intensity changed over time, in inverse proportion to growing Italian support for Fascism. At the point of the regime’s maximum consolidation, when it seemed that all opposition had been eliminated, the emphasis on the internal opponents diminished. Then it became stronger in particularly unfavourable, even if not really dramatic circumstances, as it happened after the collapse of the regime and during the tragic two-year period 1943-1945\(^{111}\).

In Spain, the Falangist struggle against anti-national enemies started with the foundation of the party in 1933, even if it had its


\(^{111}\) On the clash between the ‘two Italys’ during the 1943-1945 biennium that, as clarified preliminarily, constitutes a chapter that is outside the scope of this research, see E. Galli della Loggia, La morte della patria, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2008, pp. 32-40; L. Ganapini, La repubblica delle camicie nere, Milano, Garzanti, 2002, pp. 7-128; E. Gentile, La Grande Italia. Il mito della nazione nel XX secolo, pp. 231-268.
forerunner in the Jons of Ramiro Ledesma Ramos and Onésimo Redondo Ortega. However, it was the Civil War - fought by the ‘crusaders’ of the nationalist troops in the name and for the salvation of the homeland - that represented ‘the greatest nationalizing and denationalizing episode of the Spaniards’\textsuperscript{112}. At that moment, the Spanish nation’s combat against ‘anti-Spain’ became a battle of not only the Falange - which meanwhile had become an armed militia and a mass party in the territories controlled by the latter - but also of the whole Francoist front\textsuperscript{113}. In Ismael Saz’s opinion, the one fought in the 1936-1939 triennium was ‘the most total war among all the civil wars of contemporary Spain’\textsuperscript{114}. But, as the Valencian historian has argued, if ‘the war was total, even more was the victory’, since it allowed the nationalists to appear as the ‘incarnation of the authentic Spain’ and to marginalize the defeated by treating them as the sworn enemies of the homeland\textsuperscript{115}.

The persecutory fury against the anti-nation decreased partially after the victory of the generalísimo in 1939, and even more with the


\textsuperscript{113} The Civil War attributed political legitimacy to the Falange and conferred to its project of nationalization of the Spaniards the recognition and the popular approval that had so far been lacking. On the eve of the Alzamiento, in fact, the party had a rather small base of consensus. The first reason was its low political weight, considering that in the elections of February 1936 it had just received 0.4% of votes. The second reason was the isolation in which it had been relegated: it was declared illegal in following March because of the waves of violence triggered in the country by its adepts. The third reason was the internal crisis that struck it in the fall of 1936 when, once many of its leaders were killed or imprisoned, the party lacked of a solid leadership. The electoral data is in I. Saz Campos, Fascismo y franquismo, p. 71.

\textsuperscript{114} I. Saz Campos, España contra España. Los nacionalismos franquistas, p. 158.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibidem, p. 159.
diminished influence of the *camisas azules* in the government, as a consequence of the historical events, previously mentioned, which took place between the spring of 1941 and the summer of 1942. These events sanctioned the failure of the ‘appropriation of Spain and the homeland’ by the party which, after merging with the traditionalists in April 1937, had changed its name to *Fet de las Jons*\textsuperscript{116}. The reconfirmation of the Christian roots of the regime and ‘the resulting total identification of the homeland and Catholicism’ ratified the completion of the project to create a Spanish Fascist State on the Italian model, as well as the dominance of the other main political culture in Francoism - the National Catholic one - and ‘a considerable reduction of the patriotic lexicon’\textsuperscript{117}.

A note of caution is needed here, however: the fact that both the *Pnf* and the *Falange* at the end failed to complete their own plans of ‘integral fascistization’ of the nation does not diminish the central role that the war against internal enemies played in the ideology of the two parties; a war that, both in Italy and Spain, hit dramatically violent peaks\textsuperscript{118}.

By exploiting its legitimate and cohesive potential, black shirts and blue shirts did everything to identify themselves with the nation, and tried to interpret the idea of the homeland fascistically until the end. So the abbrochment of the nation by the *Pnf* corresponded to a similar process in the ideological universe of the *Falange*\textsuperscript{119}. In both cases, the consequence was inevitably the same: discrimination

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{117} I. Saz Campos, *Visiones de patria entra le dictadura y la democracia*, p. 272.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibidem, pp. 156-160.
\end{flushright}
against those who - while being Italian and Spanish citizens in all respects - held a different view of what their country was, its founding values, and its historical mission. In fact, thinking of the nation in terms other than those proposed by Fascist and Falangist ideologues represented a betrayal resulting in the exclusion of the reprobates from the national community.\(^{120}\)

Certainly, one could argue that the battle against internal enemies was not an exclusive ideological component of Fascism, since it was also present in the political culture of other movements, parties and regimes of opposite political nature. Yet, in the two cases analyzed here, the ideological war between nation and anti-nation - in which ‘two Italys’ and ‘two Spains’ fought each other within the boundaries of the State - was dramatized to an extreme, with an extraordinary centrality.

The clash, as ideologically configured by the Pnf and the Falange, was a struggle of liberation from opponents who, although members of the same State group, were perceived as foreigners at home. Deprived of their status as citizens and sometimes treated as genuine pariahs, those considered anti-nationals were physically and morally excluded from the community.\(^{121}\) As things stood, it was not surprising that Socialists were regarded as enemies of the nation par excellence, since they recognised themselves as members of a ‘class’, and championed the cause of proletarian internationalism. On closer scrutiny, however, not only were ‘Bolsheviks’ branded invalidators of the homeland, but so were supporters of a liberal ideology that - even if at different times and in different ways - was dismissed as anti-national.


For both the black shirts and the blue shirts, the basic anti-national character of liberalism was determined by the fact that it legitimized the exclusive domain of the bourgeoisie. In other words, they believed that the liberal State, formally representative, was actually a ‘mono-class’ State, and ignored the social demands of the subordinate classes. Such a State was also deemed responsible for the foundation of an articulated network of corruption based on a solid crony structure, clearly indicating that the liberal political class was incapable of making the government work in an authentic democratic way.

The most glaring symbol of this system, judged both corrupt and corrupting, was the institution of Parliament. Considered the ‘epidemic illness’ of the Italian political organism by Pnf ideologues, it was the exclusive instrument of the Giolittian ‘bourgeois oligarchy’, which promised with ‘demagogic perfidy’ to fight for the upliftment of the people, but instead governed essentially for the ‘favours of the clienteles’.

For their part, the Falangists accused the republican government led by Azaña, seen as heir to the tradition of Spanish caciquismo, of various forms of nastiness. The vortex of radicalization in which the country had fallen was attributed to its incompetence; a radicalization produced by the demand for more social justice, coming mainly from

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the peasant population, to which the Republic was unable to give an adequate response\textsuperscript{125}.

In both Italy and Spain, for the two Fascisms, the liberal State was a synonym for \textit{division}, certainly not \textit{nation}. The roots of the disintegration lay in individualistic theory, that was the expression of the rationalist culture of the late 19th Century, of which liberal-democracy was in many ways a manifestation. Man as the centre of life was considered by the magazine \textit{Gerarchia} as ‘the basic error of materialistic philosophical thought’ and the main character in the disunity of modern civilization\textsuperscript{126}. His ‘hyperbolic affirmation’ had transformed the State into a mere instrument for the protection of civil rights and negative freedoms of individuals; it had deprived citizens of a superior leadership; and, even worse, it had obfuscated the supreme reality of the nation\textsuperscript{127}.

In the context of such an interpretation, Italian Fascists denounced the dramatic reality constituted by the antithesis between the ‘false Italy’ of the executive elite and the ‘real Italy’ of the people gathered in the squares. In the opinion of political figures like Enrico Corradini, the care of national interests had given way to the ambition of men. So politics had become a ‘curriculum of parliamentary professionalism’ and an exaltation of the ‘superstition of the majority’\textsuperscript{128}.

Similarly, Spanish Fascists condemned the republican government that, in their eyes, had only been concerned with producing laws and speculating abstractedly on the individual, with the result that the

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{125} G. Ranzato, \textit{L'eclissi della democrazia. La guerra civile spagnola e le sue origini 1931-1939}, pp 151-169.
\textsuperscript{126} G. Selvi, \textit{Le basi naturali della dottrina fascista}, in \textit{Gerarchia}, no. 4, April 1926, p. 235.
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Ibidem}, p. 236.
\end{footnotes}
‘national genius’ had become more than anything else an ‘issue of numbers’\textsuperscript{129}. The liberal State, devoid of any ideal impulse, was not ‘the resolute executor of patriotic destinies’ but ‘the spectator of electoral fights’\textsuperscript{130}. As José Antonio Primo de Rivera stated, in the years of the Republic there was:

[la] farsa de las papeletas entradas en una urna de cristal [que] tenía la virtud de decirnos en cada instante si Dios existía o no existía, si la verdad era la verdad o no era la verdad, si la patria debía permanecer o si era mejor que, en un momento, se suicidase\textsuperscript{131}.

In the interpretation of some, it seemed that, in such a ‘turbulent and unpleasant life’, there was a deep laceration of the social connective tissue and the bond of brotherhood between citizens without equal in the history of the country\textsuperscript{132}. What emerged in the ideological reconstruction of the Falange intellectuals was the drama of a ‘sectarian and rancorous’ politics, inaugurated on April 14, 1931 and founded on a constitution that gave a ‘legal semblance to the most anti-national State that Spain ever had’\textsuperscript{133}.

In the thought of the PnF and Falange ideologues, the clear separation between ‘legal country’ and ‘real country’ ended up facilitating the appearance of an intrinsically anti-national political

\textsuperscript{129} R. Ledesma Ramos, Ideas sobre el Estado, in Acción Española, no. 24, March 1, 1933, pp. 582-584.

\textsuperscript{130} Discorso de fundación de Falange Española pronunciado en el Teatro de la Comedia de Madrid el día 29 de octubre de 1933, in J.A. Primo de Rivera, Escritos y discursos. Obras completas (1922-1936), p. 189.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibidem. [Author’s translation: ‘The farce of the ballots in a glass urn [that] had the virtue of telling us at any instant if God existed or did not exist, if the truth was the truth or not the truth, if the homeland had to remain or if it was better for it, in a moment, to commit suicide.’]

\textsuperscript{132} Ibidem, p. 18.

actor: maximalist Socialism. The liberal political class had proven to be incapable of integrating the masses into the State and of providing an adequate response to their needs. Inevitably, this incapacity made the Bolshevik danger stronger day by day, and this occurred within both Italian and Spanish territorial boundaries.

From day one, Mussolini and the Fascist leaders dragged Giolitti to the dock since, in their eyes, he represented not only the ‘parecchista’ of the Great War, but was also the one who had sought to include the Socialist Party in the government. As is well known, the pressures from the maximalist wing of the party pushed the leader Filippo Turati to reject the invitation. But this rejection was not enough to mitigate the political hatred that the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento had for the Piedmontese statesman. They did not like the Giolittian opening to the Socialist Party at all, considering it a deplorable choice since it represented another step towards the disintegration of the nation.

In other words, the liberal State was accused of sitting by and watching the Psi advance. The overwhelming victory of the latter in the 1919 elections and the events of the ‘red biennium’, interpreted by the Duce as a ‘criminal attempt to caporette Italy’, corroborated that conviction. The climate of tension and violence made it seem like the country was on the brink of civil war and that a spark could start it. Although Bolshevism had never seemed as threatening as in those years, Giolitti merely brought the dispute back to the syndical field, hoping that attempting to resolve the crisis in the mould of parliamentary debate would be enough to return to normality. But the

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134 The verb ‘caporette’ was used by Mussolini to mean the Psi intent to lead Italy to the catastrophe. This neologism comes from ‘Caporetto’, a former Italian village, now part of the Slovenian territory, where the Italian army was dramatically defeated by Austro-German forces in 1917. Caporetismo, in Il Popolo d’Italia, no. 194, July 17, 1919, reproduced in Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, vol. XIII, p. 241.
fact is that internal divisions in the Psi and the emergence of anti-Socialist blocs in the fall 1920 administrative elections created optimum conditions for a relaunch of Fascist action. Taking advantage of the favourable situation, the leaders of the provincial *squadrismo* set off a large-scale offensive, which even the signing of the pact of pacification on August 2, 1921 could not stop.

In Spain, the results of the April 1931 elections - determining the victory of the republican-Socialist coalition - raised concerns that, along with the Republic, the Bolshevik revolution was also coming. While the Socialists in Italy always adopted clear revolutionary positions, which prevented any agreement with bourgeois-democratic forces for fears that a proletarian dictatorship might arise, things worked differently in Spain. Liberals and Socialists there found common ground in the struggle against the oligarchy of old Spain, and were united in support of the republican cause.

After Miguel Primo de Rivera’s authoritarian experience and once the monarchical institution was set aside - since it was too compromised with the dictatorship to be credible in the new liberal-democratic regime - the Alcalá Zamora provisional government and the following Azaña governments seemed to be, in the eyes of the Spanish Fascists, the anteroom of hell. The struggle, as Onésimo Redondo Ortega wrote, was ‘fatally of reciprocal elimination; Spain or the anti-Spain’.

The reformist biennium of 1931-1933 strongly affected the political footprint of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party or Psoe), which then held the majority of seats in Parliament and controlled three key ministries. Socialist

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leader Fernando de los Ríos first headed the Justice Ministry, then Public Education, and finally Beaux Arts. The ‘Spanish Lenin’, party president Francisco Largo Caballero, served as Minister of Labour and Public Welfare. Indalecio Prieto was Minister of Industry until December 1931, and then moved to the Ministry of Public Works until September 1933.

Once the term of the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Right-wing Groups or Ceda) government during the 1933-1935 ‘bienio estupido’ ended, the victory in February 1936 of the Popular Front - including Psoe, the Partido Comunista Español (Spanish Communist Party or Pce), the republican Leftists, and the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (Workers’ Party of Marxist Unification or Poum) - gave new impetus to Falangist fears, which were later reflected in the formation led by Franco.\(^\text{137}\)

The outbreak of the Civil War strongly radicalised the blue shirts’ position. From July 18, all the labour and republican parties, regardless of the differences between them, were vilified as ‘servants of Russian imperialism and lackeys of Stalin’s designs’\(^\text{138}\). Accused of selling out Spain to Bolshevik tyranny, they were deemed guilty of breaking any emotional and ideal bond with the Spanish people.\(^\text{139}\)

The formation of Socialist governments - the first headed by Caballero in September 1936, and the second led by Negrín in May 1937 - represented to Falangist militiamen the materialization of Bolshevik anti-Spain. At the same time, the fear of massive Soviet


\(^{138}\) X.M. Núñez Seixas, ¡Fuera el invasor! Nacionalismos y movilización bélica durante la guerra civil española, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2006, p. 251.

\(^{139}\) V. Gay, Estampas rojas y caballeros blancos, Burgos, Hijos de Santiago Rodríguez, 1937, p. 6, in X.M. Núñez Seixas, ¡Fuera el invasor! Nacionalismos y movilización bélica durante la guerra civil española, p. 251.
interference in the country was more than founded, both from a military and, above all, political point of view. In fact, at that time, Moscow not only provided arms and military advisers to the republicans but also held Spanish gold reserves, given by the government as a ‘pledge’ in exchange for the international protection of the Soviet Union. For that reason, the blue shirts appeared more determined than ever to fight the inner enemies of the homeland. After all, as Mussolini wrote, ‘the human beast is always the same, whether it is [...] a Russian ghepeù or a Spanish militiaman’.

Italian and Spanish Fascists hated Socialism for many reasons, a main one being the fact that it pursued goals detrimental to the integrity of the nation. Fomenting the most extreme class antagonism and instigating the working class to fight, Socialism completely ignored the national dimension, which was sacrificed on the altar of internationalism. This was the supreme ideal to which were dedicated all the energies, in order to create a ‘universal proletariat’ in which States and social distinctions would no longer exist.

By placing above all the principle of international solidarity of the proletariat, Bolshevism in its several national variants subordinated loyalty to one’s country to the interest of the revolution. The nation was downgraded to a territorial context: nothing more than the contingent and marginal framework of the battle of the working class to attain power and affirm its supremacy. Therefore, the internationalist doctrine nipped in the bud any possibility of synthesis.

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140 G. Ranzato, _L’eclissi della democrazia. La guerra civile spagnola e le sue origini 1931-1939_, p. 455.
141 Trecentoventi, in _Il Popolo d’Italia_, no. 161, June 11, 1937, reproduced in _Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini_, vol. XXVIII, p. 194.
between the nation and Socialism, confirming the anti-systemic nature of the latter in the eyes of both Pnf and Falange ideologues.\textsuperscript{142}

In Italy, the struggle of the \textit{Fasci Italiani di Combattimento} against Socialist strongholds started from the beginning of the movement, but reached a pivotal point when the black shirts met the agrarians\textsuperscript{143}. This encounter allowed Fascism to break into the political scene of the country and occupy its centre in a stable manner. As is well illustrated in Angelo Tasca’s study, the agrarians found common cause with Fascism, pouring into it all the hatred and rage they had harboured since ‘their “vital space” [was] reduced by the development of the cooperatives and municipal Socialism’\textsuperscript{144}. ‘The agrarians “discover[ed]” Fascism’ in the administrative elections of October-November 1920, in which the Socialists - even if they did not repeat their incredible success in the previous year’s political elections - won the majority of seats in many municipalities and provincial councils\textsuperscript{145}.

In Emilia, the Psi victory was overwhelming, considering that it triumphed in 223 municipalities out of 280. And that was where an alliance between the agrarians and the Fascists began to take shape. The former saw their scope for action in the countryside diminishing day by day, while the latter looked at the spread of the institutions of Socialism as a materialization of Bolshevism. So they organized expeditions to strike at these institutions, targeting ‘red’

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{142} E. Gentile, \textit{La Grande Italia. Il mito della nazione nel XX secolo}, pp. 143-144.
\textsuperscript{143} E. Galli della Loggia, \textit{Tre giorni nella storia d’Italia}, pp. 33-42.
\textsuperscript{144} A. Tasca, \textit{Nascita e avvento del fascismo}, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1995, pp. 189-228. The quote is at p. 194.
\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Ibidem}, p. 190. With regard to the autumn 1920 administrative elections, it is important to remember that the anti-Socialist bloc held 56\% of the votes on national basis, obtaining 4655 municipalities on 8346 and 33 provincial councils on 69. Socialists conquered the majority in 2022 municipalities and in 26 provincial councils. The electoral data are reproduced in E. Gentile, \textit{E fu subito regime. Il fascismo e la marcia su Roma}, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2012, pp. 16-17.
\end{footnotesize}
municipalities, almost like they were a ‘sort of Italian version of the Soviets’\textsuperscript{146}. Under these circumstances, it was not possible to imagine any involvement of the Psi in government, as this would have meant leaving the field open to the ‘destroying struggle between the classes, whose consortium is the foundation of national society’\textsuperscript{147}.

The Fascists countered ‘irresponsible Bolshevik action’ - which served the alien and was cause of ‘despondency’ - with their reorganizing and reconstructive force that, they claimed, they provided to serve the national community\textsuperscript{148}. In summary, in the Fascist ideologues’ interpretation of the historical events of the country, the Socialists - by identifying themselves as part of the universalistic horizon of proletarian internationalism - contributed to destroying the ideal of the nation. It was the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento and then the Pnf - which from the beginning had characterized themselves in terms of ‘adherence [...] to the national State and to its values’ rather than in terms of social class - who raised the flag of the Fatherland again and established in its name a radical new political order\textsuperscript{149}.

Similarly, the Spanish Socialists were accused of spreading the ‘germs’ of the dissolution of the country, prostrating themselves at the feet of the Soviet enemy. They were deemed guilty of not only conspiring against the nation and promoting the fratricidal struggle between the classes, but also of undermining its territorial and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{146} L. Di Nucci, \textit{Nel cantiere dello Stato fascista}, pp. 23-26. The quote is at p. 24. Cf. also Id., \textit{Lo Stato fascista e gli italiani ’antinazionali’}, pp. 129-145.
\item \textsuperscript{147} E. Corradini, \textit{Il fascismo e la riforma costituzionale}, in \textit{Gerarchia}, no. 7, July 1923, p. 1065.
\item \textsuperscript{148} A. Marpicati, \textit{Dall’antipartito al Partito Nazionale Fascista}, in \textit{Gerarchia}, no. 10, October 1934, p. 797. About this topic, see L. Di Nucci, \textit{Lo Stato fascista e gli italiani ’antinazionali’}, p. 131.
\item \textsuperscript{149} B. Crespi, \textit{Ordine nuovo}, in \textit{Critica fascista}, no. 9, May 1, 1929, pp. 178-180. The quote is in R. Vivarelli, \textit{Storia delle origini del fascismo. L’Italia dalla grande guerra alla marcia su Roma}, p. 31.
\end{itemize}
spiritual unity. In fact, the Psoe, in addition to fighting for the ideal of
the proletarian revolution, supported two other causes considered
highly anti-national: the cause of regionalisms and the cause of the
secular State. On the one hand, it showed its benevolence and support
for those who served, in the eyes of the Falangists, the ‘particularist
ambitions of politicians and regional traffickers who [complicated] the
problem of autonomies with blasphemous breaths of separatism’150.
And on the other hand, it led its own atheist struggle against the
Catholic Church, that was ‘one of the historical essences of the
españolidad’. A struggle fought with the ultimate goal of eliminating
the Catholic presence from society, often resorting to persecutory and
vindictive methods151.

The text of the Constitution of the Republic approved on
December 9, 1931, according to the opinion of its detractors, put all
this down on paper. Hastily dismissed as the ‘effort of a minority’
who came to power riding a revolutionary wave to ‘build an anti-
Spanish State’, the Constitution was considered a sort of ideological
manifestation of anti-national ideals, concretely translated into articles
that defined the organization of State powers152. In fact, the
Constitution attributed wide administrative autonomy to regions that
had applied for it, recognizing the Statutes of self-government, as
happened in Catalonia in 1932. Moreover, it also established a wide
separation between the State and the Church; guaranteed freedom of

150 O. Redondo Ortega, Señales del estado antinacional, December 19, 1932, in
El estado nacional, p. 72.
151 X.M. Núñez Seixas, ¡Fuera el invasor! Nacionalismos y movilización bélica
durante la guerra civil española, p. 247. On religious persecution during the Second
Spanish republic, consult the following studies: V. CárceOrti, La persecución
religiosa en España durante la Segunda Republica (1931-1939), Madrid, Ediciones
Rialp, 1990; A. Montero Moreno, Historia de la persecución religiosa en España,
1936-1939, Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1999; G. Redondo, Historia
152 P. Sainz Rodríguez, La tradición nacional y el Estado futuro, in Acción
Española, no. 56-57, July 1, 1934, p. 183.
worship; provided for a drastic reduction in ecclesiastical privileges; and sanctioned the dissolution of religious orders that had vowed obedience to an authority other than the State. As if that was not enough, it legitimized civil marriage and divorce, and protected the rights of children born outside marriage\textsuperscript{153}.

The decisively reformist, if not radical, character of the Constitution angered Spanish Fascists, who saw in it an attempt - not even veiled - to sow seeds of discord and expunge the spiritual element from the lives of Spaniards. ‘Tyrannical’ and ‘unstable’, Socialism was accused of being the reason for the ‘perversions, weaknesses and repugnant deficiencies which had profaned the Nation, the unstoppable deterioration of health, and the inadmissible debasement of the most intimate national sentiment’\textsuperscript{154}.

Dragged to the dock, the Psoe was charged with pitting Spaniards against one another by creating a divisive policy that, on the one hand, exploited tools that ‘liberal-parliamentary candour’ offered its subversive propaganda; and, on the other hand, resorted to its revolutionary systems\textsuperscript{155}. In the opinion of the Falangists, the country was in the tight grip of liberalism on one side, and Bolshevism on the other. So they believed they had no choice but to ‘mercilessly wipe out the internal accomplices, purple or red, who have assaulted or projected to assault the founding values, freedoms and spiritual fort’ of the Fatherland in order to ‘serve the nation powered by hidden masters’\textsuperscript{156}.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{155} R. Ledesma Ramos, Ideas sobre el Estado, pp. 582-584; Intervención de J.A. Primo de Rivera en el Parlamento, in Arriba, no. 1, March 21, 1935, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{156} The adjective ‘purple’ indicates those who supported the republican cause. It refers to the purple color of one of the three horizontal stripes forming the flag of the Second republic of Spain. The quote is in O. Redondo Ortega, Señales del Estado
Significantly, among these ‘hidden masters’, both Italian and Spanish Fascists included Freemasonry, completing the list of anti-national opponents. Associated at different times with the liberal regime and with Socialism, it seemed to share with both of them a potentially disintegrating, subversive and anti-systemic character. According to an historical interpretation, Masonic lodges were accused of moving the levers of world finance. But for the Pnf and the Falange, the worst thing was that they plotted in the shadows to control the vital ganglia of the State. So Freemasonry was considered a serious threat that had to be counteracted with appropriate measures.

The first one was Italian Law no. 2029 of November 26, 1925, better known as the ‘Law on secret societies’. This included the dismissal of all civil servants and military agents of every order and rank of the State, provinces and municipalities or institutes under their protection, belonging to organizations established in the Kingdom or outside it, even partly operating in a clandestine manner or whose members were bound to the secrecy. The reference to ‘that great criminal conspiracy and forge of high treasons that was Freemasonry’ was explicit.

Actually, the lodges in Italy were not a real danger. From the data reported by the Minister of Justice and Religious Affairs at that time,
Alfredo Rocco, it was evident that the number of Freemasons in 1925 did not exceed twenty thousand\textsuperscript{159}. Nonetheless, party theorists were convinced that the power of the Grand Orient was spreading on the peninsula like a disease attacking the healthy body of the nation, enfeebling the spirit of the people, and weakening the authority of the Pnf from the inside. Hence the dangerous character attributed to Freemasonry, which ‘was clinging to the State and, in a thousand ways, was binding it and dominating it’\textsuperscript{160}.

The struggle against secret associations, therefore, constituted a relentless fight to defend the State and the nation. In fact, it was not permissible for a ‘hidden hierarchy’ to attempt to dominate the State hierarchy and get to a point of trying to replace it\textsuperscript{161}. Once the independence of the country from an alien power was ‘won at such a price and at such a price maintained’, it was inconceivable for the nation to find itself again at the centre of political manoeuvres orchestrated by clandestine organizations linked to foreign headquarters, which had nothing to do with the homeland of true Italians\textsuperscript{162}. For this reason, after the definition of the legislative framework justifying the persecution, the members of the lodges were subject to the unquestionable judgment of a Special Court, expressly charged with the evaluation of crimes perpetrated against the State and the regime\textsuperscript{163}.

\textsuperscript{159} Discorso pronunciato dal Ministro Alfredo Rocco alla Camera dei Deputati nella tornata del 16 maggio 1925, in A. Rocco, \textit{La trasformazione dello Stato. Dallo Stato liberale allo Stato fascista}, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{160} A. Rocco, \textit{La trasformazione dello Stato. Dallo Stato liberale allo Stato fascista}, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{161} Relazione sul disegno di legge sulle società segrete, presentata alla Camera dei Deputati dal Presidente del Consiglio dei ministri Benito Mussolini nella seduta del 12 gennaio 1925, in A. Rocco, \textit{La trasformazione dello Stato. Dallo Stato liberale allo Stato fascista}, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{162} Ibidem, pp. 37-38.

\textsuperscript{163} The Special Court was established by Law no. 2008 of November 25, 1926. Article 7 established its composition. Its members were a president, elected among
Analogously, Falange theorists also avowed and strengthened the theory of Masonic conspiracy, exploiting the enormous potential for legitimization/delegitimization that it possessed. This happened from the early stages of Spanish Fascism’s development. The Jonsist Onésimo Redondo Ortega, for example, in January 1933 denounced Freemasonry’s strongly anti-religious, secular and ‘foreign’ character, which was alien to the national historical tradition. In his assessment, the liberal State itself as well as Marxism and the Republic represented ‘export goods recommended by the Masonic lodges and the insurgent Internationals to impose upon the nation some myths and laws that [deformed] it’.\textsuperscript{164}

Two years later, Falange founder José Antonio Primo de Rivera, speaking of the anti-national policy implemented during the ‘terrible biennium’ 1931-1933, highlighted how Spain had become a colony of Freemasonry, and legitimized the use of force against what he called a ‘triumphant sect, seeder of discord, denier of the national community and obedient to foreign orders’.\textsuperscript{165} Advancing from the same premises, Ramiro Ledesma Ramos accused ‘secret and exotic’ Freemasonry of being closely related to liberal-democracy. In accordance with this affiliation, the latter had contributed to worsening the economic crisis


\textsuperscript{165} España estancada, and \textit{La violencia y la justicia. Carta de José Antonio al camarada Julián Pemartín}, Madrid, April 2, 1933, both reproduced in J.A. Primo de Rivera. \textit{Escrítos y discursos. Obras Completas (1922-1936)}, pp. 581, 165.
and undermining the vital interests of the nation, public order, internal security and social peace\textsuperscript{166}.

The intensity with which Spanish Fascists conducted this campaign, even before the \textit{Alzamiento}, gave new impetus and renewed vigour to the anti-Masonic radicalism of Franco and his army during the Civil War years\textsuperscript{167}. This meant a strong Falangist influence underlying the normative measures taken during the conflict and in its aftermath, which were clearly aimed at annihilating the lodges as secret associations and, above all, as enemies of the nation. Hit by censorship along with the Popular Front and trade unions, they were officially banned by the \textit{Ley de Responsabilidades Políticas} of February 9, 1939, which reiterated Freemasonry’s illegal and anti-national character\textsuperscript{168}. The legislation targeted parties and groups that had contributed to creating or aggravating subversion of the order in Spain, and all those who had opposed the nationalists ‘with concrete acts or serious passivity’\textsuperscript{169}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{168} A first measure was already taken with the edict of October 15, 1936, signed by the General Commander of the Canarian Islands, Ángel Dolla Lahoz. With it, the Freemasonry and other secret organizations were declared out of the law and all the activities related to it were labeled as ‘crimes of rebellion’. The text of the edict is published in \textit{Boletín Oficial de la Provincia de Santa Cruz de Tenerife}, no. 125, October 16, 1936. Two years later, a new decree issued on December 21, 1938 imposed the elimination, within a term of two months, of all the Masonic inscriptions, symbols and documents, including those in the churches and cemeteries of the national zone.
\item \textsuperscript{169} In Article no. 4, letter i, there was an exception for those who had abandoned Freemasonry voluntarily before July 18, 1936, and for those who had been expelled from it for having acted against the principles to which it was inspired or against the purposes it pursued. The full text of the \textit{Ley de 9 de febrero de 1939 de...}
A new law, promulgated on March 1, 1940, intensified the persecution. This legislative provision affected secret societies and international forces of a ‘clandestine nature’ - essentially Freemasonry and seditious organizations associated with it - since it was thought that they constituted the galaxy of international Communism. To justify the law, that led to another repressive crackdown, many reasons already adduced several times before were given. The organizations in question were held responsible for all the tragedies that devastated the life of the nation: from the war of independence to the loss of the colonial empire, from the fall of the constitutional monarchy to the ‘terrible atheistic, materialist, anti-militarist and anti-Spanish campaign’ that made Spain a ‘satellite and slave of the criminal Soviet tyranny’ during the 1930s\textsuperscript{170}.

Members of the lodges were considered guilty of providing support, arms and money to republican oppressors and, along with the Communists, were accused of spreading ‘the most atrocious slander against true Spain’\textsuperscript{171}. Like what happened in the Italian Fascist regime, a Special Court was established to judge those suspected of affiliation with Freemasonry. This court also had the discretion to award ‘excusas absolutorias’ (‘absolving justifications’) provided by law for special merits, essentially linked to participation in the nationalist cause\textsuperscript{172}.

\textit{Responsabilidades Políticas} in Boletín Oficial del Estado, no. 44, February 13, 1939, pp. 824-847. The quote is at p. 825.


\textsuperscript{171} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{172} The Special Court was chaired by a trustworthy man of the Chief of State and it was composed by an army general, a hierarch of the Fet de las Jons, and two intellectuals, both unquestionably chosen by Franco. The informations about the Special Court can be found in art. 12 of \textit{Ley de 1 de marzo de 1940 sobre represión}.
Falling within the ambit of the punitive measures’ exclusion clauses, support for the Falange - that was a fundamental component of the nationalist front since the early months of the Civil War - ended up being a parameter to identify a good citizen, and its absence a discriminating factor for assigning the black mark of ‘anti-national Spaniard’. Moreover, although there is no doubt that the regime never granted Falangists an appropriate space of political manoeuvre to implement a ‘genuinely Fascist direction’ in governing the country, it is also true that the reward nature of certain articles in the March 1, 1940 law surely had something to do with the efforts of the blue shirts who, since their origins, had attempted to affiliate Falange with the true homeland173.

So it can be said advisedly that the blue shirts’ ideologists conceptualized the image of the anti-national enemy in a form very similar to what the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento first, and later the Pnf, did. Monopolising the ideal of the Fatherland, Fascism and Falangism identified the nation with themselves. The relevance of this ideological appropriation process lies in the fact that it was not just an abstract construction of some theorists, but was turned into concrete political action. Therefore, by excluding any other way of conceiving membership of the national community, the Pnf and the Falange channelled their energies towards the realization of their most ambitious goal respectively: the effective construction of the Fascist nation in Italy, and the National syndicalist one in Spain.

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3. From theory to fact: implementing the Fascist and Falangist nations

‘It is not a party but a nation, the movement that fights and defeats the enemies of the nation itself’\(^{174}\). These words, written in *Critica fascista*, fit well into the discourse articulated so far. By proclaiming themselves the most authentic representatives of their respective Fatherlands, the black shirts and the blue shirts ceased to be only a part or, more precisely, a party. They were no longer simply the Pnf or the Falange, but the nation who had fought and defeated the anti-nationalists. Once the latter were out of play, a new political season dawned, in which the topic of the nation was not discussed only negatively.

When the Fascists and the Falangists invaded the political scene of their respective countries, the nation they dreamed of had some common features. It was, in fact, anti-decadentist, anti-positivist, anti-materialist, anti-rationalist, anti-liberal, anti-Socialist, and anti-Masonic. However, as José Luis de Arrese - two-time secretary of the Falange since May 1942 - stated: ‘the “anti” are always negative, and the people triumph only when they oppose to the idea that destroys the idea that constructs’\(^{175}\). In fact, in the complex process of the nation’s ideological definition undertaken by the two Fascisms, the purely critical and reactionary phase signified an essential but transient stage. It constituted the step preceding the much more important stage of positively constructing the national identity, interpreted by Pnf and Falange theorists in a totalitarian sense.


After gaining power, Fascism - which, as Renzo De Felice wrote, had been in the biennium 1920-1921 a ‘negative aggregation’ and a result of a ‘sum of infinite negations’ - acquired a more defined identity. Certainly, even though the general characteristics mentioned above were shared, there were different visions of the nation. This was evident, considering the debate that took place within the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* after the signing of the ‘treaty of appeasement’ with the Socialists on August 3, 1921. On that occasion, in a well-known article published in *Il Popolo d’Italia*, Mussolini declared that the covenant served ‘the cause of humanity, the cause of the nation, the cause of Fascism’. Calling to order those who asserted, as Dino Grandi did, that the agreement with the Psi erased the entire ‘ethical and ideal’ heritage of the struggle of the black shirts, the Duce urged them to give up factional interests, stating the movement’s priority unequivocally: ‘Fascism [saw] the nation, and then all the rest’.

Therefore, if Fascism had identified itself with the Fatherland from the beginning, from that moment onwards it gradually claimed its exclusive ownership. As Emilio Gentile argues, the ideal of the ‘homeland of the Italians’ - which, despite all its contradictions, had been the guiding principle of the Risorgimento and the post-unity governments - was replaced by the ideal of the ‘homeland of the

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Fascists’ Only on these latter was the status of authentic Italians conferred. On the contrary, those who did not embrace the Mussolinian belief received different treatment, since they were regarded by Fascism as ‘excommunicated and renegade’.

The speech of January 3, 1925, which ratified the dictatorial turn of Mussolini’s government, officially started such process of denationalization of the anti-Fascists and the ‘afascists’. This was openly outlined in the biennium 1925-1926 with the promulgation of the laws in defence of the nation, which distinguished between national Italians and anti-national Italians, legitimizing the expulsion from the community those who were considered ‘anthropologically incompatible’ with the new Fascist Italy.

The guiding principles of this discriminatory policy were set out in the Discorso dell’Ascensione of May 26, 1927. On that occasion, the Duce addressed, among other things, the issue of exiled Italians, affirming that the policy of the regime towards these individuals was not based on ‘terror’, but simply on ‘rigour’. Fascism did nothing but provide measures of ‘social hygiene’ and ‘national prophylaxis’. Moreover, the Fascist revolution had to defend itself, Mussolini said. And, no doubt, it did so effectively considering that, after the mid-1920s, there was no room in Italy for any kind of political dialectics.

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183 Il Discorso dell’Ascensione, in Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, vol. XXII, pp. 360-390. The quotes are at p. 378.
184 Ibidem.
Apart from its peremptoriness, Mussolini’s judgment of the anti-national front, reduced to ‘dust’, has some relevance for this work. Since opposition could be considered over, a new political season was starting, in which the identification between Fascism and the nation would no longer bear the symbolic-ideal character of the past, but would become real. In summary, the construction of the Fascist nation could now begin. But how? Which political path should be followed?

It was Mussolini himself who showed the high road, speaking to the hierarchs in September 1929. In that discourse, the Duce stated that the regime did not have to wait for a distant future to ‘expand to the boundaries of the nation’ since this process was already underway, and that ‘the instrument of this expansion [was] the Party with its masses’. That being so, it was a purely rhetorical exercise to abstractedly discuss ‘hypothetical disagreements between Fascism and the nation’. The fact was that the regime, taking into account the forces of the Pnf and those of its organizations, included the ‘majority of Italians who [meant] something’. Finally, he had no hesitation in arguing that the distinction between Fascist Italians and non-Fascist Italians was not only appropriate, but necessary. There was no place in Italy for anti-Fascists, but only for afascists, as long as they were ‘honourable and exemplary’ citizens. Therefore, following Mussolini’s instructions to the letter, the repressive apparatus of the regime adopted measures that tore apart any illegal activity of organized anti-Fascism. In such a situation, the approval of an amnesty on a massive scale, on the tenth anniversary of the March on

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186 Il Discorso dell’Ascensione, p. 379.
187 Al gran rapporto del fascismo, in Il Popolo d’Italia, no. 221, September 15, 1929, reproduced in Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, vol. XXIV, pp. 132-146. The quotes are at pp. 142-143.
188 Ibidem, p. 143.
189 Ibidem, p. 143.
190 Il Discorso dell’Ascensione, p. 380.
Rome, was nothing but a public demonstration by the regime of the solidity and strength it enjoyed then\(^{191}\).

The grant of amnesty took place in November 1932, while Achille Starace was head of the party. To the latter, Mussolini entrusted the task of fascistizing the entire nation; a task that the new secretary, appointed in December 1931, tried to complete successfully, implementing a principle repeatedly laid down by two leading theorists of Fascism: Alfredo Rocco and Giovanni Gentile. In particular, the Minister of Justice, after presenting the ‘Law on dispensation from service of State officials’ on 24 December, 1925, said straight out that he considered the ‘identification between the State and the Fascist party’ as ‘logical’ and ‘holy’, since the Pnf ‘represent[ed] and idealiz[ed] the nation’\(^{192}\). This was, ultimately, the underlying assumption of the law, which guaranteed complete correspondence between administrative officials and the government, in order to provide the full support of the bureaucracy to the head of the executive, who was in charge of applying the directives given by Rome and, therefore, building the Fascist State. For his part, Giovanni Gentile, enthusiastically commenting on the decision concerning the constitutionalization of the Grand Council in May 1928, wrote: ‘The Party ceases to be a party. It is already virtually, and must be more and more effectively, the Nation’\(^{193}\).

Once this identity was established, there was only one way for the Pnf to represent the nation, or at least a large part of it; and it was the way indicated by Mussolini: incorporating the entire Italian society


into it. So the party appropriated some pre-existing institutions, established new ones, and multiplied and bolstered structures to bring as many citizens as possible into them. In this connection, the words of the federal of Rome were revealing, since he wrote in 1932: ‘We believe in a numerous, and therefore totalitarian, Fascism that does not leave any good Italian out of political circles.’

The Pnf had to organize the nation in all areas. It did this, for example, in the field of welfare, by instituting the *Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia* (National Motherhood and Childhood Organization) and the *Associazione Fascista Caduti, Mutilati, Feriti per la Rivoluzione* (Fascist Association for the Fallen, Mutilated and Wounded for the Revolution). It did it in the field of youth education, with the *Organizzazione Nazionale Balilla* (Italian Fascist Youth Organization), incorporated in 1937 into the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*, and with the *Gruppi Universitari Fascisti*. It also did it in the economic sphere, through the *Consiglio Nazionale delle Corporazioni* (National Council of Corporations) and the *Comitato Corporativo Centrale* (Central Corporative Committee); and in the cultural sphere, with the *l’Istituto Nazionale Fascista di Cultura*. Of course, it did not miss out on organizing the leisure of Italians too: for example, with the creation of the *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (National Recreational Organization), and also with the organization of summer camps, as well as with control of radio, cinema and theatre. There was no aspect in the individual’s life and the citizens’ collective existence in which the Pnf was not present.

Undoubtedly Starace’s era was marked by the ‘great prestige’ of the party and its ‘capillarity’ in the life of the country, ‘through a

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dense network of direct and connected organs, in order to permeate
the entire national fabric."\textsuperscript{196} He resolutely pursued this goal and, at
the time of leaving the secretariat, wrote to Mussolini that the Pnf
structure had been ‘developed to the extreme limit’, up to the
‘minimum unit’, that is, the individual\textsuperscript{197}. The meaning of these words
became clearer on October 29, 1939, when \textit{Il Popolo d'Italia}
published on its front page a table that indicated the forces listed in the
Pnf and in its dependent organizations. The figures were very
impressive: of 43,733,000 Italians, 20,411,596 were members of the
party and its associations, connected in various ways with them\textsuperscript{198}.

Certainly, the number of affiliates at the Falange never reached
such an imposing size\textsuperscript{199}. Yet, this does not diminish the importance
of the Spaniards’ Falangist project of nationalization under the
Francoist regime. As has already been seen, during the Civil War, the
party succeeded in obtaining the consent and legitimacy that it had
lacked till then. In fact, starting from the early months of the conflict,
it was evident that Franco’s nationalist government was devoid of a
clear ideological orientation. And it was equally evident that in order
to defeat the Republic, the caudillo needed a political instrument

\textsuperscript{197} Starace’s words are reproduced in E. Gentile, \textit{La via italiana al
\textsuperscript{198} The data are in \textit{Il Popolo d’Italia}, no. 302, October 29, 1939, p. 1. Cf. L. Di
\textsuperscript{199} The figures for the number of affiliates at Falange are rather vague. Some
recent studies regarding Falange local sections provide more accurate data on party
members within some autonomous communities. However, no registers with data on
a national basis were found, probably because they were either disappeared or
destroyed during the change of regime. Some valid indications are, however, in M.
Peñalba Sotorrio’s PhD thesis, \textit{Falange Española: historia de un fracaso (1933-
1945)}, 2009, pp. 75-77, 396-397. According to the data reported by Peñalba, it was
plausible that in June 1936 the affiliates to the party were around 150,000,
progressively increasing to such a degree that, in December 1941, the Falange
counted 2,242,512 members on a total population of around 26 millions of
inhabitants.
capable of providing adequate doctrinal backing and guaranteeing the support of the majority of the population.

Looking at the forces within the rebellious front led by the generalismo - excluding the conservative right, which had dashed any expectation of national rebirth during the bienio cedista - the only parties capable of challenging the republicans on the ideological plane were the Falange and the Comunión tradicionalista. Carlism was ‘heroic, romantic and full of virtues’, but seemed to suffer from a scant political modernity. Conversely, there was a widespread opinion in the Salamanca Francoist headquarters that the Fe de las Jons - as a revolutionary political organization with popular support throughout the occupied territory and strongly sensitive to social needs - would allow national Spain to ‘absorb red Spain ideologically’.

Franco grasped the cohesive and ‘nationalizing’ potential of the Falange and decided to use it to realize his hegemonic plans, taking advantage of the moment of crisis that the party was undergoing. In fact, at the end of 1936, Fe de las Jons was bereft of ideological points of reference. Onésimo Redondo Ortega fell in battle in the first days after the Alzamiento. Ramiro Ledesma Ramos was shot the following October. And José Antonio Primo de Rivera died in front of a firing squad in Alicante jail on November 20 of the same year, although the official news of his passing reached the blue shirts only two years later. The deaths of the founding fathers and the absence of strong leaders capable of keeping the blue shirts together had clear consequences on the stability of the party, whose leadership was deeply divided. On the one hand, there were the supporters of the

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201 Ibidem.
secretary of Fe de las Jons at that time, Manuel Hedilla, endowed with a strong revolutionary spirit and social conscience. On the other hand, the ‘legitimists’, the most intransigent and loyal supporters of José Antonio, opposed any change in the party. A third group - men who had joined the Falangist cause only recently - consisted mainly of opportunists, conservatives and technocrats\textsuperscript{202}.

Despite the difficulties, the Civil War gradually strengthened the influence of the Falange within the deployment led by Franco. The popular consensus reached by the party from the first months of the clash and the exponential increase in the size of its militias were far from negligible\textsuperscript{203}. Moreover, the conflict led to a radicalization of the process of fascistization - already started during the Second republic - of the forces within the nationalist front, which aroused great concern in Franco himself, who saw in the Falange a potential threat to his power\textsuperscript{204}.

In this context, the caudillo’s decision was to promote the union of the various political components inside the rebel front, in order to bring Falangist activity back within the limits set by himself. With an ‘inside out coup d’état’ - as defined later by Dionisio Ridruejo, provincial chief of the Falange of Valladolid and a bright young fervent blue shirt, faithful to José Antonio’s credo - Franco merged the Fe de las Jons with the Carlist requetès\textsuperscript{205}. The Unification Decree of April 1937 created a new political entity with a ‘national character’ called \textit{Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva

\textsuperscript{203} The problem connected to the growing popularity of the Falangist militias had already been contained in December 1936, when a decree ordered the militarization of the Falangist militias, as well as the Carlist ones, and their total subordination to the Army. In I. Saz Campos, \textit{Fascismo y franquismo}, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{204} I. Saz Campos, \textit{Fascismo y franquismo}, pp. 126-128.
Nacional Sindicalista\textsuperscript{206}. At the same time, it dissolved all the other organizations and political parties, and merged the Falangist and Carlist militias into a single national militia, in support of the Army and commanded by Franco\textsuperscript{207}. Also known as Movimiento, the Fet de las Jons was placed under the direct command of the generalísimo\textsuperscript{208}. The Jefe del Estado (Head of State) also became the Jefe Nacional del Movimiento (National Head of the Movement), and was assisted in his duties by the Junta Política and the Consejo Nacional (National Council)\textsuperscript{209}

The merger of the Spanish Fascist party with the traditionalists allowed Franco to achieve three extraordinary results at one fell swoop. First, it gave homogeneity to the various nationalist deployments. Second, it created the single party, an indispensable tool for the formation of the new revolutionary government. Third, and most importantly, it brought all the components of the authoritarian compromise under the caudillo’s control, also thanks to the cuñadísimo Ramón Serrano Suñer - Franco’s trusted man - who played a key role in achieving the success of this operation, since he was charged with the task of mediating with the most radical wing of Falangism\textsuperscript{210}.

\textsuperscript{206} The text of the Unification Decree no. 255 is in Boletín Oficial del Estado, no. 182, April 20, 1937, pp. 1033-1034. The quote is at p. 1034.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibídem, p. 1034. On the path that led to the promulgation of the Unification Decree see I. Saz Campos, Fascismo y franquismo, pp. 130-146; S. Payne, Falange. Historia del fascismo español, pp. 123-141.
\textsuperscript{208} The term Movimiento appears ‘hastily’ for the first time in the Unification Decree of April 20, 1937, and then it was widely resumed in the decree approving the Statutes of the Fet y de la Jons, published in August of the same year. See the Decree no. 333, in Boletín Oficial del Estado, no. 291, August 7, 1937, pp. 2738-2742.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibídem.
\textsuperscript{210} Ramón Serrano Suñer was a key figure during the first Francoism, since he had a huge influence on the caudillo during the stage of his ascension. Unlike the latter, however, Serrano Suñer favored the creation of a more ‘integrated’ and, in a way, more properly Fascist political system. Considered the spokesman of the Falange, he had great sympathy and admiration for Mussolini’s Italy and for Nazi
The Unification Decree inflicted a huge blow on the autonomy of
the Falange, which nevertheless maintained a hegemonic role within
the single party. So, even after April 1937, among the most orthodox
and coherent *camisas azules*, the hopes of realizing a Fascist
totalitarian State had not vanished at all. And to a certain extent,
Franco was forced in some cases to make concessions to the party to
contain Falangist discontent, acknowledging National syndicalist
dreams of greatness at least in words. An example was the second
article of the decree - signed by the caudillo himself - that established
as ultimate goal the ‘definitive organization of a new totalitarian
State’; a goal that the *generalissimo* reiteratd in an interview with the
journal *ABC* in July the same year.\(^1\)

Similarly, in the eyes of the blue shirts, the institutionalization of
the single party and the configuration of its main organs were an
important step in strengthening the Falange’s own position within the
authoritarian compromise.\(^2\) Equally significant was Serrano Suñer’s

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\(^2\) According to the article 41 of the Statutes of the Fet y de las Jons, the *Consejo Nacional* should have decided on the ‘primordial lines’ of the structure of the State and the *Movimiento Nacional*; on the rules regarding trade union; on the great international issues; and on all the national issues that Franco had brought to its attention. Actually, it exercised an advisory function, being in charge of providing non-binding opinions to the *Jefe Nacional*, who, moreover, appointed discretionally all the members of the assembly (in a number between 25 and 50). Inspired, at least formally, by the Grand Council of the Italian Fascism, the Consejo Nacional did not have effective decision-making power and reflected the heterogeneity of the political forces inside the regime. It never played the role of the exclusive representative of the party. In fact, within it, there were, together with the Falangists, also Carlists, monarchists, conservatives and generals of the Army. With the *Ley de Organización del Estado* of 1941, Serrano Suñer tried to give to this organ a political role similar to that of Mussolini’s Grand Council, but this attempt was vain. The many components within Francoism, which did not want the realization of a Fascist regime, immediately buried the project. See *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 291, August 7, 1937, pp. 2738-2742. Cf. also S. Payne, *Falange. Historia del fascismo español*, p. 150; M.A. Giménez Martínez, *El Gran Consejo
choice to entrust, in March 1938, the direction of the Ministry of Press and Propaganda - under the control of the Ministry of the Interior controlled by the cuñadísimo - to a fervent Fascist like Ridruejo. Moreover, the acceptance by the new regime of the 1934 Fe de las Jons programme seemed to ensure a certain ideological continuity to National syndicalism. Franco’s decision to adopt Falangist symbols and myths - giving the new authoritarian State a ‘Fascist rhetorical patina’ - completed the picture.

After all, the acceptance, obtorto collo, of the unification of 1937 by the Falange was based on a compromise. The blue shirts committed themselves to respecting the new hierarchical structure, and therefore Francoist leadership. In return, they received the promise to see, once the Civil War was over, their own project of establishing a true Fascist totalitarianism realized. So the Falangists acted as if their party was the only revolutionary tool capable of activating the most energetic forces of the community. It was entrusted with the mission of returning to the homeland its greatness; a mission to be accomplished through the rapprochement of its

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213 By appointing Ridruejo as head of the Ministry of Press and Propaganda, Serrano Suñer, on one hand, winked at the most committed and coherent Falangists; on the other, assured the merger, or rather, the subordination of the Delegation of Propaganda of the Falange to the State. Indeed, it was not conceivable that the single party could act independently of the regime. It is also important to keep in mind that the Falangist publications that were considered improper were in some cases subjected to military censorship. In J. Andrés Gallego, L. De Llera, ¿Cruzada o guerra civil? El primer gran debate del régime de Franco, in M. Tedeschi, Chiesa cattolica e guerra civile in Spagna nel 1936, Napoli, Guida editori, 1989, pp. 115-116.


215 S. Payne, Falange. Historia del fascismo español, pp. 143-144.
‘immortal metaphysical truth’ with the concrete reality of the people, that realize it in time and space\textsuperscript{216}.

Convinced that it was the representative of a new order to be imposed on Spain, Falangism promoted what Ridruejo called a certain ‘political socialism’ - summed up in the famous motto ‘\textit{por la Patria, el pan y la justicia}’ - meaning a ‘high degree of identity between society and State’ to be brought about through the control of every branch of life in the country\textsuperscript{217}. In the projects of the \textit{camisas azules}, the instrument for this purpose was clearly the party - the emblem of the nation - which should have taken possession of the State, in order to realize the totalitarian design with which those who embraced Spanish Fascism with genuine impetus identified themselves. The party not only served that ‘transcendent, permanent and irrevocable synthesis’ which was the homeland, but actively incarnated it, as the former constituted the synthesis of the values and energies of the national community\textsuperscript{218}. The Falange was ‘neither party nor class’, it did not feed on ‘fragments’, ‘entities’, ‘vocations’ or on any ‘partial sense among those who made up the Fatherland’; it had to be a totalitarian and inclusive entity\textsuperscript{219}. As Ridruejo wrote, ‘the Falange was born to be everything or to die’, with ‘everything’ meaning ‘simply the total reconstruction of the Fatherland’\textsuperscript{220}.

As the nationalist deployment won on the battlefield and the anti-national enemy ceded ground to Francoist troops, the Falange, following the example of the Pnf, tried to seize exclusive control of the idea of homeland. This phenomenon underwent an inevitable

\textsuperscript{217} D. Ridruejo, \textit{Escrito en España}, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{218} D. Ridruejo, \textit{La patria como síntesis}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{219} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibidem.
acceleration during World War II when, from 1940-1941, National Socialism’s military successes seemed to herald the creation of a new Fascist and totalitarian order on a Europe-wide scale. As Saz argues, in that context, for the blue shirts ‘it was Falange and no one else, but Falange who acted in the name of Spain’\textsuperscript{221}. In this regard, Salvador Lissarrague Novoa, philosopher and law sociologist close to the party, explicitly stated: ‘In opposition to the purely national [element], that is an abstract and empty formula, we proclaim the Falangist [element], which gives life and configuration in the present to the national [element]’ \textsuperscript{222}. Falange and nation became basically synonymous; which meant that there was no national dimension except the Falangist one.

These were the ideological assumptions on which the \textit{camisas azules} sought to effectively build the Spanish Fascist nation. And they did it the same way as the black shirts did in Italy: trying to occupy as much space as possible in the State apparatus. It is in this sense, for example, that the General Government order of October 1937 should be interpreted. It made the conferment of any administrative, local or provincial assignment subject to the approval of Fet de las Jons leaders, as well as Civil Guard consent\textsuperscript{223}. Similarly, the creation of Falangist delegates at district, section and even street level - as happened in Italy during Starace’s secretariat - indicated to what extent the Falange wanted to extend its control over the territory\textsuperscript{224}.

Actually, the blue shirts had been trying to fit into the life of the nation even before the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1934, the \textit{Sección

\textsuperscript{221} I. Saz Campos, \textit{España contra España}, p. 296.


\textsuperscript{223} The text of the order is in \textit{Boletín Oficial del Estado}, no. 379, November 3, 1937, pp. 4156-4157.

*Femenina* of the party, founded by José Antonio’s sister Pilar Primo de Rivera, facilitated the Fascist education of Spanish women who applied for it, and guaranteed primary welfare services until the caudillo’s death. In 1936, Onésimo Redondo Ortega’s widow created the *Auxilio Social* (Social Aid) - originally *Auxilio de Invierno* (Winter Aid) - an efficient humanitarian relief agency, incorporated by the SF in January 1937. And, starting in December 1940, the *Frente de Juventudes* began to take care of the political education of young National syndicalists.

Another key element of the Falangist struggle for the ‘authentication of the Regime in line with its theoretical self-definition’ in a totalitarian sense and for the ‘reconstitution of the power of the State’ was control of the Spanish economy. Taking as a model the Fascist corporative project used in Italy, the *Consejo National de la Fet de las Jons* approved in March 1938 the text of the *Fuero del Trabajo*. Recalling Mussolini’s *Carta del Lavoro* of 1927, the document laid the foundation for the creation of the *Organización Sindical Española* (Spanish Union Organization or Ose), which was set up by the *Ley de Unidad Sindical* of January 1940. The Ose instituted an order of industrial, agricultural and service vertical unions, which included all factors of production, subordinated to the ‘supreme interest of the nation’. However, the

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227 The decree of approval of the *Fuero del Trabajo* is in *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 505, March 10, 1938, pp. 6178-6181. It is interesting to note that also Ernesto Marchiandi, Fascist trade unionist and consultant of the Italian Embassy, attended the drafting of the legislative text.
228 Ibidem, p. 6180.
229 The text of the *Ley de 26 de enero de 1940 sobre Unidad sindical* is in *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 31, January 31, 1940, pp. 772-773. It is important to note that the first autonomous trade unions of the Jons date back to the beginning of 1933. After them, there was the *Sindicato Español Universitario* (University
organization was the ‘ tepid ’ fruit of bargaining among various interests in the Consejo Nacional. It did not introduce profound changes to the production system and had little practical application, to the point that Ridruejo defined it, with total disappointment, as a ‘ ghost ridiculed by rhetoric ’.

Deprived of political autonomy, the Falange never succeeded in realizing its plan to create an authentic ‘ nation in blue shirt ’. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize the radically revolutionary and genuinely Fascist significance of the nationalization project of the Spaniards conducted by National syndicalism: a project that, despite the obstacles encountered, did not remain a dead letter, but determined concrete political choices. The fact that its results in terms of the effective construction of a totalitarian State were much more modest than those of the PnF is an undeniable historical record. However, the analysis of primary sources so far shows a fundamental element common to Italian and Spanish Fascism: both identified the nation as the instrument to rebuild the identity of the people and to escape the political, social, cultural and moral crisis that modernity had provoked, which liberal democracy, despite its best efforts, failed to overcome.

Spanish Union or Seu), founded in November of the same year; the Centrales Obreras Nacional-sindicalistas (National syndicalist Workers’ Centres or Cons), created in 1934; and the Centrales de Empresarios Nacional-sindicalistas (National syndicalist Entrepreneurs’ Centres or Cens) in 1935. Such organizations included respectively university students, workers and business owners affiliated to the party. However, they were unable to exercise a real pressure on the republican government and were often forced to operate in clandestine conditions. On this topic see M.S. Lopez Gallegos, El proyecto de sindicalismo falangista: de los sindicatos autónomos jonsistas a la creación de las centrales obreras y de empresarios nacional sindicalistas (1931-1938), in F. Gallego and F. Morente, Fascismo en España, Barcelona, Editorial El viejo topo, 2005, pp. 43-67.

230 D. Ridruejo, Escrito en España, p. 207.
Chapter II

The imperial destiny of the nation

1. *A natural evolution*

Per il fascismo la tendenza all’impero, cioè all’espansione delle nazioni, è una manifestazione di vitalità; il suo contrario, o il piede di casa, è un segno di decadenza: popoli che sorgono o risorgono sono imperialisti, popoli che muoiono sono rinunciatari.¹

These words spoken by Mussolini epitomize the importance of the imperial question in Fascist doctrine, both Italian and Spanish, and exhibit the nature of the bond connecting empire to nation; a bond that could be described as almost physiological. In fact, as the nation transcended the contingent reality of the State and embodied the spiritual and moral essence of the people, the empire - going beyond the nation - represented its next evolutionary stage: namely its enhancement and affirmation in the world. If, for Fascism and Falangism, the nation was the ‘maximum social reality’ - to which all else was subordinate - the empire was its perfection, that is, the extraterritorial expression of its power.²

¹ B. Mussolini, *La dottrina del fascismo*, p. 22. [Author’s translation: ‘For Fascism, the tendency to [build] the empire - that is, to expand the nation - is a manifestation of vitality. Its opposite is a sign of decadence: people who rise, and rise again, are imperialist; people who die are defeatist.’]

It must be carefully noted, however, that this does not mean that, in the first half of the 20th Century, the nationalist phenomenon, *in toto*, was imperialist per se\(^3\). But Fascist nationalism, including the Italian and Spanish varieties, certainly was. And it was not at all, as has often been argued, only empty rhetoric dictated by delusions of grandeur and megalomaniac tendencies of some prominent political figures of the two Fascisms. Rather, it was the natural evolution of a totalitarian and authentically revolutionary political doctrine that - while trying to achieve the greatness of the nation through the continuous mobilization of its most vital energies - inevitably ended up seeking affirmation and prestige even beyond the narrow territorial boundaries of the State. Precisely based on this assumption, Pnf ideologues and Falange theorists expressed their own views on empire, in their own time and in their own way.

As Emilio Gentile suggests, the fact that the nationalism of the black shirts in Italy would sooner or later lead to imperialism was predictable from the origins of their movement\(^4\). In his speech at the creation of the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento*, Mussolini had already affirmed that imperialism was ‘the foundation of life for every people who tend to expand economically and spiritually’\(^5\). Also, in February 1921, during a famous speech in Trieste, the Duce encouraged his supporters to raise the ‘flag of empire’ and Fascist imperialism. And

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\(^3\) In Italy, for example, within the heterogeneous nationalism, there were those who, like Giuseppe Prezzolini, gave absolute priority to the resolution of the domestic problems of the country, to be favoured over any expansionist policy. Cf. G. Prezzolini, *Prefazione* to G. Papini, G. Prezzolini, *Vecchio e nuovo nazionalismo*, Milano, Studio editoriale lombardo, 1914, pp. VII-XII, reproduced in F. Perfetti, *Il nazionalismo italiano dalle origini alla fusione col fascismo*, pp. 68-71.


\(^5\) *Atto di nascita del fascismo*, in *Il Popolo d’Italia*, no. 83, March 24, 1919, reproduced in *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, vol. XII, p. 323.
then, during the 4th national congress of the Pnf held in Rome in June 1925, he went so far as to identify the imperial concept as ‘the base’ of his party’s doctrine.

Although the theme of empire was present in Fascism at the beginning, it was not a central tenet then. On March 23, 1919 - when the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento were founded - Mussolini’s expansionist dreams were still sketchy, mostly revolving around generic and vague projects of a ‘Great Italy’ and the will to power that the First World War had aroused. After all, in the early phase of the movement, it could not be otherwise, since there were more serious problems to be faced on the home front. As mentioned before, all the efforts of, first, the movement and then the party were directed towards realizing the Fascist State. Only after the Pnf seemed to have accomplished its revolutionary intentions in the country, and the regime began to appear more solid, did the imperial designs of the black shirts re-emerge with renewed strength and extraordinary determination. Once all opposition was eliminated, the State machine was fine-tuned and the majority of the Italian people were united under the insignia of the fascio littorio, Mussolini decided to turn his gaze beyond the boundaries of the peninsula, towards new and more ambitious targets.

To imbue their expansionist projects with a strong legitimacy, Fascists drew on contemporary Italian imperialist tradition, whose origin was traced back to the Risorgimento. This way, they represented themselves as successors of the patriotic generation that had exalted Italian moral primacy and claimed for the country a leading role on the world stage. Certainly, as Giuseppe Bottai pointed

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out, the colonial idea in Italy rose late, in comparison with other European States. Indeed, when the great wars for hegemony and empire were underway, Italy was still oppressed by ‘foreign tyrannies’ and was thus incapable of ‘acting as a nation’, because it had to fight ‘to become a nation’.

In the reconstruction of the ideologues close to Mussolini, it was during the Risorgimento that some ‘enlightened’ political men began to appreciate the importance of going beyond the borders of the peninsula and pursuing a dynamic foreign policy. So, even before the unification, Cavour had tried in 1851 to increase Savoy’s commercial presence in the Mediterranean, boosting trade with Tunisia. Four years later, with the participation of the Piedmontese State in the Crimean War, the statist managed to enter the European diplomatic college and made it clear that the Kingdom of Savoy sought to develop its economic interests in the Near East.

Some elements of the colonial doctrine were found even in Mazzini, and in the sacred mission of civilization he ascribed to Italy. The theory that, with this mission, the Genoese patriot meant to point the way towards a decisive expansionist policy of the State is questionable. Significantly, nonetheless, in an article dating back to March 1871, he claimed an important Italian role in Northern Africa, especially in Tunisia and in Libya. Analogously, in the opinion of Carlo Curcio, professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences of Perugia, Vincenzo Gioberti and Cesare Balbo also contributed to the cause of empire: the former, by emphasizing the idea of Italian civil and moral

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primacy, and by demanding for his country control over Corsica and Malta; the latter, by hoping for the birth of a great Catholic and Mediterranean civilization, with Rome at its centre\textsuperscript{10}.

Pnf intellectuals asserted, in their historical reconstruction, that the ideal legacy of these men was assimilated by the colonialists of the late 19th Century and, in particular, by Francesco Crispi. He was considered the only political player of the unified State to have projected Italy into the Mediterranean with authentic ‘imperialistic soul and thought’\textsuperscript{11}. He deserved credit for having opposed the ‘small,anguished, miserable concept’ that had inspired colonial policy until then, and for using the military campaign in Eritrea and Ethiopia as a chance to revive Italian power\textsuperscript{12}. But, according to this interpretation, the presence of a vile and defective ruling class ended up dooming Crispi’s adventure in Abyssinia. The Battle of Adua, Bottai wrote, ‘like Caporetto, like every misfortune of the Fatherland, [found] in Parliament its prophets, […] its propitiators’\textsuperscript{13}. The Italian defeat of March 1, 1896 opened the way to the era of Giolitti and the ‘cohort of the gnomes’\textsuperscript{14}. Thus the country seemed to end the 19th Century indolent and grey.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 20th Century, some publications by Mario Morasso, Gabriele D’Annunzio and Alfredo Oriani - which revived the ideal of Italy’s primacy in the world - were

\textsuperscript{13} G. Bottai,\textit{ Mussolini costruttore d’impero}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibidem}, p. 20.
regarded by some party intellectuals as proof that Italy’s indigenous imperialist tradition had never faded. This tradition was retrieved by some prominent figures of Italian nationalism, such as Corradini, Federzoni, Cantalupo and Coppola, who forcefully brought the theme of colonial expansion back to centre stage in the political debate\textsuperscript{15}. In particular, it was the founder of the weekly *Il Regno* who asserted in 1908 that imperialism was a ‘state of the nation’, that is, a ‘state of exuberance, vitality, strength’\textsuperscript{16}. So, after the conclusion of the Italian-Turkish venture of 1911-1912, he rejoiced in that colonial success and expressed his pride at seeing a glorious Roman civilization reappear on Libyan soil after 1,500 years\textsuperscript{17}.

It was the Rome of the Caesars that Corradini alluded to. And it was precisely ‘the sentiment and the consciousness of the genius of Rome and the Empire’ that he recalled for Italians, anticipating what Pnf ideologues would do some years later\textsuperscript{18}. Nonetheless, according to the latter, only with the appearance of Fascism had this sentiment and conscience finally ‘rooted, clarified, developed in the people’ and

\textsuperscript{15} It is important to note that Federzoni was the first minister of the Colonies of Fascist Italy from October 1922 to June 1924 and from November 1926 to December 1928. Similarly, it is not surprising that Cantalupo was appointed undersecretary of State for the Colonies in 1924, a role he held for two years. In N. Labanca, *Oltremare. Storia dell’espansione coloniale italiana*, pp. 106-107, 112, 144, 243; J.L. Miège, *L’imperialismo coloniale italiano. Dal 1870 ai nostri giorni*, p. 134.


even become the cornerstones of the regime\textsuperscript{19}. The reality was that, once again, Fascism had picked ideas from nationalist thinking to secure the doctrinal base needed to justify its ideological and political choices. The construction of the Fascist myth of a Caesarean Roman spirit - which, according to the black shirts, was the emblem of the glorious destiny of the country - was a powerful tool for legitimizing the expansionist projects of Mussolini, who was portrayed as the ‘new Augustus of a reborn Imperial Italy’\textsuperscript{20}.

Many scholars, Emilio Gentile notes, argued that the cult of ancient Rome and its empire was only the ‘grotesque expression of the Fascist factory of ideological emptiness’\textsuperscript{21}. But such an interpretation seems reductive and simplistic. Beyond the obvious rhetoric, the Fascists did not use the glorious past for ‘reactionary nostalgia’ or ‘antiquarian veneration’ but re-elaborated it in a modern way, ‘according to political action to create the future’\textsuperscript{22}. By proceeding to an ‘unscrupulous anti-historicist manipulation of the history of Rome’, they established an ideal bridge, a diachronic bond, between the mythical imperium of the Caesars and the empire of Mussolini, attributing to the latter the mission of spreading the universal principles of the doctrine of Fascism on a global scale\textsuperscript{23}.

After all, the fact that, at some point in its existence, the Fascist nation - ‘an ethical reality that exist[ed] and live[d] inasmuch as it develop[ed]’ - would project itself onto the international field was the logical consequence of the state of permanent mobilization in which

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{19} \textit{Impero}, in \textit{Dizionario di politica} edited by Partito Nazionale Fascista, vol. II, p. 476.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} E. Gentile, \textit{Fascismo di pietra}, p. VII.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibidem}, p. 48.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibidem}, p. 206.
\end{itemize}
the party held Italians, or at least the majority of them. By working hard to build a Fascist homeland, a fighting community where there was no longer any trace of the Old Italy, it was in some way inevitable that the myth of the nation would blend with the myth of imperial civilization. A completely fascistizing nation was naturally pushed to overcome its boundaries to spread the Mussolinian revolution around the world, bringing ‘discipline everywhere [there was] disorder and an evident or veiled rebellion’. Against the ‘absurdity of the internationalist myth’ - democratic or Socialist - Fascism called for the establishment of a peaceful hierarchical order among States. It would be led by Mussolini’s Italy, that was also ‘in power - that is, by right - empire’. Italy, indeed, was driven by a ‘so pure and universal ideal’ that it would have ‘overcome every limitation of tradition and church’, and could have therefore, by means of the ‘power of spirit and weapons’, promoted harmony between peoples.

A conceptual fine-tuning of the relationship between the nation and the empire was made in the political dictionary of the Pnf, where nationalism was considered the ‘intrinsic expansive vitality of a civilization’, ‘exaltation, active consciousness, duty’ of the nation in history. Therefore, there was no contradiction between homeland and empire, unlike what a large part of the liberal ruling class had claimed in the first sixty years of the life of the unified State. Once again, it was reproached for having preferred to adopt a conservative

29 *Ibidem*.
and defensive tactic, based on a certain ‘nullness’ and a good dose of ‘parasitism’, rather than a dynamic and enterprising policy\textsuperscript{31}. For Fascism, the nation and the empire were not only compatible, but complemented each other perfectly since, as Roberto Pavese claimed, the authentic nation was just the one that had ‘virtually the empire in itself’\textsuperscript{32}.

But what were, according to Pnf theorists, the indispensable elements for the realization of this mythical imperial civilization? Party linguist and philosopher Antonino Pagliaro identified two. First of all, a universal idea was needed, that is, a guiding principle governing the political, social and civil organization of the country, which could be successfully applied in different spatial and temporal contexts. In the eyes of the ideologues close to Mussolini, this was the case of the Fascist doctrine, and the Italian people - who had reached a ‘high perfection of culture, organization and cohesion - had to become its evangelists’\textsuperscript{33}. This universal idea, however, was not enough. It had to be supported by an imperial conscience, namely by a complete faith in the ‘human, non-contingent and transient value’ of the principles underlying the nation\textsuperscript{34}. The black shirts held this firm belief, so convinced of the superiority of ‘Italic civilization’, which they used to justify their claims of domination - they were well aware of the task they had been called upon to undertake: ‘To make their own world, their own political and social gains a moment in the history of the world, an asset acquired by all peoples’\textsuperscript{35}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item R. Pavese, \textit{Internazionalismo e fascismo}, p. 605.
\item \textit{Ibidem}.
\item \textit{Ibidem}. See also A. Bavaj, \textit{Coscienza coloniale}, in \textit{Libro e moschetto}, no. 28, May 9, 1935, p. 6.
\item \textit{Impero}, in \textit{Dizionario di Politica} edited by Partito Nazionale Fascista, vol. III, p. 484. Moving from the conviction of the supposed superiority of the Italian people and the importance of its colonial mission, Mussolini and the Pnf
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Building an empire, besides satisfying Mussolini’s delusions of grandeur, had obvious material advantages. Colonization appeared, above all, to be the most effective solution to the problem of substantial population growth in Italy. Indeed, if, on the one hand, the people were encouraged to pursue the greatness of the country by the regime’s pro-natal policies (that will be addressed in the third chapter of this work); on the other hand, they had to deal with limited resources. It was therefore felt that colonial settlements would significantly reduce demographic pressure on the peninsula. Metropolitan citizens willing to relocate - twenty thousand farmers who disembarked in Tripoli in November 1938 were only a small portion of them - were offered decent homes to live in and, above all, a source of employment in terms of land to cultivate. By accomplishing this, the regime would resolve another complex issue: it would stem the emigration of Italians abroad, which was considered a disaster, an enormous loss of national energy. Moreover, an empire would provide significant economic benefits, as it would secure markets for Italian production and also supply raw materials which the country lacked.

Nonetheless, as the party’s media outlets never tired of repeating, Fascism would not execute a policy of colonial exploitation. They asserted that Mussolini’s imperialism aspired to have a strong ethical

intellectuals began to articulate the racist discourse, which will be investigated in the next chapter.


37 A. Solmi, Il programma dell’espansione nazionale, pp. 448-452.

38 J. L. Miège, L’imperialismo coloniale italiano. Dal 1870 ai nostri giorni, pp. 139-140.
character that would differentiate it from the clearly belligerent thought of the Ani nationalists. Based on Fascist propaganda, the Duce always rejected the idea of a colonialism imposed by the force of arms, founded on a desire to dominate and the humiliation of indigenous peoples, as the Germans and English had done. The ‘integral’ Fascist empire would not be just a ‘territorial or military or mercantile expression, but a spiritual and moral one. Mussolini’s nation - strong in its history, culture and political maturity - would lead other nations, and it would do so ‘without having to conquer one square kilometre of territory’.

The regime’s conquest plans, in summary, would be carried out with certain ‘humanity’ and a strong charitable spirit, to export a higher order of life and wealth to populations considered inferior. In other words, after completing the process of reforming Italians and creating the New Man of Fascism within the borders of the State, the black shirts would continue their educational task in less developed foreign civilizations. Presenting themselves as modern missionaries in fez and musket, they would have ‘fascistically evangelized’

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40 N. Guglielmi, Roma, il fascismo e l’impero, in Gerarchia, no. 9, September 1935, p. 757; B. Mussolini, La dottrina del fascismo, p. 22.

41 B. Mussolini, La dottrina del fascismo, p. 22.

42 The party’s propaganda celebrated Mussolini as the protector of those populations. In doing so, a particular mention was made of the news related to the celebrations held in Tripoli on March 18, 1937. In that circumstance, the duce received the ‘sword of Islam’, a ceremonial white weapon that he brandished, on the back of a horse, ‘almost as if he wanted to symbolise his ‘patronage’ over all the Arabs’. R. De Felice, Il Fascismo e l’oriente. Arabi, ebrei e indiani nella politica di Mussolini, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1988, p. 180. Cf. Imperialismo, in Dizionario di Politica edited by Partito Nazionale Fascista, vol. III, p. 475.
indigenous peoples, and instruct them to respectfully obey the principles of Mussolini’s revolution.\footnote{Impero, in Dizionario di Politica edited by Partito Nazionale Fascista, vol. III, p. 484.}

However, even though propaganda hammered away at the topic of a benign Fascist evangelization on an almost daily basis, in reality, the regime resorted to all the instruments at its disposal - even morally reprehensible ones - to realize its colonialist ambitions. Despite the fact that Italy had signed in Geneva in June 1925 an international treaty prohibiting the use of chemical and bacteriological weapons, Mussolini endorsed the use of poison gas to sow terror among indigenous populations and eradicate local resistance, going so far as to suggest the use of infectious agents to Badoglio in February 1936.\footnote{As will be seen in the next paragraph, the regime resorted to poison gas already during the war in Libya. However, it was only in Ethiopia that they were used systematically. The main studies on the subject are: A. Del Boca, I gas di Mussolini. Il fascismo e la guerra d’Etiopia, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1996, pp. 49-87, 89-103, 117-131, 145-162; Id., La guerra d’Etiopia. L’ultima impresa del colonialismo, pp. 102-152.}

This use of poison gas obviously negated any claim of a good and charitable Fascism. Such an inhumane choice was even more execrable because it was used by the Italian Army to fight Ethiopian guerrillas who were poorly organized and equipped. Yet, the Mussolini regime did not merely resort to terror, since it worked also to establish consensus.

It is in this sense, for instance, that the creation in 1935 of the Gioventù Araba del Littorio (Arab Youth of Littorio or Gal) should be interpreted. It was a parallel organization of the Opera Nazionale Balilla, equivalent to the Gioventù Italiana del Littorio, which guaranteed the party’s spiritual and material support to Libyans.\footnote{It was followed by the establishment of the Ethiopian Youth of Littorio in the second half of 1936, and by the constitution in April 1939 of the Albanian Youth of Littorio, reporting directly to the Albanian Fascist party. They both had functions almost entirely similar to the homologue organization in Libya. Cf. Partito Impero, Dizionario di Politica, vol. III, p. 484.}
Strongly promoted by Italo Balbo - governor of Libya from 1934-1940 - it had the task of imparting political, military and moral education to youngsters, in order to instill in them a sense of attachment to the Fascist Italian motherland. An example was reported in a front-page article in the periodical *L’Azione coloniale* on May 22-23, 1936. It was a comprehensive account of the participation of the Gal in the ‘imperial days’ event then taking place in Rome. Some members of the Arab Youth of Littorio sailed to Naples and arrived in the capital on a special train to take part in the celebrations and pay homage to the sovereign and the Duce. The article said they marched ‘martially’ in front of Mussolini on the Street of the Empire, demonstrating efficiency and solidity in their military demeanour, and that they intoned the song *Giovinezza* in an atmosphere of euphoria and jubilation. It was, however, a new version of the famous Fascist song in an original Arabic rendering of not just the lyrics but also the music, that ‘spontaneously degenerated into a monotonous tune of an authentic local colour’.

Besides the clearly propagandist tone of the article, its significance seemed to lie in its detailed description of a cross section of the Italian colonial reality then, in which it was essential to inculcate in indigenous peoples a love for Italy - their adopted homeland - and devotion to the regime. This was clearly another indication of Fascism’s intention to establish an identity between itself and the nation, and to include colonies in the Fascist community. This goal

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was pursued with diligence and methodicalness. So it was not surprising that the regime strove hard to regiment the young Berbers, who not only had little knowledge of what Fascism really was, but knew very little about their motherland as well.

A certain bond with the motherland, on the contrary, had survived in the Spanish ultramarine territories even after the desastre of 1898. After all, four centuries of colonial domination could not be swept away in a single stroke, not even in the face of the heavy defeat inflicted on Spain by the United States at the end of the 19th Century. The Spanish influence, especially in Latin America, had been so strong and pervasive in indigenous societies that it could not be easily eliminated. From the time of Isabel of Castille and Ferdinand of Aragon, indeed, the conquistadores did not just stamp their economic and commercial presence, but acted as true apostles of Hispanic culture, which they spread in all occupied areas.

Falangist theorist Antonio Tovar - responsible for Radio Nacional in 1938 and under-secretary for Press and Propaganda in the 1940-1941 biennium - asserted that Spain at the end of the 15th Century heeded the ‘llamada de lo Universal’ (‘call of the Universal’) with the primary aim of spreading the values of the hispanidad globally.\(^{48}\)

\(^{48}\) The term Hispanidad is found, for the first time, in a treatise of spelling and accents of 1531. It appeared again in the fourth edition of the Diccionario de la Academia of 1803 as a synonym for hispanismo, meaning a way of speaking that was characteristic of the Spanish language, and that did not follow the common grammatical rules. No longer used for decades, this wrd was retrieved in 1910 by Miguel de Unamuno, who mentioned it in an article titled Sobre la argentinidad in the newspaper La nación of Buenos Aires. Afterwards several authors resorted to the concept of hispanidad, but the latter reached certain maturity only towards the late 1920s. It was, indeed, in 1927 that Unamuno wrote a new article in which defined hispanidad as an historical, spiritual and civil category that spread beyond the Atlantic Ocean and met with americanidad (in M. de Unamuno, Hispanidad, in Síntesis, Buenos Aires, no. 6, November 1927, pp. 305-310). After him, Ramiro de Maeztu, influenced by priest Zacarías de Vizcarra, provided an idea of hispanidad that was not only historical, linguistic, civil, and geographical, but that was also strictly bound to Catholicity. In R. de Maeztu, La Hispanidad, in Acción Española, no. 1, December 15, 1931, pp. 8-16.
Taking as a model the ancient Capitoline empire - which extended its hegemony to all shores of the Mediterranean Sea under the banner of the *pax romana* - Spain had created a vast community of men of different races, united harmoniously under the emblem of the yoke and arrows of Catholic sovereigns.\(^49\)

This glorious empire, which flourished in the reign of Charles V, began its descending parabola in the 17th Century. According to blue shirt ideologues, the decline was due to the country’s moral degeneration and the absence of an imperial vigour that animated past epic ultramarine feats. In particular, Tovar pinpointed the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which gave birth to the modern international system. In his view, the Treaty not only spelt the end of Spanish dominion in the Netherlands, but also triggered the beginning of the national tragedy.\(^50\)

From that moment on, a slow but inexorable process of impoverishment began, with ever greater territorial losses that characterized the country’s political life for over two centuries. In short, first, with the War of Succession and then the Napoleonic invasion, Spain was forced to give up all its possessions in the Old Continent. It suffered the same fate with its colonies in the New World in the 19th Century, when it became clear that the decline of the empire, begun 150 years before, was unstoppable.\(^51\)

At first glance, such a reconstruction of Spain’s colonial history may seem nothing but a melancholy and anachronistic re-enactment of

\(^{49}\) A. Tovar, *El imperio de España*, Madrid, Ediciones Afrodisio Aguado, 1941, 4\(^{\circ}\) ed., pp. 24, 52-53. It should be noted that the reference to the imperial Rome was a recurring element in the Falangist ideology. The first one that made explicit mention of it was in 1932 the ‘prophet’ of Spanish Fascism, Giménez Caballero, who indicated in the harmonic and creative *pax* of the ancient Roman Empire the flag of Fascism and the authentic ‘genius of Spain’. In E. Giménez Caballero, *Genio de España. Exaltaciones a una resurrección nacional. Y del mundo*, Barcelona, Ediciones Jerarquía, 5\(^{\circ}\) ed., 1939, pp. 184-189.

\(^{50}\) *Ibidem*, pp. 67-68, 151-152.

\(^{51}\) *Ibidem*, pp. 68-75, 152-159.
a legendary past in which, ‘in the world, orders were given in Spanish and people obeyed in Castilian’\textsuperscript{52}. Yet, in the eyes of the Falangist ideologues, it represented much more. It was an obvious allusion to a great imperial legacy, to which the men of the Falange proclaimed themselves successors. Using history as a ‘politic engine’, the blue shirts identified ‘vitality’ as the distinctive trait of the nation, since they were convinced that Spain still had ‘something to do in the world’ \textsuperscript{53}. In their view, ‘winds saturated with constitutions, encyclopaedism, Roussonian theories, liberal myths’, and with ‘secret orders, Masonic dens and treasons of the homeland’, had failed to undermine the country’s original spirit of conquest\textsuperscript{54}. After centuries of disorder, the Catholic kings had created the first modern nation State, and imposed their colonial supremacy on previously unexplored continents. Similarly, after years of Republican and Socialist anarchy, the Falange - with its renewed emblem of the yoke and arrows - would restore the homeland’s prestige and return to the people ‘the tension and dignity of empire’ that it deserved\textsuperscript{55}.

A comprehensive study of Spain’s past thus shows that, unlike what happened in Italian Fascism, the theme of empire was a central

\textsuperscript{52} M. Ballesteros Gaibrois, \textit{El imperio de España}, p. 258. Please note that Franco himself, in a speech held in 1937, stated: ‘No queremos a una España vieja […] queremos un Estado donde la pura tradición y sustancia de aquel pasado ideal español se encuadre en las formas nuevas, vigorosas y heroicas que las juventudes de hoy y de mañana aportan en este amanecer Imperial de nuestro pueblo.’ [Author’s translation: ‘We do not want an old Spain […] we want a State where the pure tradition and the essence of the ideal Spanish past is framed in the new, vigorous and heroic forms that the youth of today and tomorrow brings in this Imperial dawn of our people.’] In F. Franco, \textit{Discurso al imperio de las Españas}, in \textit{Jerarquía}, no. 2, October 1937, pp. 9-22, reproduced in AA.VV., \textit{Jerarquía. La revista negra de la Falange (1936-1938)}, p. 170.


\textsuperscript{54} P. Sainz Rodríguez, \textit{Primer día del imperio}, in \textit{Vértice}, no. 5, September-October 1937.

tenet in the ideological universe of Falangism from its beginning. Starting with Giménez Caballero, Ledesma Ramos and José Antonio Primo de Rivera, all the theorists of the party identified in the nation’s imperial projection one of their most important political goals. So the third of the twenty-six programmatic points of Fe de las Jons stated: ‘We have the will of Empire. We affirm that the historical fullness of Spain is the Empire’. This guiding idea was highlighted by the Fe founder in a parliamentary speech on November 30, 1934:

España no se justifica por tener una lengua, ni por ser una raza, ni por ser un acervo de costumbres, sino que España se justifica por una vocación imperial para unir lenguas, para unir razas, para unir pueblos y para unir costumbres, en un destino universal.

Saz’s observation in this regard is very relevant: that José Antonio’s missionary nationalism resolved itself into the ideal notion of empire. As the Falangist leader argued, ‘nations are determined from the outside’. The same concept of unidad de destino en lo universal held that the Spanish homeland’s revival had to be accompanied by the realization of a collective feat in the world, of a

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57 España y Cataluña. Discurso en el Parlamento el 30 de noviembre de 1934, reproduced in J.A. Primo de Rivera, Escritos y discursos. Obras completas (1922-1936), p. 515. [Author’s translation: ‘Spain does not exist because it has its own language, nor because it is a race, nor because it is a collection of customs. The essence of Spain lies in an imperial vocation to unite languages, to unite races, to unite peoples and to unite customs, in a universal destiny.’]
great project of outward expansion. Primo de Rivera summed up this thought masterfully in these famous words:

No veamos en la patria el arroyo y el césped, la canción y la gaita; veamos un destino, una empresa. La patria es aquella que, en el mundo, configuró una empresa colectiva. Sin empresa no hay patria; sin la presencia de la fe en un destino común, todo se desuelve en comarcas nativas, en sabores y colores locales.¹⁰

For Falangist theorists, empire was not only synonymous with prestige and grandeur, but also a factor with an enormous potential for aggregation. Firstly, because - by overcoming the small peninsular size - it was a formidable tool to resolve the problem of regional separatisms that threatened the country’s territorial unity.¹¹ Secondly, because it allowed citizens to recognize themselves as members of the same national community, and cooperate to accomplish a great common mission of high spiritual value.

‘The unity of destiny takes us from people to nation, from this latter to empire,’ wrote Fet de las Jons general secretary Raimundo Fernández Cuesta in the periodical Vértice in 1938, showing that Spanish Fascists saw in the nation and in empire two historically

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¹⁰ La gaita y la lira, in F.E., no. 2, January 11, 1934, reproduced in J.A. Primo de Rivera, Escritos y discursos. Obras completas (1922-1936), p. 249. [Author’s translation: ‘We do not have to see in the Fatherland the stream and the lawn, the song and the bagpipe; let’s see a destiny, an endeavour. The Fatherland is the one that, in the world, formed a collective endeavour. Without endeavour, there is no Fatherland; without the presence of faith in a common destiny, everything dissolves in native regions, in local flavours and colours.’]

¹¹ Not all the theorists of Spanish Fascism shared this way of thinking. Among them, there was Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, who believed that the empire was a goal in itself and not a means to solve internal political problems. In I. Saz Campos, España contra España. Los nacionalismos franquistas, p. 122.
inseparable and interconnected dimensions. By virtue of this conviction, they hoped that the resurgence of the homeland would correspond with a simultaneous imperial rebirth, since the greatness of the nation could be achieved only through the recovery of empire.

The reality, however, was that the 1930s was a convulsive phase in Spanish political history and the country did not have the resources to embark on such ambitious plans of colonial reconquest, especially after the outbreak of the Civil War, which consumed all the energies of the nation internally. When the fighting ceased in April 1939, Spain was on its knees and Franco’s regime had to face much more pressing problems. Indeed, it was imperative to repair the social fabric which had been torn to shreds in three years of fratricidal clashes, and to fix the State economy that had been destroyed by the conflict.

Civil War wounds were still raw, but this did not distract the men of the Falange from their intentions. While rejecting the idea of a colonial policy based on monopoly and the concept of protectorate - which they considered a ‘hypocritical European formula to hide ruthless exploitation’ - they claimed the ‘right to defend Spanish civilization in the world’. Spain had to again become the spiritual axis of the ‘great Hispanic brotherhood’, which brought together about 200 million individuals of different races all over the world, sharing the same language, the same customs and traditions, and, not least, the same religious belief: the Catholic one.

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In the Falangist transfiguration of the past, the confessional element was a decisive factor in the success of the *conquistadores’* endeavours since the end of the 15th Century. The evangelization of indigenous populations and their conversion to Christianity, in fact, gave a symbolic and mystical significance to the colonial mandate. In other words, it was not only the manifestation of the power of the Spanish nation, which had begun to discover unexplored worlds; it was also a divine mission to spread the Word of God, against all sorts of heresy and paganism. \(^{65}\)

The strong Catholic imprint given to the whole process of building a national and imperial identity since 1492 explains why the appeal to Catholicism was a recurrent theme in the discourse of the Falangist theorists. Having said that, it must be made clear that Spanish Fascism, like Italian Fascism, was not a confessional movement. Onésimo Redondo Ortega explicitly declared this in February 1932 when he stated that Jonsist nationalism - being totalitarian - could not represent any faction, not even the county’s main religious group. \(^{66}\) Ledesma Ramos emphasized this from an even more radical point of view in 1935, when he clearly spelt out the priority of the Fe de las

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\(^{65}\) A. Tovar, *El imperio de España*, pp. 52-66.


\(^{67}\) O. Redondo Ortega, *Ensayo sobre el nacionalismo*, in *El estado nacional*, p. 41. As for the Italian case, it was Giovanni Gentile who made it clear that: ‘The Fascist State is […] a totalitarian State; it leaves nothing out of it. […] To those who talk about Catholic Fascism, therefore, I have the honor of saying, […] that they understand very little about it. Fascism is Fascism, with its affinities and divergences in comparison to other religious and philosophical concepts; but with its originality’. In G. Gentile, *Dopo la fondazione dell’impero*, 1936, reproduced in G. Gentile, *Politica e cultura*, vol. 2, 1990, p. 150.

\(^{68}\) Spanish Fascism could not be confessional for two reasons. First of all, because it would have been absurd to raise the flag of religion since Falangism systematically resorted to violence as a legitimate instrument of political struggle. Secondly, because it would antagonize most of the masses of workers, that Spanish Fascism wanted to wrest from the control of the Marxist, atheist, and anti-national organizations. In O. Redondo Ortega, *Ensayo sobre el nacionalismo*, in *El estado nacional*, pp. 42-47.
Jons: the realization of the greatness of the nation, not the salvation of mankind. ‘National morals’ - that everyone had to follow - and ‘religious morals’ were not in conflict with each other, but were certainly not the same. They were two distinct plans, and had to remain so, as set out in the party’s programmatic rules.

In this sense, the attitude of the Falange towards the Church was in many respects similar to that of the Pnf. The religion of the Spaniards, as that of the Italians, was Catholicism. Opposing it would have meant losing the sympathy of the majority of the population. Yet, beyond mere calculations of political expediency, there was a profound difference between the two countries. In Italy, the peninsula’s unification had taken place not only without Church participation, but in the face of clear opposition from the entire Catholic community, which did not participate in State life until 1913, the year in which the Gentiloni Pact was concluded. Conversely, Catholicism in Spain had played a fundamental role in the birth and consolidation of the nation State and its empire. Therefore, the Falangists - who proclaimed themselves successors of that nation and empire built from the end of the 15th Century - had to accept that reality and could not do anything

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69 R. Ledesma Ramos, Discurso a las juventudes de España, p. 88.
70 Ibidem, p. 70.
71 In particular, it was the point twenty-five of the programme that gave indications about the relations that should have existed between the Falangist State and the Church. First of all, the text of the article established that the new party would commit itself to incorporating the Catholic sentiment, ‘of glorious tradition and predominant in Spain’, in the process of regeneration of the homeland. Actually, in the next paragraph, the article provided that the Church could not interfere in the State affairs and prevented it from carrying out any activity that could have diminished the national integrity. In Norma programática de la Falange, November 1934, reproduced in J.A. Primo de Rivera, Revolución nacional, p. 40.
72 Cf. R. Ledesma Ramos, Discurso a las juventudes de España, p. 87.
besides incorporating, at least partly, the religious element in their ideological universe.74

This is why blue shirt ideologists’ expansionist dreams always involved - to a lesser extent before the outbreak of the Civil War, and to a greater degree after 1937 - recalling the Catholic tradition, to which the same idea of empire was tied. In the early 1930s, loyal supporters of the laic and totalitarian State such as Ledesma Ramos and Redondo Ortega had already acknowledged that the greatness of the country was historically linked to its Catholic essence.75 In 1933, it was Giménez Caballero who declared that Fascism represented the ‘new Catholicity in the world’, and that Spain would regain its ancient imperial prestige and go back to being the right arm of the universal Christian ideal.76 Similarly, José Antonio Primo de Rivera recalled how Spain had taken civilization to the inhabitants of unknown continents and incorporated them into a ‘universal feat of salvation’.

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74 The presence of the Catholic element in the doctrine of the *camisas azules* is a peculiarity of the Spanish Fascist identity, which can not be found in the Italian one. The fact that the Falangist thought contained original elements compared to the other Fascist movements of the time was a badge of honour for some of its ideologues. Indeed, while declaring to draw inevitably on Mussolini’s doctrine, they tried to free themselves from it in order to restate their authenticity. In this respect, José Antonio Primo de Rivera’s words, pronounced in 1934, are emblematic: ‘People says that we imitate Italy. Yes, we do it in order to search our inner raison d’être in our own guts’. In J.A. Primo de Rivera, *Declaraciones en ‘Ahora’*, in *Ahora*, February 16, 1934, reproduced in J.A. Primo de Rivera, *Escritos y discursos. Obras Completas* (1922-1936), pp. 305-306. Cf. also J.A. Primo de Rivera, *Discurso de proclamación de Falange Española de las J.O.N.S. pronunciado en el Teatro Calderón de Valladolid el día 4 marzo 1934*, in J.A. Primo de Rivera, *Escritos y discursos. Obras Completas* (1922-1936), p. 331; O. Redondo Ortega, *El Estado del porvenir*, February 20, 1933, in *El Estado nacional*, pp. 114-115.

75 Nevertheless, Ledesma Ramos claimed that Catholicism in the 1930s had become a divisive element and it no longer represented a unifying factor. R. Ledesma Ramos, *¿Fascismo en España?*, 1935, reproduced in Id., *Obras completas*, vol. IV, pp. 154-155; O. Redondo Ortega, *Ensayo sobre el nacionalismo*, in *El estado nacional*, pp. 42-43.

76 E. Giménez Caballero, *Puntos de partida*, in *El fascio*, no. 1, March 16, 1933, p. 3.
thanks to its ‘sense of Catholicity’. In the opinion of the Fe founder, this was the element that made the country great for centuries. And this should be the starting point to rebuild Spanish national and colonial power under the watchful eye of the Falange.

After the unification with the traditionalists in April 1937 and the rise of anti-clerical republican fury - which gave to the Civil War the sense of a ‘cruzada’ ('crusade') - Falangist references to Catholicism increased exponentially. From then on, the party attempted - not without difficulty - to integrate religion into its political thought while committing itself to retaining its revolutionary character. One example is that, one year earlier, José Pemartín - who became head of the Secondary Education National Service in 1938 - indicated that Catholicism had the ‘fundamental national ideology’ of the Falange.

In his view, the New Spain could recover its imperial standing only by spreading the ‘great Hispanic, Latin, Christian culture’ in the world under the emblem of the yoke and arrows of the Fet de las Jons. Similarly, party historian and philosopher Pedro Laín Entralgo, attempting to reconcile Fascism with religion, stated: ‘In the Catholic element, there is [...] a spiritual centre that gives meaning and transcendent virtue to our unity of destiny’; a unity of destiny lost in

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78 Ibidem.
79 As Ismael Saz states, ‘Spanish Fascism reconstructed its discourse integrating the Catholic component. However, it did not become National Catholic’. According to the Valencian historian, ‘the Falangist attitude was a continuous balance, an unresolved oscillation between the reaffirmation of the most orthodox submission to the principles of the Church and the most nationalistic attitudes’. In I. Saz Campos, España contra España. Los nacionalismos franquistas, pp. 203, 220, 405.
81 Ibidem, p. 152.
time but that, in his opinion, the Falange would retrieve with its revolutionary energies\(^{82}\).

Firmly convinced of this, Antonio Tovar associated the imperial essence of his people with the Catholic values of the Counter-Reformation, that he matched with Fascist values\(^{83}\). The Spain of the 15th Century, he wrote, had launched itself ‘by way of spiritual unity and the humanization of coloured races elevated to the dignity of Christians’\(^{84}\). The empire of the Falange would behave in a similar way, since it would perform not only the task of preserving the Spanish language and traditions in the world, but also - above all - save ‘the soul of the Hispanidad, that is, Catholicism’\(^{85}\).

While many claims of the National syndicalist theorists dealt with colonial rebirth on eminently cultural and spiritual grounds, it is nonetheless true that in the party - that was born Fascist and radical for all intents and purposes - there were many who fought to promote plans of concrete territorial expansion\(^{86}\). Indeed, from the very beginning, some of the Falange most illustrious ideologues envisaged the rebuilding of an empire based on strength, domination, and the physical occupation of territories\(^{87}\). Undoubtedly, this happened to a


\(^{83}\) I. Saz Campos, *España contra España. Los nacionalismos franquistas*, pp. 204-209.

\(^{84}\) A. Tovar, *El imperio de España*, pp. 60-61.


greater extent between 1935 and the early 1940s, when the successes of the Axis powers were promising indicators of a new configuration of a Fascist international order.\textsuperscript{88}

In such circumstances, the blue shirts thought they could take advantage of the redistribution of power in the Old Continent. So they promoted, with even greater force and conviction, their projects of effective conquest, both in Europe and beyond. True power, they argued, ‘can never lack a vigorous physical reality that imposes the order of a thought’\textsuperscript{89}. The empire of the Falange would not be a ‘rhetorical empire’\textsuperscript{90}. The \textit{camisas azules} were not willing to live in a memory of past glory. They would not be content with some right of ‘cultural pre-emption’ on former Spanish domains. Most importantly, they would not stand around with their arms folded avoiding duties - not only moral, but also practical and substantial - that their universal destiny enjoined on them.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{88} The Falangists recognized a role of imperial power to Italy, and expressed their enthusiasm for the great success of Mussolini’s campaign in Abyssinia. The \textit{camisas azules} praised the Duce for carrying out a masterful work of civilization towards the ‘wild’ Ethiopians, and expressed their strong opposition to the economic sanctions of the Spanish republican government against Italy. The support of the Falange to the colonial feat of the Italian Fascism was undeniably dictated by ideological affinities between the two movements. However, it is of significant importance also the fact that, at that time, José Antonio Primo de Rivera received a monthly subsidy of 50,000 lire, granted by the undersecretary of State for the press and propaganda, Galeazzo Ciano, through the Italian Embassy in Paris. In J. del Val Carrasco, \textit{Delirios de grandeza. La idea del Imperio en el fascismo español de preguerra, 1931-1936}, in \textit{Historia} 16, no. 164, 1989, p. 14. Cf. also \textit{El estado social de Abisinia}, in \textit{Arriba}, no. 21, 1935.

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{El imperio retórico}, in \textit{Arriba}, no. 403, July 16, 1940, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibidem. See also I. Saz Campos, \textit{España contra España. Los nacionalismos franquistas}, p. 275.
2. *The routes of the empire*

After a long period of intestinal fights, colonial defeats, outrages and humiliations at the international level, Fascist Italy and that part of Spain that recognized itself as the Falange claimed boldly to have full awareness of their historic mission in the world. So they did not hesitate to announce their expansionist policy guidelines.

A common goal was, certainly, the claim of the natural possession of the Mediterranean area. In this regard, the Italo-Spanish agreement was considered the starting point for redefining the geopolitical order in that strategic zone. After all, Mussolini did not hide the fact that supporting Franco during the Civil War had been dictated, among other reasons, by the fear that a Bolshevik victory in Spain would have made Madrid dependent on Moscow and Paris, thus strongly reducing Italy’s influence in the Mediterranean basin. This was an area that the Fascists regarded as the ‘real metropolitan frontier’ of their country and which, they argued, would open the way for national expansion to Africa and Asia. In fact, since there was no possibility of expansion beyond the Atlantic, it was in the Near East, above all, where Fascist ideologues envisaged their imperial projects. In that area, that was considered wild and underdeveloped, they thought there was still room for Italian work ‘in the interest of civilization’. And in those lands, ‘once largely covered by Roman eagles’, the colonists of

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93 *Ibidem*, pp. 141-142.
the Littorio would have begun their ‘peaceful and fruitful penetration’.96

Motivated by such convictions, even in the aftermath of the March on Rome in October 1922, Mussolini started to make demands on the Maghreb, claiming rights in regions of obvious strategic value as, for example, Tangier and Tunisia. In the former case, the Duce demanded an authoritative role for Italy in the administrative decisions of the Morroccan city, which was not only an important port on the Strait of Gibraltar but had also hosted a large Italian settlement for years. Although it had been under an international regime in 1912, the area was the object of the often conflicting interests of France, Spain and Great Britain. The need for a greater and more precise regulation led to the signing of a convention by the three European powers on December 18, 1923, which gave the French government a privileged role in the territorial and municipal management of the city. Fascist Italy, which was excluded from the negotiations, openly opposed the new agreement. The tense situation induced a rapprochement with Spain that had an anti-French tone, albeit not explicitly. At the same time, it worsened the already complex relationship between the Quai d’Orsay and Italy, which refused to tolerate the invasive colonial policy of Paris in the Mediterranean. The turf war was settled only four years later with a demonstration of strength, when Mussolini sent three warships to Tangier as a ‘warning’ in October 1927 to secure the recognition of Italian rights over the Maghrebi city, that took place officially in July 192897.

Although the Moroccan feud was resolved diplomatically, it revived old disagreements between Italy and France on Tunisia. The

96 Ibidem.
dispute between the two countries started in 1881, when the French protectorate was established in the region. The news was received with anger and disappointment by the then president of the Italian Council, Benedetto Cairoli, who had made the colonization of Tunisia one of the aims of his government’s foreign policy, since he considered it, in some ways, an appendage of the metropolitan territory. Indeed, there was a big community of expatriate compatriots there - the largest in the country - enjoying rights and freedoms provided by the capitulatory regime and recognized by France in September 1896. But when, in 1919, the French authorities announced their intention to abolish these privileges and in 1925 declared that they were ready to implement a plan to ‘Frenchize’ more than 12,000 Italians in twelve years, tensions between Rome and Paris rose to a high level. Mussolini became firmly determined to defend the interests of Italy in the Mediterranean, and intervened resolutely in Tunisian issue. So the Pnf created in loco schools and credit institutions, established welfare organizations, and intensified propaganda, in order to win the sympathies of the local ruling class and to maintain control of that strategic area, located close to the western coast of Sicily.

In addition to claiming questionable rights in Morocco and Tunisia, Fascism had since 1923 committed itself to consolidating the Italian presence in areas already under Rome’s authority. So it happened in Libya, which became a possession of the Kingdom of Italy on October 18, 1912 with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne ending the Italian-Turkish War, started the year before. Despite international recognition of Italian sovereignty in that country, after the end of the conflict, several areas still were not under the control of

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98 Ibidem, pp. 157-161.
the homeland. In fact, although the conquest of the coast was realized quickly and with relative ease, the troops sent by Giolitti - who had endorsed the colonial expedition with little enthusiasm - encountered many obstacles in imposing their domination in the hinterland. Specifically, the situation was particularly difficult in Cirenaica, where the indigenous resistance led by the Islamic confraternity of Senussi proved to be rather tenacious.

The outbreak of World War I complicated the already delicate situation, compromising the results achieved so far. In order to cope with war needs, a large number of military units in Libya were recalled home, and the Italian presence in the occupied territories was drastically reduced. Many internal locations were left abruptly and in a disorderly manner, thus easily returning under the control of autochthonous peoples. About sixty thousand Italian soldiers remained in the country, but they guarded only the coastal area and defended themselves from attacks by Arab garrisons.

The return to a decisive expansionist policy took place only after the conflict in Europe ended. Beginning in January 1922, the Bonomi government started operations to reconquer Libya. The fatigue and poor organization of the local rebels, in contrast to the greater security and speed of the Italian troops, allowed the latter to attain some quick victories. But it was when Fascism came to power in October of the same year, that the colonial enterprise initiated earlier was accelerated, since it could then count on the full support of Mussolini’s

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101 Ibidem, pp. 128-133.

executive. The Duce, ignoring promises made earlier about peaceful penetration, did not hesitate to legitimize the recourse to extremely unorthodox tools: acts of violent repression against the population and the Senussi warriors, house-to-house searches, expropriations, the use of poison gas, confinement in concentration camps, and the slaughter of livestock. Those were the practices endorsed by Giuseppe Volpi, governor of Tripolitania from 1921 to 1925, and implemented from 1923 by the troops of Rodolfo Graziani to bring the whole of Libya under the command of Rome.

This goal was achieved in January 1932, when the sole governor of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, Marshal Pietro Badoglio, proudly declared that all subversive activity had been annihilated. Two years later, with the Royal Decree no. 2012 of December 3, 1934, the two territories were united into a single colony under Italo Balbo’s general governorate. At the same time, its administrative division was established in four provincial districts - Tripoli, Misurata, Bengasi and Derna - besides a southern military territory, which was responsible for controlling the Saharan area.

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The black shirts enthusiastically welcomed the conclusion of the colonial enterprise in Libya, which they claimed had finally returned to being Roman again. In actual fact, however, beyond the Fascist exaltation dictated by the imperial climate, the country was extremely poor, predominantly desert and scarcely inhabited. Still, on the one hand, Mussolini had his eye on the capacity of that territory to absorb growing ‘metropolitan energies’, to be used in managing large and medium-size farms, expressly created by the regime and financed by the State. On the other hand, the Duce found the 1,800-kilometre Tripolitan and Cyrenaic coast on the Mediterranean Sea enticing, considering it the ‘fourth shore’ of Italy.

Alongside the efforts to valorize Libyan possessions, during the 1920s, Fascism sought to strengthen the country’s presence in the Dodecanese islands, seized from the Ottoman Empire in 1912 and officially recognized as territories subject to Rome’s jurisdiction with the Second Treaty of Lausanne, which entered into force in August 1924. In the party’s geopolitical view, the control of this archipelago was indispensable for an ‘imperial and totalitarian nation’ like Italy: firstly, because those islands played an important role in

108 It should be noted that, although the first studies of the Libyan subsoil were conducted during the Thirties by the geologist Ardito Desio, who identified the presence of hydrocarbons in certain parts of the country, the discovery of the largest oil deposits and the resulting extractive activity by American companies dates back to the second half of the 1950s. Cf. D. Vandewalle, A history of modern Libya, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 44. About Ardito Desio’s studies regarding Lybia see G. Stefanini and A. Desio, Le colonie, Rodi e le altre isole italiane dell’Egeo, Torino, Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1928, pp. 273-362.
110 From 1912 to 1924, the Dodecanese islands were subjected to military occupation by the Italian Expeditionary Force in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. With the entry into force of the Second Treaty of Lausanne in August 1924, they were definitively recognized at international level as territories subject to Italian sovereignty. Since then, they were known as ‘Italian Islands of the Aegean’. Cf. N. Labanca, Oltre mare. Storia dell’espansione coloniale italiana, pp. 124, 145; J.L. Miège, L’imperialismo coloniale italiano. Dal 1870 ai nostri giorni, pp. 202-203.
defence against possible attacks by Western powers, as well as Balkan and Asian ones; and secondly, because they constituted a ‘base for the cultural and spiritual expansion of Italy in the Near East’, as well as a fundamental point of support for trade with countries in that region. It is not stretching the truth to say that many Italians admired this accomplishment of the regime, which had gained international recognition of the Italian domination on the Dodecanese and promoted a form of superior civilization in those possessions. All credit for this great feat was given to Benito Mussolini, who was celebrated for realizing what the jurist and historian Renzo Sertoli Salis called ‘a beautiful page of our Mediterranean history’; and for asserting, ‘in the light of the Empire, an Italian tradition in the Levant’ bound to last for centuries.

The importance of that archipelago facing Turkey was undeniable. Yet, there were some Fascist leaders who insisted that the ‘keys to that expansion in the world that a renewed Italy, rich in active youth, [had] the right to’ - in order to affirm its ‘peaceful and fruitful mission of Romanity’ - were to be found in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, where the tricolour flag had flown in some areas for a while already. In fact, since 1890, the Italian State had extended its sovereignty over Eritrea, a very poor land, difficult to develop from an agricultural point of view, and unprofitable as regards mining operations. Its importance essentially lay in the port of Massaua,

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112 R. Sertoli Salis, Le isole italiane dell’Egeo dall’occupazione alla sovranità, p. 344.
114 Cultivations could only be planted, and to a modest extent, on the tablelands in the hinterland of the country. On the other hand, mining activity was limited to salt extraction in neighbouring areas of the cities of Massawa, Uachiro and Assab.
which became one of the most modern trading centres of the Red Sea, and to its proximity to Ethiopia, which for decades had been the focus of Rome’s expansionist ambitions.\footnote{O. Gabelli, *Le vicende della colonizzazione italiana in Eritrea e in Somalia*, in T. Sillani, *L’Africa orientale italiana (Eritrea e Somalia)*, pp. 104-112. Cf. N. Labanca, *Oltremare. Storia dell’espansione coloniale italiana*, p. 274.}

On the other hand, the occupation of Somalia dated back to 1908, even if Italy obtained full control of it only in 1927 after two years of military intervention - ordered by Mussolini and led by then governor Caesar Maria De Vecchi - leading to the pacification of the northern rebel sultanates.\footnote{N. Labanca, *Oltremare. Storia dell’espansione coloniale italiana*, pp. 170-172; J.L. Miège, *L’imperialismo coloniale italiano. Dal 1870 ai nostri giorni*, pp. 200-201.} Mostly desert and poorly populated, the Somali colony gained more value since, with the signing of a protocol in July 1924, the Fascist government obtained from Great Britain the cession of the area on the right bank of the River Juba. It was part of the former British province of Jubaland, a fertile area that, according to Pnf technicians, would allow the growing of indigenous crops - mostly cotton, bananas and kapok - and improving the country’s livestock.\footnote{G.E. Pistolese, *L’acquisto dell’oltregiuba*; O. Gabelli, *Le vicende della colonizzazione italiana in Eritrea e in Somalia*; A. Lessona, *L’Eritrea e la Somalia nei fini dell’espansione italiana*. They can all be found in T. Sillani, *L’Africa orientale italiana (Eritrea e Somalia)*, respectively at pp. 98-99, 112-118, 119-127. Cf. N. Labanca, *Oltremare. Storia dell’espansione coloniale italiana*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2002, pp. 145, 275.}

This was the picture of Italian possessions in the world at the beginning of the 1930s, which included a territorial concession in a small part of the Chinese city of Tientsin, obtained following Italy’s participation in the 1901 Boxer War.\footnote{N. Labanca, *Oltremare. Storia dell’espansione coloniale italiana*, pp. 96-99. See also A. Cicchitti Suriani, *La concessione italiana di Tien Tsin (1901-1951)*, Roma, Attività editrice internazionale, 1950, pp. 1-6.} Fascist rhetoric trumpeted the
importance of these domains. The reality, however, was that the regime’s colonies were scarcely profitable from either an agricultural or mining point of view; and that years of intensive economic and military efforts were required to control and develop those resources. The dominant feeling among Fascist leaders was that Rome was cut off from a fair division of Africa, that it got territories devoid of concrete value, and that, in essence, it had to content itself with scraps left by Paris and London.

Determined to erase the image of Italy as a third-rate power, Pnf theorists - who until then had basically acted in accordance with pre-Fascist foreign policy - began to delineate in a clear and organic way their own colonialist project. Their intention was to ‘carry the whole life of the nation to the plan of the Empire’, and they would do so through a long-overdue conquest of the Abyssinian lands to which, in their view, Italy had ‘title deeds, provided by the blood spilled from its children’.

From the early 1930s, therefore, Fascist references to empire become stronger and more frequent, due to several factors: firstly, the need to restore to the nation the lost honour and imperial prestige that it deserved; secondly, the will to project the Fatherland to new and more ambitious goals. These motivations were accompanied by the urgent necessity to escape the economic crisis that hit Italy as a result of the Great Depression that began in America in 1929, as well as by

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120 Once the resistance in Cyrenaica was repressed and the riots in the northern sultanates in Somalia were dissolved, the Fascist regime had all the resources it needed to venture into a new colonial mission.
the hope of rebuilding the unity of the nation with a new colonial war and consolidating the prestige of the regime and the Duce\textsuperscript{121}.

The party felt that conquering Ethiopia would improve Italy’s situation as it would have allowed the homeland to export its products there and ensured a continuous supply of raw materials such as minerals, wheat, cotton, wool and coffee. It would also have guaranteed employment and a dignified lifestyle for settlers - especially poor peasants, unemployed and unskilled workers, small provincial officials, low-ranking officers and hierarchs - who wished to improve their socio-economic status\textsuperscript{122}. Not least, it would have finally avenged Italy’s defeat in the 1896 Battle of Adua which, after more than thirty years, still rankled as an open wound in national pride\textsuperscript{123}.

Considering the reasons behind Fascist colonial ambitions, it is not convincing the thesis accoding to which the Fascist campaign in Abyssinia was an extemporaneous venture of the regime. In fact, the first political preparations for it dated back to 1932, when the then Minister of the Colonies, Emilio De Bono, prepared a report on a possible offensive against Ethiopia, and alerted the Minister of War, the Air Force Minister and the Governor of Eritrea of this intention\textsuperscript{124}. The project presented by the quadrumvir of the March on Rome,

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however, remained a dead letter until 1934, when the Duce began to concretely prepare Italy’s military resources to annex Ethiopia.\(^{125}\)

The casus belli was provided by the Ual-Ual incident in December of the same year, after which the party’s propaganda machine was promptly set in motion to convince public opinion of the urgent need to intervene and fight the army of Negus Haile Selassie.\(^{126}\) The substantial acquiescence of France and Great Britain - that did not want to jeopardize diplomatic relations with Mussolini’s Italy, to keep the Stresa Front united - facilitated the regime’s demands. Italy started war operations on October 3, 1935 without encountering any particular resistance from the international community. The minor economic sanctions approved by the Society of Nations - in an attempt to stop the Duce from his occupation plans - were not only ineffective but also counterproductive.\(^{127}\) They, in fact, allowed the party to attach even greater importance to the mission in Ethiopia, claiming that the honour of the homeland was at stake.\(^{128}\)

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As Giuseppe Bottai argued at the time, those who had ‘foolishly thought of using the Ethiopian conflict as a reagent to dissociate “Fascism” from “Nation”’ were totally wrong. The war taking place in Abyssinia was not just a colonial war but a ‘Fascist war’ and a ‘national war’, because it was an endeavour of the party and the people, in which 400,000 men of the regular Italian army, well organised and well equipped, fought and succeeded in wiping out indigenous resistance in a short time.

On May 5, 1936 - seven months after the start of the military campaign - Mussolini announced the entry of Marshal Badoglio into Addis Ababa and proclaimed that Ethiopia was Italian. On May 9 of the fourteenth year of the Fascist era, the Duce welcomed the ‘reappearance of the Empire on the fateful hills of Rome’; an empire which, according to its founder, bore ‘the indestructible signs of the will and power of the Littorio’.

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In an atmosphere of euphoria and jubilation, oceanic crowds applauded the regime and praised the Duce, who had succeeded in giving Italy the place in the sun that it deserved\(^{133}\). In the climate of collective exaltation that arose in the country, people also came to think that the Ethiopian campaign was a precursor to a bigger endeavour, to be extended even beyond the Strait of Gibraltar. That was also the view of Roberto Pavese, who wrote in \textit{Gerarchia} in July 1936:

Dall’Africa la nuova romanità potrà gettare un ponte dal passato verso il futuro del suo Impero: dai lidi del Mediterraneo a quelli dell’Atlantico meridionale, dall’Europa al Sud-America, dovunque Roma ha portato il suo idioma e la sua fede. E al di là dell’Atlantico si chiuderà un giorno quel ciclo che forse nell’Atlantide ebbe la sua lontana origine\(^{134}\).

The cycle that Pavese talked about was closed long before he thought, actually, when Fascism made its final colonial conquest in the spring of 1939: the ‘fifth shore’ of Italy, namely the Balkan one\(^{135}\). After a short occupation lasting just a few days, a constituent assembly meeting in Tirana on April 12 offered the crown of Albania to King Vittorio Emanuele III. The following night, the Grand Council of Fascism met in an extraordinary session to celebrate with


\(^{134}\) R. Pavese, \textit{Statura dell’Impero}, in \textit{Gerarchia}, no. 7, July 1936, p. 455. [Author’s translation: ‘From Africa, the new Romanity can build a bridge from the past to the future of its empire: from the Mediterranean coast to that of the southern Atlantic Ocean, from Europe to South America, wherever Rome has taken its idiom and its faith. And beyond the Atlantic Ocean, that cycle that perhaps in Atlantis had its distant origin will close one day.’]

‘virile joy’ that memorable event\textsuperscript{136}. With it, the future of the skipetarian people was officially tied to Italian destiny ‘under the sceptre of the Savoy and with the rules of the Littorio’ which, after centuries, had finally brought Italy back to its ‘imperial fastigium’\textsuperscript{137}.

Exalted by the regime’s expansionist success, Mussolini decided to go to war just two months later alongside his National Socialist ally, driven by the desire - as will be seen in the last chapter of this work - to realize his own project of a new order in the Mediterranean basin, led by Fascist Italy. In this context, he chose to wage a ‘parallel war’ with exclusively national goals that started with the Battle of the Alps in June 1940, and continued with the campaign in Greece on October 28 the same year. Through these two military expeditions - in which Hitler’s Germany gave its substantial contribution - Italy gained control of some French municipalities along its western border. Moreover, it occupied southern Slovenia, the southwestern part of Croatia, the coast of Dalmatia, Montenegro, most of Kosovo, western Macedonia, most of the Greek territory and its islands, as well as, in November 1942, Corsica and eight districts in the south-eastern part of France, including the Principality of Monaco\textsuperscript{138}.


\textsuperscript{137} G. Ambrosini, L’Albania nella comunità imperiale di Roma, Roma, Istituto nazionale di cultura fascista, 1940, p. 8. See also the speech held by Costanzo Ciano on 15 April, during the 30th session of Camera dei fasci e delle corporazioni. On that occasion, the president of the assembly welcomed the endeavour with these words: ‘Now that the Albanian people have found its way, now that the tricolour flag and the banner of the eagle wave next to each other, no more doubt is permitted: Albania is heading definitively toward that great happy future that Imperial Rome assures it in the glorious name of the Duce’. In Resoconto stenografico della riunione di sabato 15 aprile 1939 della Camera dei fasci e delle corporazioni, XXX session, Assemblea plenaria, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{138} D. Rodogno, Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo. Le politiche di occupazione dell’Italia fascista in Europa (1940-1943), Torino, Bollati Borghieri, 2003, pp. 31-32.
The parallel war, a major miscalculation of Fascist imperialism, ended in abject failure. The Duce had always been firmly convinced of the superiority of the Royal Army, which, according to him, would have wiped out any resistance. But the reality was very different. This became evident in the summer of 1943, when the regime - internally divided, without popular consensus, and checked by the Allied powers that landed in Sicily on July 10 and began to free the peninsula - collapsed ruinously with its empire.

Nonetheless, until then, Mussolini’s colonial endeavours must have seemed to Falangists as proof of Fascism’s effectiveness in foreign policy. It is perhaps for this reason that they declared themselves even more determined to revive a real empire for Spain, because they were convinced that, once the internal crisis was overcome and the dignity of the nation was restored to the people, there were infinite possibilities in the international arena\textsuperscript{139}.

The \textit{camisas azules} began to make territorial demands right from the beginning of their movement, since they were sure that the realization of the new Jonsist and Falangist State in the near future would have turned their projects of conquest into reality. Certainly, the annexation of Vasconia, in southwest France, was one of them. Party theorists considered this region contiguous with the territory and population of the Basque country, which it should have therefore joined. For example, José María Cordero Torres, a Falangist expert in colonial studies, wrote in an article published in the periodical \textit{JONS} in May 1934: ‘The border divides an identical landscape: the same faces, the same blood. Euskeras, that is, non-Romanized Spaniards. Consequence? French Basque country [...] must be Spanish’\textsuperscript{140}.

\textsuperscript{139} R. Ledesma Ramos, \textit{Discurso a las juventudes de España}, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{140} J.M. Cordero Torres, \textit{Un mes bajo el emblema del lector romano}, in \textit{JONS}, no. 10, May 1934.
Analogous claims were made on the Principality of Andorra, a small independent State near Catalonia; as well as Roussillon and the high Cerdanya, ancient regions belonging to the Aragonian crown, ceded by Philip IV to France in the Pyrénées Treaty of 1659\textsuperscript{141}.

With these initial goals highlighted, it is important to add that the expansionist plans of the Falangists were much more ambitious, and certainly not limited to modest demands for small border territories. The rebirth of the empire involved many other valorous dreams, starting with the unification of the entire Iberian peninsula under the emblem of the yoke and arrows. The first statements in this regard dated back to 1931, when Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, in the pages of the periodical \textit{La Conquista del Estado}, clearly promoted the annexation of Portugal by Spain\textsuperscript{142}. This was a leitmotif in the writings of the most radical theorist of Spanish Fascism, who was convinced that the two countries were made up of a ‘unique people who, after a romantic period of national independence, [could] and [had] to merge into an empire’\textsuperscript{143}.

Ledesma progressed to the point of depicting this ambition almost as a mission to save Spain’s Portuguese neighbours, ‘exposed to a militaristic tyranny that dishonoured them’ and threatened by the danger of an imminent ‘sovietization’\textsuperscript{144}. On the basis of these assumptions, he believed it was a moral obligation for Spain to ‘prevent the noble Portuguese people from suffering both betrayals’,
and to integrate the Lusitanian State ‘in the Spanish imperial order, helping it to separate itself from the powers that oppressed it’\textsuperscript{145}.

For the Jons co-founder, this aim was of such importance as to justify the use of force, if necessary. The article titled ‘¿Conquistamos Portugal o Portugal nos conquista?’ was an example of this position. In it, Ledesma - dropping his previous sedate and ‘benevolent’ tone - declared peremptorily: ‘If Spain finds its eternal route, at the moment of regaining its territorial sovereignty, Portugal will at the same moment be ours for a genuine and clean right of conquest’\textsuperscript{146}.

For his part, José Antonio Primo de Rivera seemed to favour such a project of territorial assimilation, pointed out one of his most famous biographers, Felipe Ximénez de Sandoval. His account contains the report of a private conversation between the Fe founder and some of his faithful comrades, in which José Antonio indicated his choice of Lisbon for the unique capital of the envisaged Spanish empire of the Falange, ‘through which all the Iberian impetus that summarizes the Tagus River enters the Atlantic Ocean, and from which the immense Hispanidad of our American blood can be seen face to face’\textsuperscript{147}.

Claims on Portugal were often accompanied by the exhortation to reconquer another territory of enormous strategic value: Gibraltar. The

\textsuperscript{145} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{146} R. Ledesma Ramos, ¿Conquistamos Portugal o Portugal nos conquista?, in \textit{La Conquista del Estado}, no. 20, October 3, 1931.

\textsuperscript{147} The Falangist plans of annexation of Portugal really had to frighten the President of the Lusitanian Council, Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, who signed with Franco’s Spain a treaty of friendship and not aggression in March 1939, through which he sought to preserve the independence of his country by the imperialist ambitions of the \textit{camisas azules}. The agreement, in fact, provided for the Contracting Parties to mutually commit themselves to respecting their frontiers and not to threaten in any way the territorial integrity of the other State. The text of the Treaty of Friendship and Not Aggression between Spain and Portugal of March 17, 1939 is reproduced in J.M. Cordero Torres, \textit{Relaciones exteriores de España (problema de la presencia española en el mundo)}, Madrid, Ediciones del Movimiento, 1954, pp. 309-310. The quote can be found in F. Ximénez de Sandoval, José Antonio (Biografía apasionada), Barcelona, Editorial Juventud, 1941, p. 457.
city, located at the entrance of the homonymous strait that links the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, was surrendered to England in the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. For the next two centuries, the Spaniards repeatedly attempted to recover it, but failed. The loss of Gibraltar, the ‘neuralgic point of the life and grandeur’ of the homeland, was a shame for national pride, which the camisas azules were determined to erase\textsuperscript{148}. ‘Gibraltar [...] has been, is, and will remain the constant concern of the Falange,’ said Ximénez de Sandoval in 1937; since he was convinced that, in the near future, the world would have seen ‘the victorious flags of Spain Una, Grande y Libre’ flying once again in the fortress of Peñón\textsuperscript{149}.

After all, for the Falangist theorists, regaining that territory meant a significant first step towards reaffirming Spain’s hegemonic role in the Mediterranean and securing an important bridgehead to advance into North Africa, where Madrid had historical precedents and material interests\textsuperscript{150}. ‘The African call continues to reverberate insistently in the ears of all Spaniards,’ affirmed party ideologues, who saw in lands on the other side of the Strait - where ‘many [Hispanic] illusions and lots of [Hispanic] blood’ were buried - the natural continuation of their homeland\textsuperscript{151}.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[149] F. Ximénez de Sandoval, \textit{Esquema de una política exterior nacionalsindicalista}, p. 192.
\item[151] El destino africano de España, in \textit{Pueblo}, no. 704, October 13, 1942, p. 1; R. Ledesma Ramos, \textit{Discurso a las juventudes de España}, p. 79; J. del Val Carrasco,
\end{footnotes}
Morocco and Algeria were two geopolitical ‘imperatives’ in the imperial project of Falange theorists. The *camisas azules* presumed legitimate jurisdiction over them because those two countries, in their view, had been colonized and enriched ‘with the hunger and sweat of Spaniards’\(^\text{152}\). ‘All Moroccans and Algerians [...] must feel [our] influence, that nobody can deny while the Alhambra, the Mezquita and the Giralda are standing,’ declared Ximénez de Sandoval in 1937, in open polemic with France, which was accused of having illegitimately occupied those lands\(^\text{153}\).

Actually, the Spanish presence in Algeria - which was limited to the city of Algiers and the overlooking island of Peñon - dated back to long before French colonization began in 1830, and in particular to the period 1510-1529. The situation was very different in Morocco, where the two European colonial powers were forced to live together since 1912, when, with the Fez Treaty, the country was divided into protectorates. On the one hand, there was the area ruled by Paris, which was most of the State territory; and on the other hand, there was the zone administered by Madrid, which coincided with the territory of the Rif and the western Atlantic coast (except Tangier which, as mentioned above, was subject to an international regime).

Calling this division of Moroccan lands unjust, the National syndicalists railed against it, arguing that Spain had been unfairly awarded just a tiny part of the territory, predominantly mountainous and barely penetrated. ‘We have to end this state of affairs for patriotic honour and interest,’ affirmed Falange supporters, presenting

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\item\(^{152}\) F. Ximénez de Sandoval, *Esquema de una política exterior nacionalsindicalista*, p. 192.
\end{itemize}
themselves as ‘faithful realizers of the political will’ of the Catholic kings. So, they appeared bent on extending what they regarded as natural and legitimate Spanish dominion over the whole of Morocco, and to ousting perennial French enemies from the country.\(^{154}\)

On this point, the interests of the party leaders tallied with Franco’s views perfectly. The generalísimo - that had always been fond of Spanish Morocco, where he had spent much of his military career and where he began the military uprising of the nationalist troops in July 1936 - was an ardent supporter of expansionist aims in Northern Africa. For the caudillo, the question was so important, in fact, that he raised it with Hitler at their meeting on October 23, 1940 in Hendaye - a French town on the border with the Basque country - in the presence of their respective foreign ministers, Serrano Suñer and von Ribbentrop.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the entry of Spain into World War II, which the generalísimo subordinated, among other things, to the acceptance by the Führer of Spanish demands on French possessions in Morocco, parts of Algeria, and in Cameroon (the latter was of great interest to Madrid, given its proximity to the Hispanic colony of Equatorial Guinea).\(^{155}\)

These requests were unacceptable to Hitler, who could not break the alliance with Vichy France. So no official agreement was reached.

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between the two regimes. However, they were indicative of the importance that Franco always accorded the colonial issue in Africa thus supporting the Spanish Fascists, who had upheld this cause from the very beginning of their movement.

But if territorial expansion in the Maghreb countries represented an extremely important goal in the foreign policy of the camisas azules, it was beyond the Atlantic Ocean - ‘through the routes of the sea’ - that, according to the party, the nation would have to go back to recover ‘its glory and prosperity’. For Falangist theorists, Hispanic America was the ‘basis of the imprecise destino en lo universal that Spain had fulfilled and had to continue fulfilling’. And exactly in the ‘firm and most vital peoples’ who inhabited those lands, according to Ledesma Ramos, there was the ‘perpetual manifestation of the imperial capacity’ of the homeland.

There, thanks to the Falange, Spain would resume its leadership, by virtue of the visceral bond tying it to its former colonies. ‘Once our race was poured into twenty American peoples’, wrote Ximénez de Sandoval in 1937, ‘it would be absurd to ignore the force of blood’. His words seemed to echo what was claimed six years earlier by the founder of La Conquista del Estado, who stated in his magazine: ‘Our role in America is not - nor is it equivalent to that of - a friendly

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people, since we will always be obliged to be something more. We are
them, and they will always be us.\textsuperscript{161}

These statements were clearly the prelude to National syndicalist
claims on ultramarine territories, unequivocally put forth in the Fe de
las Jons programme of 1934. ‘Regarding the countries of Latin
America’, stated the third point in the last paragraph, ‘we will tend to
the unification of culture, economic interests and power’.\textsuperscript{162} This way,
according to the Falangists, Spain would regain the ‘title of pre-
eminence in universal endeavours’ that it deserved, and would finally
return to playing its legitimate role of ‘spiritual axis of the Hispanic
world’ that was stolen from it by US imperialism in the 19th
century.\textsuperscript{163}

In the historical reconstruction of the blue shirts’ ideologues, in
fact, the birth of the South American republics was accompanied by
the ‘most chaotic of disorders’. This ended up leading the newly-born
independent States, ‘defenceless and stuttering’, to the ‘cold, inhuman
domination - without heat or scruple - of the United States’.\textsuperscript{164} In
opposition to this and to ‘Monroeism’ - its basis - the Falangists used
the motto ‘hispano para los hispanos’, thereby inciting the Latin
peoples to ‘rebel against Yankee domination’ and showing them the
way to salvation in the ‘return to Spanish [tradition] as the starting
point of their civilization and their history’.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{161} R. Ledesma Ramos, \textit{España, sangre de imperio}, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Puntos programáticos de la Falange Española de las J.O.N.S}, reproduced in
Cf. also R. Ledesma Ramos, \textit{Discursos a las juventudes de España}, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{163} \textit{Puntos programáticos de la Falange Española de las J.O.N.S}, reproduced in
\textsuperscript{165} M. Gran, 27 glosas a los 27 puntos, in \textit{F.E.}, no. 2, February 1937, p. 82;
To commemorate the ancient bond between the motherland and South American nations, as early as October 12, 1892 - the fourth centenary of Spain’s discovery of the New World - the *Día de la Raza* (‘Day of the Race’) was created, and made an official national holiday in 1918. Changed to a ‘patriotic rite in the service of power’ since Miguel Primo de Rivera’s military dictatorship, the annual 12th of October celebration was soon arrogated by the National syndicalist theorists, who stamped it with their own interpretation. In celebrating Spain’s imperial vocation, they highlighted less its spiritual character and more its purely territorial and concrete nature, with the primary purpose of reiterating the legitimacy of the Spanish presence in former colonial domains and legitimizing their own designs of conquest.

3. *The transmission of imperial values*

Both Fascist and Falangist theorists were acutely aware of the importance of having an efficient propaganda machine at their

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166 The term *raza* had no negative or discriminatory meaning. However, in order to avoid misunderstandings, in January 1958 the name of the celebration was officially changed to *Día de la Hispanidad*, then simply renamed *Fiesta Nacional* by Law no. 18 of October 7, 1987, published in *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 241, October 8, 1987, p. 30149. The *Fiesta Nacional* of October 12 is still celebrated in Spain, as in many other countries in the Americas, where, in many cases, it is called *Columbus Day*. Cf. Z. Box Varela, *España año cero. La construcción simbólica del franquismo*, pp. 242-244, 247; M. García Sebastiani, D. Marcilhacy, *América y la fiesta del 12 de octubre*, pp. 383-395.


disposal, to secure the widest possible consensus on issues relating to empire building.

In Italy, this task was fulfilled by the *Istituto coloniale fascista*, whose goal was to infuse a colonial conscience into citizens and to encourage scientific, commercial and industrial activities between the extraterritorial possessions of the State and the motherland. The institute - born in January 1906 and originally named *Istituto coloniale italiano* - was designated by the Pnf in February 1928 as the sole body responsible for coordinating imperial propaganda\(^\text{169}\). It was primarily charged with assisting fellow countrymen abroad, carrying out and publishing studies on foreign territories under Rome’s control, organizing lessons on colonial culture, and hosting congresses and conferences.

During the presidency of Pier Gaetano Venino, who was in office from 1928-1931, the activities of the institute multiplied. Numerous peripheral sections of the Icf were set up, both in and outside the territory of the State; the Italian-colonial Chamber of Commerce was established in Milan; and a permanent pavilion of colonies was erected at the Trade Fair of the Lombard capital. The picture was completed with the promotion of rural cruises in Libya, prize trips for schoolchildren, the award of medals glorifying colonization, and Colonial Day celebrations\(^\text{170}\).


\(^{170}\) The first edition of the Colonial Day took place on April 21, 1926, when Mussolini was on official journey to Libya. The following year, in order to avoid overlapping with *Natale* of Rome, commemorated in the same day, the celebrations were moved to May 24, coinciding with the anniversary of the entry of Italy into World War I. The choice of that date was not fortuitous: in fact, with the Italian participation in the conflict, the irredentist claims took shape. The latter were interpreted by the black shirts as the precursors in some way of the imperial revival of the country. Overall, only two editions of the Colonial Day were organized, respectively in 1927 and in 1928. From 1936 onwards, this event was replaced by the Day of the Empire, set for May 9. Cf. G. Venino, *La relazione Venino su un*
Information on all these initiatives was widely disseminated, thanks to the collaboration of the Guf, that published a colonial column in their magazine, *Libro e moschetto*. The news was also publicized by the press organ of the institute, *L’Oltremare*, a monthly publication founded in 1927 and directed until 1930 by the then deputy for the colonies, Roberto Cantalupo, in which reports of all Icf activities were published\textsuperscript{171}. Renamed *Istituto fascista per l’Africa Italiana* in 1937, the institute continued its ‘action of fusion of all colonial forces of the Nation’ until the end of World War II\textsuperscript{172}. After the regime collapsed - and, with it, the empire - the institute was revamped. It stopped acting as ‘colonial arm of the party’, that is as a tool for political propaganda, and acquired a more scientific role\textsuperscript{173}.

In Spain, the ambitious Falangist project to unite all Hispanic nations under the aegis of Madrid could count for its realization on the activity of the *Consejo de la Hispanidad*. Set up on November 2, 1940, the council was responsible for spreading the imperial communitarian idea within the new Francoist State, as well as in the former colonial domains. Divided into five sections - cultural, political, economic, social, and legal - the council had the ultimate task of establishing a single uniform direction in relations with former overseas possessions, and dissolving the various associations and pre-

\textsuperscript{171} L’Istituto coloniale fascista a trent’anni dalla sua costituzione, Roma, Fratelli Palomba, 1936, pp. 10, 30, 34-38. See also Partito e impero, edited by Istituto Fascista dell’Africa Italiana, Roma, Società anonima tipografica Castaldi, 1938, pp. 5-19.

\textsuperscript{172} Ibidem, p. 61.

\textsuperscript{173} L. Federzoni, La nuova vita dell’Istituto Fascista dell’Africa Italiana, in Rivista delle colonie, no. 1, January 1939, p. 12.
existing foreign circles that ‘constantly falsif[ied] the old and sonorous Hispanic voice’.174

Although the law establishing the council did not explicitly mention the Falange, the obvious references in the text to the third point of the Fe de las Jons programme of 1934 left little doubt about which political component of the regime had pushed for the creation of this body. Moreover, it was under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which, not accidentally, was led by filo-Fascist Serrano Suñer175. So it happened that, as the historian Lorenzo Delgado Gómez Escalonilla has written, ‘the programme of the party [gave] substance to a legal precept that, on paper at least, [would have inspired] the action of the Spanish State towards Latin America’.176

Acclaimed enthusiastically by the camisas azules, the Consejo de la Hispanidad represented, according to the Falangist newspaper Arriba, the ‘ambitious Spanish foreign policy in the best and most proper [form] of its essence’.177 Presented as a direct descendant of the ancient Consejo de Indias - the highest administrative body of the imperial territories of South America and the Pacific founded in 1511 - the council constituted an instrument in the hands of the National

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175 The law establishing the Consejo de la Hispanidad explicitly cited the third subsection, paragraph 3, of the Fe de las Jons political programme of 1934. The first quotation was in the preamble to the law, concerning the status of Spain as ‘spiritual axis of the Hispanic world as a title of preeminence in universal endeavours’. The second quotation was contained in the second article, in which were indicated - as the primary goal of the Consejo - all the activities aimed at the ‘unification of culture, economic interests and power’ related to the Hispanic world. The text of the Law of November 2, 1940, is in Boletín Oficial del Estado, no. 312, November 7, 1940, p. 7649.
176 L. Delgado Gomez-Escalonilla, Imperio de papel. Acción cultural y política exterior durante el primer franquismo, p. 269.
syndicalists to regain political leadership of the former colonies. In reality, however, despite its attempts to charm Latin countries and induce them to break free of US influence, the council’s activities were not developed adequately and it never won widespread favour.

The Istituto coloniale fascista and the Consejo de la Hispanidad were not the only propaganda tools in the hands of the Pnf and the Falange, respectively, to spread their imperial message on a global scale. There were also the Fasci italiani all’estero and the Falange exterior: two auxiliary party structures that played the role of revolutionary avant-garde of Fascism and Falangism outside the Italian and Spanish territorial boundaries.

The first Fasci all’estero appeared spontaneously in several cities of Europe before the March on Rome, although the party Statute of 1921 did not mention them. Their existence was officially recognized only in August 1922, when the Pnf expressly set up a department for their management. During the Fifth Meeting of the Grand Council of Fascism on February 16, 1923, this department was divided into five sections corresponding to five geographic macro-areas - North America, South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe - directed until November 1926 by Giuseppe Bastianini, and later by Cornelio di Marzio and Piero Parini. Initially under the control of the National Directory of the party, these sections were subsequently placed under

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178 This goal seems to be anachronistic and unrealistic now. Nonetheless, in the early 1940s, when the military successes of the Axis boded well for a worldwide Fascist victory, the Falange imperialistic ambitions did not seem to be so absurd. Cf. Law of November 2, 1940, p. 7649; L. Delgado Gomez-Escalonilla, Imperio de papel. Acción cultural y política exterior durante el primer franquismo, pp. 271, 284.

the supervision of the Foreign Ministry, held *ad interim* by Mussolini\(^{180}\).

The formation of the first nucleus of the *Falange exterior*, on the other hand, took place in the summer of 1935. It was founded in Milan by José Antonio Primo de Rivera to rally Spanish students - living in the Lombard capital - who sympathized with National syndicalism. Its creation, formalized in January 1936, was the first branch of a much larger organization, working under the *Servicio Exterior* of Fe de las Jons, led by Ximénez de Sandoval from February to August 1937, when he was replaced by José del Castaño Cadorna\(^{181}\).

The *Fasci all’estero* and the *Falange exterior* were formed at the beginning to manage economic aid flowing in from expatriate fellow

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\(^{180}\) During the XXVII session of the Grand Council of October 15, 1923, it was established that the secretary and the vice-secretary of the *Fasci all’estero* were dependent on the National Directory of the PnF. In this occasion, moreover, it was decided that the secretary of the *Fasci all’estero* became an *ex officio* member of the Grand Council (then he was excluded from it in December 1928, as a result of the promulgation of Law no. 2693, entitled ‘Ordinamento e attribuzioni del Gran Consiglio del Fascismo’). Nine years later, with the statutory amendment of November 1938, the secretary, the vice-secretary and the two inspectors of the *Fasci all’estero* joined the PnF National Council. The articles of the various party statutes, with relative modifications, concerning the *Fasci italiani all’estero* are reproduced in M. Missori, *Gerarchie e Statuti del P.N.F. Gran Consiglio, Direttorio nazionale, Federazioni provinciali: quadri e biografie*, Roma, Bonacci editore, 1986, pp. 353, 356-357, 363-366, 414-415; *Il Gran Consiglio nei primi cinque anni dell’Era Fascista*, pp. 88-89. Cf. E. Gentile, *La politica estera del partito fascista. Ideologia e organizzazione dei fasci italiani all’estero (1920-1930)*, in *Storia contemporanea*, no. 6, December 1995, pp. 900-906. On this topic see also N. Labanca, *Política e amministrazione coloniali dal 1922 al 1934*, in E. Collotti, *Fascismo e politica di potenza. Politica estera 1922-1939*, pp. 142-143; L. De Caprariis, *I Fasci italiani all’estero*, in, *Il fascismo e gli emigrati*, edited by E. Franzina, M. Sanfilippo, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2003, pp. 3-5.

countrymen, in support of the patriotic cause promoted, respectively, by the black shirts and the *camisas azules*. In a short time, the two structures became tools of active political intervention to spread Fascist and Falangist doctrine in the world. Their main goals were to provide assistance to their citizens abroad and to monopolize their political representation, fighting anti-Fascist and anti-Falangist propaganda in the countries that hosted them; to establish links with similar political movements; and, most importantly, to exalt the national and imperial values of Italy and Spain on a global scale.\(^{182}\)

If, for Mussolini, the *Fasci all’estero* were a kind of ‘Fascist consulates for the legal and extra-legal protection’ of emigrant compatriots, José del Castaño Cardona, for his part, asserted that the *Falanges Exteriores* represented an ‘effective instrument of our [Falangist] external action in the spiritual, cultural and economic spheres’, as well as ‘the advance of our civilization and a bulwark always ready to defend our movement’.\(^{183}\)

Numerous efforts were made to use the two organizations as bridgeheads for a more aggressive and incisive foreign policy, capable of supporting the imperialist projects of the Pnf and the Falange. However, as time went by, the results proved to be far below expectations. This was due, first of all, to the tepid support of

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expatriate compatriots. In the Spanish case, the lack of means also had an impact, as well as the progressive loss of power of the most radical Fascist component in the Francoist government from the biennium 1941-1942. But it was the tensions (if not outright conflict) between the two parties’ hierarchies and the official diplomatic machinery of their respective States - which did not tolerate political interference that could discredit its work - that represented the biggest obstacle to the realization of Fascist and Falangist plans.

What therefore emerges as a logical conclusion, while duly acknowledging the differences in both countries, is this: the reappearance of the eternal State-party dualism, this time outside national boundaries. And, once again, in the struggle for supremacy, it was the party that lost. The Fasci all’estero and the Falange exterior were thus progressively emptied of content and deprived of all autonomy. So when, from the winter of 1941, the tide of the World War II began to turn against the Axis powers and the Allies started to decisively check the global advance of Fascism, these

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184 In the Italian case, there were less than 200 fasci all’estero in 1925: about half of them in Europe, 25 in the Americas, 20 in Africa (including colonies), 13 in Asia and 5 in Australia. In 1928 the number increased exponentially, rising to around 580 units, for a total of barely more than 100,000 affiliates. By the end of 1930, the sections of the Fasci all’estero were 623 with about 140,000 members. However, it should be noted that the figures are rather small, considering that Italian expatriates and residents in different parts of the world were about 10 million at the time. The data are in E. Collotti, Fascismo e politica di potenza. Politica estera 1922-1939, p. 146. In the Spanish case, there were sections of the Falange exterior in most of Europe, but also in Morocco, Canada, Philippines, China, and Japan. The most conspicuous part was in Latin America. There are not official data about the number of affiliates, except for the case of the Falange exterior in the Far East. According to Florentino Rodao’s study, in the period between 1936 and 1945, the members in the Philippines were about 800, in China about 50, while the section in Japan had only two members. In F. Rodao, Falange Española en Extremo Oriente 1936-45, in Revista Española del Pacífico, no. 3, 1993.

two structures substantially disappeared, along with the imperialist ambitions of the parties that had created them.\textsuperscript{186}

\textsuperscript{186} E. González Calleja, El servicio exterior de Falange y la política exterior del primer franquismo: consideraciones previas para su investigación, pp. 299-307; E. Collotti, Fascismo e politica di potenza. Politica estera 1922-1939, p. 151.
Chapter III

Race in defining the national identity in Italian and Spanish Fascism

1. The issue of race

In the vision of the theorists of the Pnf and the Falange, the totalitarian ideal of ‘national and imperial community’ incorporated by nature the ideal of ‘people’. As already seen, in the great project of rebirth and expansion of the nation that was present in all European Fascist experiences between the two World Wars, it was the people - once it had acquired awareness of themselves and of their own roots and values - were entitled to complete the historic mission of a general renewal of the Fatherland. This renewal had to necessarily pass through a regeneration of the race, namely through an authentic anthropological revolution aimed at creating a homo novus: virile, spiritually and physically strong, morally irreprehensible, and obedient to the orders of the party.

But what value did the word ‘race’ assume for the camicie nere and the camisas azules? Did its meaning remain unaltered over time, or did it change with the coincidence of particular events? Answering these questions is essential, first of all, to understand the real importance of the racial element in building the national identity for the Pnf and the Falange; and, secondly, to verify if it actually represented a basic component of the European Fascist phenomenon.

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between the two World Wars, or if it was a contingent variable found only in specific national cases.

An examination of Spanish primary sources clearly shows that the National syndicalist theorists always used the term ‘race’ as a synonym for Hispanic community, without attributing any distinct biological value to it. Even if, as Saz asserts, the Castilian essence of Spain was taken for granted, essentially the awareness of the historical imperial plurality and the continuous Falangist call to unidad de destino en lo universal implied that discriminatory behaviour on a racial basis was supported or at least theorised\(^2\). Therefore, blood was never an element of identification of the Spanish essence for the party ideologists, who constantly declared that they attributed more importance ‘to the spiritual than the corporal, to the soul than the body’\(^3\).

So it is not surprising that Antonio Tovar unhesitatingly asserted that Spain was a ‘mix of races’ and that its unity would never be ‘a racist unity, nor a unity of language or a cultural unity, but a unity of destiny’\(^4\). Similarly, an article published in June 1938 in Destino, the Falangist Catalan weekly publication, claimed that, for the camisas azules, the problem of race regeneration - considered typical of all national revolutions - concerned the spiritual sphere exclusively, not the physical one. ‘We don’t know what Hispanic human body is’, the author wrote, ‘because it doesn’t exist as an ideal type’\(^5\). This peremptory statement was followed by a more exhaustive explanation:


\(^{4}\) A. Tovar, El imperio de España, p. 27.

\(^{5}\) Dr. Azul, Ensayo sobre la raza, p. 6.
Los, ahora, pobladores de España somos descendientes de muchas razas, entre las que se realizaron numerosos cruzamientos. No existe un tipo hispano, física o fisiológicamente hablando. Tan buen español puede ser el moreno como el rubio, el braquicéfalo como el dolicocefaló, el asténico como el pícnico. Esto no quiere decir que hemos de dejar de cultivar las buenas cualidades del cuerpo, que no hemos de regenerar el cuerpo; pero esta regeneración ha de ser tendencia a hacerlo perfecto no como fin sino como medio, pues el cuerpo es el medio que ha de hacer triunfar nuestra alma, nuestra ideas y nuestra cultura Imperiales e Hispanicas.

It is true that the regeneration of the race would have passed for the physical regeneration of the people. But the latter would have been achieved through simple interventions of ‘positive eugenics’, that is, through generic measures of hygiene and preventive social medicine - for example, childcare and maternity assistance supplied by the Sección Femenina of the party - as well as demographic policies to support natality and sports education. No recourse to practices of ‘negative eugenics’ was contemplated. The Falangist theorists, in fact, believed that instruments like birth control, sterilisation and abortion constituted a ‘negative and destructive’ action, aimed at undermining ‘the highest interests of the State and society’. Surely, the Catholic Church had a certain influence on the definition of that position – not

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6 Ibidem. [Author’s translation: ‘Those who now inhabit Spain come from many mixed races. There is no Hispanic type, physically or physiologically speaking. A good Spanish can be the brunette as well as the blond, the brachiocephalic as well as the dolichocephalic, the asthenic as well as the pyknic. This does not mean that we have to stop cultivating the good qualities of the body, that we do not have to regenerate the body; nonetheless, the body is not a goal but an instrument aimed at the triumph of our soul, our ideas, and our Imperial and Hispanic culture.’]


8 Dr. Vallejo Najera, Illicitud científica de la esterilización eugénica, in Acción Española, no. 2, January 1, 1932, p. 148.
only because it refused to endorse the use of tools that could damage the sacredness of the human being, but also because it strongly condemned every type of discriminatory behaviour as contrary to the principle of equality of all individuals in the eyes of God.

The Catholic roots of the State also influenced Giménez Caballero’s thinking. The prophet of Spanish Fascism attributed to Spain the role of ‘antiracist genius par excellence’, as an expression of a people who ‘gave to the problems of race a solution of faith, but never a solution of blood’. The evident reference to the unifying role that Catholicism played in colonial conquests, beginning at the end of the 15th Century, allowed the apostle of Spanish Fascism to corroborate this thesis about the absence of racism on a biological basis in the Hispanic tradition. In his opinion, the annual 12th of October celebrations represented proof since, as he stated:

Si España un día llegó a instituir la Fiesta de la Raza, fue precisamente en el sentido contrario al germánico: o sea, en aquel de negar la raza pura de España, admitiendo como base de nuestro genio, la fusión de razas, el sentimiento cristiano y piadoso de la comunión del pan y del vino, del cuerpo y de la sangre, bajo el símbolo de una unidad superior, de una divinidad más sublime, menos somática que esa corporal y sangrienta.

The criticism of Nazi doctrine concerning the purity of the Aryan race was not an exclusive prerogative of Falangist theorists. Till the first half of the 1930s, Mussolini and the ideologists of the Pnf indeed

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10 Ibidem. [Author’s translation: ‘If Spain one day instituted the Festival of the Race, it was precisely opposite to the Germanic sense: that is, in denying the pure race of Spain, admitting as the basis of our genius the fusion of races, the Christian sentiment of the communion of bread and wine, body and blood, under the symbol of a higher unity, of a more sublime and not physical divinity.’]
did not hide their disagreement with the racist measures adopted by Hitler that they considered scientifically unfounded. As an example, it is worth recalling an article titled *Fallacia ariana* published in *Il Popolo d’Italia* in August 1934, in which the Duce quoted anthropologist Grafton Elliot Smith as saying that German theories contradicted anthropological research. According to Mussolini, it was a ‘severe lesson’ for the Nazi *Kultur* since science, he wrote, was unable to guarantee ‘the “purity” of the blood of anyone’\(^{11}\). Therefore, ‘the new “civilizers” of the north maybe could have some unknown relatives within the walls of Tel Aviv’\(^{12}\). The phenomenon of the half-castes was an unquestionable reality, and they were mostly desirable because it seems that they accelerated the evolutionary process of the people\(^{13}\). Besides, the head of Fascism said clearly - and not casually - during an interview with the writer Emil Ludwing in 1931, that ‘starting from happy mixes [there is] often strength and beauty for a nation’ and that ‘national pride does not need racial hysteria’\(^{14}\).

In the opinion of the party theorists, the racial myth constituted the fulcrum of a ‘barbarian idea of political civilizations’, all centred on the ‘power of biological, morphological and territorial elements’\(^{15}\).

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\(^{12}\) *Ibidem*. Two weeks after the publication of this article, the Duce, reiterating his rejection of Hitler's racism, said peremptorily: ‘A German race does not exist. […] Germany is made up of different races, more or less happily blended together […]. We will see if Nazism will succeed in drawing a “herd” of pure blood. At best, according to experts’ calculations, six centuries of racial marriages and racial castrations are needed. So there is plenty of time to talk about it, with calm and no rush.’ In B. Mussolini, *Alla fonte*, in *Il Popolo d’Italia*, no. 204, August 29, 1934, p. 2.


\(^{14}\) E. Ludwing, *Colloqui con Mussolini*, Milano, Mondadori, 1932, p. 73.

wisdom’, showed the right path to an authentic imperialist policy based not on ‘mechanical sterilisations’ and ‘utopias related to the existence of a more or less pure blood’, but on the ‘physical power of the race’ - interpreted as ‘propulsive and not static concept’ - and the ‘exaltation of an atmosphere of high ideal tension’16.

The nation was ‘above all a spiritual entity that overcame any grotesque question of dolicocephalic or brachiocephalic skulls, blond or brown hair’, that is, ‘a way of being, feeling and living collectively’17. Acknowledging such a reality, the Fascist ideologists derided the ‘presumption of forced and selected breeding of race with related sterilisations and eugenic mating’, aimed at creating a caste of dominants18. In their opinion, there were no biological boundaries, but only borders of spirit, civilization, history, and culture. These latter elements constituted the ‘ethical essence of a people’, and they determined its ‘national personality in an unequivocal way, better and more than any mythical or doctrinal presumption of race and blood’19.

With this fact established, it is necessary to note that, in the Duce’s discourses and in the Fascist publications before the campaign in Ethiopia, the term ‘race’ was used in different circumstances. Nevertheless - and this is a crucial point for a realistic picture of the racist phenomenon in Italy during the regime - that term was employed till the mid-1930s in its ‘lebonian’ meaning, synonymous with ‘people’ and ‘nation’20. The first part of the discorso

16 Ibidem.
17 G. Selvi, Il mito di razza, in Gerarchia, no. 10, October 1934, p. 806.
19 G. Selvi, Il mito di razza, p. 807.
20 Gustave Le Bon believed that the ‘soul of race’ was formed from the set of ‘moral and intellectual characters’ and that ‘this aggregate of psychological elements’ constituted the ‘national character’. Starting from this assumption, the sociologist moved from the conviction that there were no real races in the civilian populations in the biological and scientific sense, but ‘only historical races, namely
dell’Ascensione, delivered by Mussolini in the Italian Chamber of Deputies on May 26, 1927, was an enlightening example. On that occasion, the head of the Pnf declared that it was necessary to ‘protect the destiny of the [Italian] race and cure the race’ - meaning the people ‘in its physical expression’ - because, in his opinion, ‘in a well-ordered State, the health care of the people [had] to be put first’\(^{21}\). As he continued his speech, what he meant by ‘cure’ was clarified when he mentioned, first of all, a series of hygiene measures to fight illnesses. Then he condemned alcoholism, industrial urbanization and singlehood, calling them social plagues. Finally, he talked of strengthening welfare programmes and implementing legislation aimed at increasing the size of the population\(^{22}\).

Like the Spanish case, these were measures of positive eugenics that, as Claudia Mantovani claimed, aspired to the ‘regeneration of souls in light of the “moral revolution” realized by the War and continued by Fascism’ more than ‘the regeneration of bodies in light of the science of heredity’\(^{23}\). Fascist eugenics was sceptical of the ‘cold determinism of genetics’ and the ‘mechanistic logic of reproduction control’\(^{24}\). Instead, it followed the ‘quantitative’ and ‘populationist’ orientation prescribed by Mussolini’s government, that

\(^{21}\) Discorso dell’Ascensione, in Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, vol. XXII, pp. 361-364.
\(^{22}\) Ibidem, pp. 362-367.
\(^{24}\) C. Mantovani, Rigenerare la società. L’eugenetica in Italia dalle origini ottocentesche agli anni Trenta, pp. 271-273, 291-292. The quotes are at p. 273.
gave more importance to the strength produced by increasing numbers of youth and their overflowing energy\textsuperscript{25}. The party’s ideologists saw in demographic growth ‘the reasons for a greater power and a prosperous future’\textsuperscript{26}. So, on the one hand, crimes against ‘ancestry’ - like abortion, anti-fertility propaganda, syphilis and blenorrhage contagions, and instigation of suicide - were severely condemned with the reform of the Criminal Procedure Code in 1930. And, on the other hand, a wide instrumentation was provided for its defence\textsuperscript{27}. So a green light was given to interventions to protect maternity and childhood, tax cuts for big families, bonuses for marriage and childbirth, taxation on singles, a struggle against urbanization, the development of physical education, and increasing hygiene both at home and work places\textsuperscript{28}. Till the mid-1930s, these were the only

\textsuperscript{25} Ibidem. See also F. Cassata, \textit{Molti sani e forti. L’eugenetica in Italia}, pp. 142-144.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Eugenetica}, in \textit{Dizionario di politica} edited by Partito Nazionale Fascista, vol. II, pp. 94-95.


\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Eugenetica}, in \textit{Dizionario di politica} edited by Partito Nazionale Fascista, vol. II, p. 95. Cf. C. Mantovani, \textit{Rigenerare la società. L’eugenetica in Italia dalle origini ottocentesche agli anni Trenta}, pp. 275-277, 283, 307-319. On this topic, also read Mussolini’s speech on March 18, 1934, during the second quinquennial conference of the regime: ‘The military strength of the State, the future and the security of the nation are linked to the demographic problem; a problem that is insistent in all the countries of white race and also in Italy. It is necessary to declare once again in a peremptory way that the irreplaceable condition for the primacy is the number. Without this latter, everything will fall down and die. The “Mother’s and Child’s Day”, the tax on celibacy and its moral condemnation - except for some justified cases - the displacement of the cities, the rural remediation, the assistance to maternity and childhood, the marine and mountain colonies, physical education, youth organizations, hygiene laws, everything contributes to the defence of the race. […] I refuse to believe that the Italian people of Fascist time that has to choose between live or die, choose the latter. I refuse to believe that between youth - that renew its spring waves - and the old age - that declines into the dark winters - choose the latter. Doing so, in a few decades the country will offer the infinitely painful spectacle of an aged Italy, an Italy without Italians; in other words, the end
measures that Pnf theorists referred to when they mentioned their aim to increase the ‘vitality of the nation’ and the ‘health of the race’. These measures, moreover, were welcomed by the Catholic Church that, in this demographic policy, considered Fascism a valid and reliable ally for the ‘defence of traditional morals from the threats of modernity’.

2. Race, empire and the ‘construction’ of the Jewish problem

After fifteen years, the overwhelming majority of Pnf ideologues changed their beliefs regarding race coinciding with Italy’s foreign conquests. This new thinking resulted from the increasing occurrence of promiscuous behaviour between the colonisers and Abyssinian natives, with whom Italians were in close contact during the military campaign and after its conclusion. The spread of the practice of madamato - namely relations of a conjugal nature between metropolitan citizens and subjects of the East African colonies - together with the consequent increase in half-caste children (the so-called meticciato), gave rise to the problem, within the party, of the ‘defence of the unity and the purity of the Italian race as a condition of [its] colonising superiority’.

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30 C. Mantovani, Rigenerare la società. L’eugenetica in Italia dalle origini ottocentesche agli anni Trenta, p. 279.
31 The expression ‘metropolitan citizenship’ means the citizenship pleno iure given to the population living within the peninsular territory. On the different types of citizenship provided by Fascism, see Cittadinanza, in Dizionario di politica
Before 1935-36, these phenomena did not create any worries. In fact, the Fascist government, through Law no. 999 of July 6, 1933, on the ‘organic system for Eritrea and Somalia’, even looked favourably upon awarding metropolitan citizenship to those born of mixed unions. Such ‘benevolence’ was justified by the fact that the local population in those countries was then rather small. The meticciato, being a limited phenomenon, was tolerated since it did not present a threat to the colonisers.

The situation changed radically with the conquest of Ethiopia, where there were about 15.6 million natives in 1936. This massive entry of black individuals into the imperial society and the exponential increase of unions between colonisers and indigenous women began to be perceived as alarming. Fascists were apprehensive that, if citizenship was given to Abyssinian persons of mixed race, in fifty years there would have been ‘two or three million caffelatte Italian citizens’ who, having occupied positions of power in Ethiopia, would...
have moved to the motherland with the same intention\textsuperscript{35}. According to general Emilio Canevari’s prevision, the destiny of Italy would be the same as that of France, where

le “naturalizzazioni” e i matrimoni misti [avevano] snaturato la razza di quanto vi era di meglio nel carattere nazionale, col corollario dei deputati negri che [facevano] a pugni a Palazzo Borbone con i deputati bianchi e un sottosegretario negro che legifera[va] sulle Colonie\textsuperscript{36}.

This ‘apocalyptic’ scenario presented by Pnf ideologists spurred the government to intervene. Royal Decree Law no. 880 was thus promulgated in April 1937, deeming madamato a crime and establishing that Italian citizens in a relationship of concubinage with a subject of Africa Orientale Italiana (Italian Eastern Africa or Aoi) would be sentenced to prison for one to five years\textsuperscript{37}.

In the opinion of anthropologist Lidio Cipriani - a prominent ideologist of the National Fascist Party and an expert on African demographic issues - the one who did not avoid intimate contact with

\textsuperscript{35} E. Canevari, Pacificare e governare, in Critica fascista, no. 15, June 1, 1936, p. 228.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibidem. [Author’s translation: ‘Naturalizations and mixed marriages distorted the best part of national character, with the corollary of nigger deputies who punch[ed] white deputies at Bourbon Palace and a nigger undersecretary who legislate[d] on Colonies.’]

\textsuperscript{37} The text of the Royal Decree Law of April 19, 1937, no. 880, regarding Sanzioni per i rapporti d’indole coniugale tra cittadini e sudditi is in Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia, no. 145, June 24, 1937, p. 2353. On this topic also see Razza, in Dizionario di politica edited by Partito Nazionale Fascista, vol. IV, pp. 28-29. It is an interesting fact that, at the end of the military campaign in Abyssinia, the popular Fascist song Faccetta nera (Black little face) suddenly disappeared, on higher orders. The reason is that, for many Fascists, the lyrics of the song seemed to encourage a certain sexual promiscuity that, from then on, was considered undesirable by the founders of the great Fascist empire. The motivation for this condemnation is mentioned in Paolo Monelli’s article, titled Donne e buoi dei paesi tuoi (the Italian version of ‘wives and cattle from your hometown’), published in La Gazzetta del Popolo, June 13, 1936, and reproduced in G. Rochat, Il colonialismo italiano, pp. 191-193. Cf. A. Sbacchi, Il colonialismo italiano in Etiopia 1936-1940, Milano, Mursia, 1980, pp. 224-234.
black people, thus diminishing his own racial dignity, committed a serious crime and left the ‘permanent, painful and dangerous burden of bastards to posterity’\(^{38}\). A firm supporter of an ‘indissoluble link between racial nature and spiritual loftiness’, Cipriani was convinced that any ‘mixture’ with inferior populations would have generated a ‘mediocre product’\(^{39}\). For him, as for many other Pnf theorists, interracial cohabitation was an evil to be avoided because, in a short time, it would have diluted the ‘original intrinsic qualities’ of the Italians, making them disappear in the ‘dramatic gridlock of the half-castes’\(^{40}\).

Precisely to prevent ‘ethnic Babylones’, the regime promulgated Law no. 1004 on June 29, 1939 with ‘penal sanctions for the defence of racial prestige in front of natives of Italian Africa’\(^{41}\). This law punished acts that degraded the colonisers’ moral role, whether the detrimental behaviour was committed by indigenous people, or by a citizen who abused his position as a member of the Italian race, or by a citizen who failed in the duties that his race involved\(^{42}\). Less than a

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\(^{42}\) The legislative dispositions established an increase in punishment both for crimes committed by citizens in complicity with natives and for crimes committed by citizens to the detriment of the natives, introducing the particular crime of ‘abuse of credulity of the native’. The prosecutable acts were: conjugal relations with natives, habitual frequenting of places reserved for natives, work performance of a metropolitan citizen on behalf of a native, manifest drunkenness of a citizen in front of a native, and also all fraudulent crimes of a native to the detriment of a citizen.
year later, Law no. 822 of May 13, 1940, on rules against half-castes, prohibited any assimilation. Children born of an Italian father and an indigenous mother had, _de iure_, the status of the native parent, who was responsible for their subsistence and education. Deprived of the right to acquire metropolitan citizenship, they could not be recognised or adopted by Italians. So they were forced to live in a state of objective segregation, far from ‘nationals’.43

An analysis of this legislation and the context in which it was created gives rise to some summary considerations. First of all, it is necessary to note that, contrary to what is often believed, the appearance of racism in the Italian political scene was antecedent to the publication of anti-Jewish laws in autumn 1938. As for why it appeared, it is essential to specify that it was ascribed to practical problems linked to the colonial administration, as Mussolini himself pointed out. In fact, in a speech in Trieste on September 18, 1938, the Duce stated:

_‘Il problema razziale non è scoppiato all’improvviso […]. È in relazione con la conquista dell’impero; poiché la storia c’insegna che gli imperi si conquistano con le armi, ma si tengono con il prestigio. E per il prestigio occorre una chiara, severa coscienza razziale, che stabilisca non soltanto le differenze, ma delle superiorità nettissime’._44


44 Discorso di Trieste, in _Il Popolo d’Italia_, no. 261, September 19, 1938, reproduced in _Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini_, vol. XXIX, p. 146. Cf. also Historicus, _Razzismo e giudaismo nell’Europa moderna_, in _Civiltà fascista_, no. 9, September 1938, pp. 784-791. [Author’s translation: ‘The racial problem did not break out suddenly […]. It is related to the conquest of the empire; because history teaches us that empires are conquered with weapons, but they are held with prestige._
According to Pnf ideologists, the imperial dimension of the nation - reached ‘thanks to the typical and decisive values of the race’ - required the defence of the ‘psychological factors’ and ‘universal biological laws’ that made the African conquests possible and allowed Italy to establish itself as a colonizing power. In this way, race - biologically speaking - was declared a necessary factor for the definition of the national identity because, the Fascists believed, it would have firmly established ‘on an ethnic level’ the ‘unity achieved in the moral and political order’. As an editorial published in Critica fascista claimed, race represented ‘the new frontier of the Fatherland’; a very ‘firm frontier’, ‘without which the empire [did] not rise as a vital expression of the Nation and [did] not evolve or maintain itself as an organic and civil unity’.

To justify this new orientation, the theorists of the regime tried hard to trace a line of continuity between the legislation against half-castes in Italian Eastern Africa and the demographic measures adopted by Fascism since the early 1920s. Their aim was to show the existence of a racial tradition in the ideology of the party, right from its origin. In this way, the radical change was attenuated, and the new position on race was presented as a logical consequence of the acceleration of the Fascist totalitarian project. This was a project aimed at building Mussolini’s new Italian since, in that turning point in the life of the State, ‘from its purely and territorially national phase, already integrated in all its elements, to the imperial phase, that mobilises […]

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45 Il Partito e la razza, in Gerarchia, p. 635.
46 Ibidem, p. 685.
47 Coscienza della razza, in Civiltà fascista, no. 8, August 1938, p. 686.
all its energies’, the racial conscience would have expressed ‘totalitarianly’ the human ideal envisaged by Fascism.

Those arguments were made repeatedly when, in autumn 1938, Pnf theorists had to justify the anti-Semitic turn: one of the most despicable pages in 20th Century Italian history. The ideologists inspired by Mussolini forcibly traced a fil rouge that started from this presumed racial tradition in the party, passed through the measures against half-castes, and arrived almost naturally at the anti-Jewish laws.

In this regard, it is important to first remember the unbridled individualism attributed to the Israelites. They were accused of paying attention only to their own racial interests, and also considered deliberately unwilling to integrate themselves into the body of the nation. As Paolo Orano - committed anti-Semite and author of the famous volume Gli ebrei in Italia - said, the Jewish community had a proclivity for differentiation and auto-isolationism, as if it ‘always needed to live in the ghetto’; so, even if the ‘material one was wide open’, it needed to create a ‘moral one’ anyway.

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50 To support his thesis, Orano took as example the behaviour of the Israelite community after the First World War, when the Jews published their own list of fighters, dead, wounded, and honoured. According to him, this was proof of their ‘spiritual need to distinguish themselves from others’. Orano said: ‘In front of the Fatherland and the Nation […] they are Italians like everyone else. So why do they want to separate themselves in documenting their merit? […] The Homeland cannot recognize any special merit for its fighting citizens because they are not Catholics or non-Christians, or because they are Israeli or Protestant or Orthodox or Muslim. The documentation suggests, therefore, that the Jews do not feel morally obliged to embrace in a positive way the cause of war and national interests. It seems that this cause represents an obligation, making them more worthy of praise, gratitude and respect than the others.’ P. Orano, Gli ebrei in Italia, Roma, Casa editrice pinciana, 1937, pp. 125, 136-137. Cf. M. Sarfatti, Gli ebrei nell’Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione, Torino, Einaudi, 2007, pp. 136-137; R. De Felice, Storia
Party intellectuals felt that the Jews’ non-involvement in the life of the Fatherland derived also from their participation in Zionism’s ‘extranational endeavour’, which was considered an ‘outrage […] to the sacrosanct exclusive duty to live and think and fight and sacrifice oneself for the development of imperial Fascist Italy’\textsuperscript{51}. In the opinion of Pnf ideologues, it was impossible to simultaneously serve with equal loyalty both Israel’s cause and Mussolini’s cause. This was also impossible because of the international anti-Fascist position of the Zionist movement, proven by the historic relationship with the ‘perfidious Albion’ as well as by the support that Zionism gave to the republicans in the Spanish Civil War, when about 7,000 Jews fought in the International Brigades\textsuperscript{52}.

Branded with the black mark of subversive individuals, the Israelites were further accused by the Fascists of disturbing the equilibrium of the Arab world, to which the Fascist State was bound


\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Ibidem}, pp. 74, 79-80. The quote is on p. 159.

tightly, especially after the conquest of the empire. The accusation of conspiracy completed the defamatory picture. It was based on the thesis in the shameful pamphlet, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, that is, a fake publication of the Tsarist Russian police denouncing a supposed global Jewish-Masonic-Marxist conspiracy that operated in the shadows, by controlling high finance, with the primary aim of world domination.

Slandered in this way, the Jews were ‘involved in the clash between the “Nation and the Anti-Nation”’. For the Fascists, they

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53 Ibidem, pp. 75-76, 85-87, 90.
54 *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were first published in Tsarist Russia in 1903 in short form, and in 1905 in extended form. It was a fake report of some secret meetings between Israeli elders. According to the document, during these meetings a Jewish criminal plan was devised to conquer the world by controlling finance and using terrorist activity. Actually, it was proven that the content of the Protocols was based on a pamphlet published in 1864 against Napoleon the Third, then re-elaborated in anti-Semitic key. Even if the Protocols were published in the first years of the 20th Century, they were propagated in Europe and in the United States between 1919 and 1921. According to De Felice, Giovanni Preziosi was the first person in Italy to be inspired by them, so he started his anti-Semitic debate immediately after reading the pamphlet. Nonetheless, this document did not reach great success among Italian Fascists. *I Protocollai dei ‘Savi Anziani’ di Sion*, Roma, Vita italiana, 1938, pp. 47-93, 105, 108-118, 132-145. Also see *Antisemitismo*, in *Dizionario di politica* edited by Partito Nazionale Fascista, vol. I, pp. 144-146; P. Orano, *Gli ebrei in Italia*, p. 165; R. Pavese, *Il problema ebraico in Italia*, in *Gerarchia*, no. 6, June 1942, pp. 256-258; L. Villani, *Occhio agli ebrei!*, in *Gerarchia*, no. 11, November 1940, pp. 582. Cf. R. De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, p. 51; S. Romano, *I falsi protocolli. Il ‘complotto ebraico’ dalla Russia di Nicola II a oggi*, Milano, Longanesi, 2011, pp. 18-63, 89-96, 115-126.

55 L. Di Nucci, *Lo Stato fascista e gli italiani ‘antinazionali’*, pp. 179-180. Those who grew up and were entirely reared under the regime, that is, young people of the Fascist University Groups, welcomed enthusiastically the anti-Semitic turn of Mussolini’s government and proposed repeatedly in their publications the theme of the Jewish anti-national enemy. As an example, it is interesting to note some passages in an article published in 1941 in *Libro e moschetto*, in which a fervent member of the Guf wrote with extreme hardness: ‘Certainly, every Italian should feel the disdain for this race as a completion of the love for the homeland, or better still, as a whole with it. [...] No excuse, no justification for the enemies of the country [...] War to the Jews, therefore, again and again, and to all those who defend them. The inner front also has its own battle.’ In D. Frizzi, *Guerra agli ebrei*, in *Libro e moschetto*, no. 55 special issue, October 4, 1941, p. 1. Similarly, a year later, the student Carlo Pignoldi stated in an article titled *Anti-Jewish letter* that the action against the Jews had to become ‘even harsher’, with the aim of ‘expelling them permanently from the nation’s organism [...] We need to win especially against the
became the true enemies of the Fatherland, so they were removed from the institutional and social life of the State. Party ideologists felt that a racial conscience had been awakened in Italy, ‘embracing the phenomenon in its full breadth and thus carrying the problem from the colonial field to the national one’. On the other hand, in the Grand Council’s opinion, the Jewish question was the ‘metropolitan aspect’ of the complex and thorny issue of race, for which a targeted and incisive intervention was needed.

Within such an ideological framework, anti-Semitic legislation promulgated in autumn 1938 established the concept of race on a biological basis. This way, the concepts proposed a few months earlier in the *Manifesto degli scienziati razzisti* were turned into binding legal dispositions. In doing so, Mussolini’s ‘scientists’ tried to...
demonstrate the existence of a pure Italian race ‘solidly constituted, always homogeneous’, from which the Israeli population had to be immediately separated and expelled. The normative, therefore, was presented as the ‘totalitarian and energetic reaffirmation of the national community’ in the racial field, and also as the best ‘defence
of the Aryans against the virus injected into [Italian] blood’ by the Jews.

Actually, unlike the Nazi case, there was not an exclusively biological anti-Semitism, since the basis for the persecution measures was mainly political-ideological, as will be seen broadly in the following pages. Moreover, biological racism had never been part of the Italian tradition, so it was scarcely felt by either the people or within the Pnf. It is only in the light of these considerations that it is possible to understand the ratio of the discriminatory clauses provided by Article 14 of the Royal Decree Law of November 17, 1938, no. 1728. They partially excluded from the punitive provisions those who, even if Jews, had served with honour the cause of the nation and the party. There was no chance of salvation for other Jews who did not

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62 That article established that the Ministry of the Interior could avoid applying the punitive measures provided by Articles 10, 11 and 13, letter h, of the law to the families of the fallen in the Libyan War, the First World War, the Ethiopian War, the Spanish Civil War, and to the families of those who fell for the Fascist cause. This exemption could be applied also to: 1) mutilated, disabled, wounded, volunteers in the Libyan War, the First World War, the Ethiopian War and the Spanish Civil War; 2) soldiers with military decoration; 3) mutilated, disabled, wounded for the Fascist cause; 4) members of the party in the years 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, and in the second semester of 1924; 5) legionnaires in the city of Fiume; 6) possessors of exceptional benevolence. In all these cases, the ‘benefit’ could be extended also to families of the subjects mentioned. The members of the Guf did not approve such provisions, considering them a ‘Trojan horse of discrimination’. They
belong to this category, and who were considered extraneous to the national community as well as dangerous to the order and security of the country.

Some Catholic circles, where anti-Semitic prejudices always circulated, supported these ideas immediately. On the one hand, they drew from conspiracy theories about the alleged existence of a Jewish-Masonic-Marxist global plot, and the stereotyped image of the ‘carnal Jew’, that was victim of his instincts and greedy for money.63 On the other hand, these prejudices were founded on accusations of deicide, dating back to antiquity and particularly dear to the Jesuits, according to which the Israelites were responsible for the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ.64

64 Many priests, despite the Fascist prohibition, continued to celebrate mixed marriages and impart the sacrament of baptism to children born of Jewish parents, in order to allow the Israeli community to escape Italian persecution. Also, Pope Pius XI acted secretly, and as time went by increasingly, to help the Semitic population. As Renzo De Felice has claimed, those actions were certainly spurred by ‘human and Christian solidarity for the oppressed’. Nonetheless, they were not enough to absolve the Church of its responsibilities, since it never openly condemned the racist legislation of 1938, expressing just a tepid disappointment. The main interest of the Holy See was to preserve its prerogative within the State and not to obstruct the regime openly. The pope promoted official protests only after the promulgation of the Royal Decree Law no. 1728 of November 17, 1938, which forbade marriages between people of different races, even if both professed the Catholic religion. According to Renzo De Felice, the pontiff acted this way to end the evident violation of the Concordato signed in 1929, rather than express his indignation toward such an absurd and vile law. In R. De Felice, Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo, pp. 31-43, 292-298. Cf. R. Vivarelli, Le leggi razziali nella storia del fascismo italiano, p. 747. About the position of the Church towards the Jews, see R. Moro, La Chiesa e lo sterminio degli ebrei, pp. 35-67; V. De Cesaris, Vaticano, fascismo e questione razziale, Milano, Guerini e associati, 2010, pp. 87-98, 187-192, 211-234; Id., The Vatican, racism and anti-semitism between Pius XI and Pius XII,
Actually, as Renzo De Felice’s analysis revealed, with the exception of Catholic anti-Semitism, a Jewish problem in Italy never existed. The Jews settled in the country had always constituted a rather small community; in 1938, they totalled about 47,000. They lived mainly in the centre-north part of the peninsula, and were well integrated into the social fabric of the nation.

Moreover, the charge of anti-nationalism against them was unfounded. In fact, Italian citizens of Jewish origin demonstrated in many situations a strong attachment to their homeland, as was proven by their presence alongside other Italian fighters in World War I and their participation in D’Annunzio’s campaign in Fiume. Even the theory of the Jews’ supposed hostility towards the regime was not convincing. Most of them showed their devotion to Fascism from the beginning in various ways. They not only enthusiastically embraced the cause of the black shirts, but also made donations to the party and occupied public offices of great prestige, in Parliament as well as in the armed forces, in the universities, and the judicial and administrative sectors. One of the most famous examples was Guido Jung, Minister of Finance from July 1932 to January 1935, and

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65 The perfect integration of the Jewish community in the country explains the reluctant and scarce support of the population for the anti-Semitic policy of the regime that Italian people, generally speaking, accepted with substantial (even if equally guilty and despicable) indifference. See R. De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, pp. 6-16; R. Vivarelli, *Le leggi razziali nella storia del fascismo italiano*, pp. 770; M. Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell’Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione*, pp. 32-34, 43-44. For detailed information on the Jewish census of 1938, see M. Sarfatti, *Mussolini contro gli ebrei. Cronaca dell’elaborazione delle leggi del 1938*, pp. 131-176.


67 R. De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, pp. 73-74.
member *de jure* of the Grand Council throughout his mandate. Likewise, another emblematic figure was Renzo Ravenna, who was the *podestà* of Ferrara, a city dear to the early Fascism, from October 1926 to March 1938.

Furthermore, many Jews continued to regard themselves as Fascists even after the promulgation of anti-Semitic laws. This was shown in letters sent as a sign of unconditional respect and gratitude to the head of the Pnf after the autumn of 1938. It was made even more evident by over 400 missives addressed to the Duce and the Ministry of the Interior by Israeliites of all ages and social extraction. Driven by a strong sense of moral and civic duty, between September 1939 and June 1940 they asked for permission - which was denied by the new laws - to fight for the nation and for the regime, in the name of Mussolini and the revolution of the black shirts.

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70 *La rassegna mensile di Israel* published some of these letters, which deserve to be partly quoted. The first one was written by J.B. who, reiterating his support for the Fascist cause, wrote on September 16, 1938: ‘My religion is Fascism and my Messiah is Mussolini […] On behalf of all the young Jewish Italian citizens, born and raised during Fascism, I want to tell you, Duce, that nothing in the world can ever extinguish this Italian flame of volunteering that today more than ever shines purely in our hearts, in contrast to the general panic that the anti-Semitic campaign has generated in the Jewish world’. On June 8, 1940, just two days before Italy entered World War II, P.S. stated he was ready to contribute with his sacrifice to the imperial destiny of the nation. So he invoked the Duce and said: ‘My blood and the blood of my children […] bursts of Italianity. We feel deeply humiliated for not being able to respond freely to the common [military] appeal […] We are ready to give our existence [for the country] […] Let us embrace the rifle as volunteers of the black shirts’. On June 10, the young M.E. launched his appeal to Mussolini: ‘Race or no race, I just feel I am Italian and Fascist. I want to contribute with all my strengths […] to the greatness of my beloved country. Educated as Fascists, we have welcomed with discipline and understanding those provisions that, even if they hit us in the deepest and most holy of feelings, are correct because they come from you […] But today I ask you to let me serve my homeland, in whatever way you command. With you, in life and in death’. Similarly, on June 16, G.F. wrote to the head of the Pnf: ‘The time invoked by the Duce for 20 years has arrived and I hoped the time has arrived for me too […] Why do you want to deny me this supreme justice? I'm worthy of pouring my blood for the glory of Italy and for the glory of
In addition, the accusation against the Jews of betraying the homeland, because of their open support for international Zionism, seems barely plausible. Renzo De Felice’s research in this connection has shown that such support grew slowly in Italy and, in any case, only after the introduction of the anti-Semitic legislation of 1938\textsuperscript{71}. At the same time, the historian has rejected the notion of any threat to the national interest posed by a presumed Jewish lobby in the economic field. In fact, in the peninsula, the Semitic population was employed mainly in the administrative, political and academic spheres; only a small percentage worked in the commercial and financial sector\textsuperscript{72}.

Based on data revealed so far, it is difficult to believe that the presence of the Israeli community in the territory of the Italian State was an element of annoyance or a factor of fragmentation. Moreover, it is not insignificant that Mussolini himself had never shown any earlier prejudice against the Jews, as evidenced by the participation of the latter in political debate within the party and by some of the Duce’s personal relations, for example the one with the writer and art critic Margherita Sarfatti\textsuperscript{73}. Indeed, the absence of any preconceived

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\textsuperscript{71} R. De Felice, \textit{Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo}, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Ibidem}, pp. 13-14.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Ibidem}, pp. 67-69. In this regard, on 10 August 1938 Giuseppe Bottai wrote in his diary: ‘It is currently underway the journalistic attempt to demonstrate a continuity in Duce’s racist thought. People remember the pages of the \textit{Colloqui} written by Ludwig. It remembers that the latter, chosen [by Mussolini] to grant his historical confidences, is a Jew. And also that the first Mussolini’s biographer is a Jew as well as many senators that he nominated. Today Brodero told me these singular episodes. In 1928 he was chairing an examination board at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: fourteen winners, and among them some Jews. He explained the situation to the boss, and this latter told him literally: “Well, nominate them. In foreign administration there are only four Jews; and they work well. And remember, I will never discriminate, since I do not want to create a matter of religion or race. Never, remember!”’. In 1933, Bodero, President of Professionals and Artists, was concerned about Jewish infiltrations in the student community of Padua, reported by
hostility towards the Jews was proven, since the ‘Sansepolcrista phase’, by the words of the leader of Fascism, who declared in October 1920:

L’Italia non conosce l’antisemitismo e crediamo non lo conoscerà mai. […] in Italia non si fa assolutamente nessuna differenza tra ebrei e non ebrei, in tutti i campi, dalla religione alla politica, alle armi, all’economia. Abbiamo avuto al Governo persino tre ebrei in una volta. La nuova Sionne, gli ebrei italiani l’hanno qui, in questa nostra adorabile terra, che, del resto, molti di essi hanno difeso eroicamente col sangue.\(^74\)

Such beliefs were fully reflected in the official doctrine of the regime and in the party’s politics, in which, until the first half of the 1930s, there was no ‘anti-Semitic vocation’\(^75\). Otherwise, it would be

\(^74\) B. Mussolini, Ebrei, bolscevismo e sionismo, in Il Popolo d’Italia, no. 250, October 19, 1920, reproduced in Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, vol. XV, pp. 270-271. [Author’s translation: ‘Italy does not know anti-Semitism and we believe it will never know it […] In Italy, there is no difference between Jews and non-Jews, in all the fields, from religion to politics, in the army, and in the economy. In the government, we had three Jews at one time. The Italian Jews have their new Zion here, in our adorable country, that, after all, many of them have defended heroically with their blood.’]

\(^75\) In order to confirm this thesis, it is important to quote part of Nahum Goldmann’s discourse. He was a prominent member of the Zionist movement, and founder and president of the World Jewish Congress. During the 3rd World Conference of Jewish Delegations, held in Geneva from 20 to 23 August 1934, Goldmann stated that the coexistence between totalitarianism and Judaism was, after all, possible. In his opinion, this was demonstrated by the case of Fascist Italy that, till then, had ‘maintained the equality of rights for the Jews’, which therefore felt safe within the peninsula. Cf. N. Goldmann, La crisi dell’ebraismo, in Gerarchia, no. 10, October 1934, p. 851. On this topic see also, as an example, G. Contri, Sionismo e ebraismo: problemi assurdi, in Critica fascista, no. 17, September 1, 1934, pp. 325-326; O. Cancelliere, Il nazismo, gli ebrei e noi, in Libro e moschetto, no. 62, December 8, 1934, p. 1. It is true that, after the March on Rome, there were some Fascists that embraced anti-Semitic ideas. However, they were isolated cases, as the already mentioned Giovanni Preziosi or Roberto Farinacci. R. De Felice, Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo, p. 66; M. Michaelis, Mussolini and the Jews. German-Italian relations and the Jewish question in Italy 1922-1945, pp. 23-28; R. Vivarelli, Le leggi razziali nella storia del fascismo italiano, p. 757. The quote is in R. Vivarelli, Le leggi razziali nella storia del fascismo italiano, p. 742.
impossible to explain the promulgation of the Jewish community law in October 1930, in which the government recognized Jewish organizations and entrusted their supervision and protection to the Ministry of Justice and Worship Affairs, also in charge of approving the appointment of chief rabbis\textsuperscript{76}. What would also have been incomprehensible was Mussolini’s decision to allow German Jews to seek refuge in Italy in order to escape the first Nazi persecutions conducted by Hitler in the months immediately following his appointment as Chancellor\textsuperscript{77}. Similarly, it would not have been possible for the entry ‘anti-Semitism’ in the \textit{Italian Encyclopaedia} to be entrusted to a Jew; and for some Italian Israelites to attend the prestigious conference of the \textit{Accademia d’Italia} that took place in October 1932\textsuperscript{78}.

State anti-Semitism was the most shameful page in history written by Fascism since, as Roberto Vivarelli has strongly emphasized, it was not a ‘simple discrimination’, but a ‘real persecution’\textsuperscript{79}. However, the fact remains that the reasons for the anti-Jewish backlash have not to be found, as Marie-Anne Matard Bonucci has argued, in the presence of anti-Semitic currents or components within the party since the 1920s, but in contingent factors and foreign policy choices\textsuperscript{80}. In


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{77} R. De Felice, \textit{Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo}, pp. 127-131; R. Vivarelli, \textit{Le leggi razziali nella storia del fascismo italiano}, p. 744.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{78} R. Vivarelli, \textit{Le leggi razziali nella storia del fascismo italiano}, p. 742.}


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{80} Matard Bonucci explains State anti-Semitism in the light of the totalitarian project of Fascism. A project that, in the moment of stasis experienced by the regime in the aftermath of the conquest of the empire, had to be vigorously relaunched. So Matard Bonucci accepts as valid the justifications adduced by the Fascist theorists regarding the need of an anti-Jewish policy as the final stage of the}
other words, as Fascism embraced racism when it had to face the problem of half-caste breeding after the end of the Abyssinian campaign, it did the same thing with anti-Semitism. Indeed, with the complicity of the other Fascist leaders, Mussolini decided to introduce anti-Semitism into the ideological universe of the Pnf when he chose to tie Italy’s fate to that of Nazi Germany.

It is, however, important to specify that the anti-Semitic legislation of 1938, although influenced by Hitlerian law, was not adopted under German constraint. It was, rather, the product of a deliberate choice of the Duce and his ideologues, and was dictated by mere political calculation\textsuperscript{81}. In fact, if Fascism had reached an unprecedented level of consensus within the nation after the conquest of Ethiopia, it was not the same situation in the international arena, since the colonial war brought Mussolini the firm condemnation of the Society of Nations. The ‘return of the empire to the fatal hills of Rome’ involved a rather high price to pay for Italy: its political isolation. So, at that time, Mussolini could count only on Hitler, who gave him carte blanche in Eastern Africa in exchange for Fascist approval of National Socialism’s racial domination projects.

Taking advantage of instability and conflict in the old continent, the Führer launched an aggressive expansionist policy to unify all the people of German language and blood in Mitteleuropa. From January 1935 to October 1938, the Chancellor of the Reich made a series of formidable gains that gave concrete expression to the Nazi dream of a

\textsuperscript{81} R. Vivarelli, \textit{Le leggi razziali nella storia del fascismo italiano}, pp. 758, 768-769.
great Germany: from the return of Saar within German borders to the military reoccupation of the Rhineland, from Austria’s annexation to the occupation of the Czechoslovakian region of the Sudetenland. In only three years, Germany succeeded in becoming the dominant power in Europe; and largely unchecked too, since the liberal democracies’ apathy unwittingly eased the path of the Führer and his great domination projects.

It was in this context that Mussolini decided to formalize the alliance with Nazism; an alliance strongly desired by Galeazzo Ciano - head of the Foreign Ministry since June 1936 - because it would have guaranteed Italy a radiant future full of success, or so thought the Fascist leaders at least82.

In particular, Mussolini was impressed by the Anschluss, that he had hoped would not happen. Hitler hid his plans from his ally until the end, and only after the Wehrmacht crossed the Austrian border on March 11, 1938, he sent a letter to the Duce. In that note, he explained his reasons for intervention, and asserted that ‘every man of character’ would have behaved in the same way83.

As ‘Führer and as a National Socialist’, he could not ‘do otherwise’, Hitler said, adding that he was sure Mussolini would not have acted differently ‘if the fate of Italians had been in play’84. Reminding the Duce that, in ‘a critical moment for Italy’, he had shown his own ‘inner good dispositions’, Hitler pointed out that, as he

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83 The text of the letter is reproduced in R. De Felice, Mussolini il duce. II. Lo Stato totalitario, p. 471.

84 Ibidem.
had drawn a clear frontier with France, he had done the same with Italy, and it was the Brenner.85

The next day, the Grand Council approved a resolution that took note of what had happened in Austria: nothing but ‘the result of a pre-existing state of affairs and the open expression of the feelings and will of the Austrian people’86. On March 16, Mussolini talked about this issue in the Chamber of Deputies, in a speech that is central to the theme of this work, mainly because it reconfirms the absolutely non-contingent value of Axis:

Ai circoli più o meno ufficiali d’Oltralpe che ci domandano perché non siamo intervenuti per “salvare” l’indipendenza dell’Austria, rispondiamo che non avevamo mai assunto alcun impegno del genere, né diretto o indiretto, né scritto o verbale […] L’interesse dell’Italia all’indipendenza dello Stato federale austriaco esisteva; ma si basava evidentemente sulla pregiudiziale che gli austriaci tale indipendenza volessero, almeno nella loro maggioranza; ma quanto accade in questi giorni nelle terre austriache dimostra che l’anelito profondo del popolo era per l’Anschluss. Ai superstiti cultori di un macchiavellismo deteriore che noi respingiamo, si può osservare che, quando un evento è fatale, val meglio che si faccia con voi, piuttosto che malgrado voi, o, peggio, contro di voi. In realtà è vera rivoluzione nazionale quella che si compie, e noi italiani siamo i più indicati a comprenderla nelle sue esigenze storiche e anche nei suoi metodi che sembrano sbrigativi, come furono sempre quelli di tutte le rivoluzioni […] Quando il dramma austriaco giunse nei giorni scorsi al quinto atto, gli avversari mondiali del fascismo spiarono se l’occasione buona non fosse finalmente venuta per mettere l’uno di fronte all’altro i due regimi totalitari e frantumare la loro solidarietà attraverso un urto che sarebbe stato, tra l’altro, lo diciamo ai pacifisti di professione, il preludio di una nuova guerra mondiale […] Ma perché non

85 Ibidem.
86 The text of the resolution is reproduced in R. De Felice, Mussolini il duce. II. Lo Stato totalitario, p. 472.
dirlo? Anche milioni di germanici stettero in ascolto. Era giunta l’ora di quello che si poteva chiamare il “collaudo” dell’Asse. Ora i germanici sanno che l’Asse non è una costruzione diplomatica efficiente soltanto per le occasioni normali, ma si è dimostrato solido soprattutto in quest’ora eccezionale, nella storia del mondo germanico e dell’Europa. Le due nazioni la cui formazione unitaria è stata parallela nel tempo e nei modi, unite come sono da una concezione analoga della politica della vita, possono marciare insieme per dare al nostro travagliato continente un nuovo equilibrio, che permetta finalmente la pacifica e feconda collaborazione di tutti i popoli.

Although the regime worked hard to make the new foreign policy orientation palatable to the public, Renzo De Felice wrote ‘it is not exaggeration to say that, at the internal level, the Anschluss was perceived by many as the first defeat of Fascism’. Pro-Axis propaganda was vehement, but insufficient to foster more goodwill for the Germans, as memories of the Great War lingered. Moreover, only a few years had passed since the Duce had openly defended Austria’s

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87 L’Anschluss, reproduced in Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, vol. XXIX, pp. 67-71. [Author’s translation: ‘To those […] who ask us why we did not intervene to “save” the independence of Austria, we reply that we never undertook such commitment, either direct or indirect, neither written nor verbal […] Italy’s interest in the independence of the Austrian Federal State existed; but it was evidently based on the precondition that the Austrian people wanted this independence, at least in their majority. But what is happening in these days in the Austrian lands proves that the people deeply desired the Anschluss. […] When an event is fatal, it is better to do it with you, rather than in spite of you, or, worse, against you. Actually, this is a real national revolution, and we, the Italian people, can perfectly understand it in its historical needs and even its methods that seem to be hasty, as it always is in all revolutions […] When the Austrian drama arrived in the previous days in its fifth act, the world’s opponents of Fascism thought it was a good opportunity to finally turn the two totalitarian regimes against each other and shatter their solidarity […] It was time to “test” the Axis. Now the German people knows that the Axis is not an efficient diplomatic building just for normal occasions, but it has proved to be strong especially in this exceptional moment in the history of the Germanic world and Europe. The two nations, whose formation has been parallel in time and ways, united as they are by a similar concept of life, can march together to give to our troubled continent a new balance, which will finally allow peaceful and fruitful collaboration among all the people.’

88 R. De Felice, Mussolini il duce. II. Lo Stato totalitario, p. 474.
independence. In the eyes of many people, the acceptance of the Anschluss signalled that Italy was treading a very risky path; a path on which it was being ‘dragged by Germany against its interests and aspirations’\(^{89}\).

It is in this context that Hitler’s visit to Italy in May 1938 should be examined. On that occasion, the Führer repeatedly proposed to Mussolini a military alliance - either public or secret - as the crowning achievement of a special relationship uniting the Italians and the Germans. This was to be a relationship based on ‘equal interests’ and the ‘commonality of ideologies’, leading to a profitable collaboration between ‘these two races of such great virtues and such great value’\(^{90}\). But the Duce made no formal commitment. He merely evoked the notions of ‘ideal community’, ‘the ethical law of friendship’, cooperation between the two nations as well as, significantly, the need for ‘justice, security and peace’ in a ‘regime of international coexistence’\(^{91}\).

At first glance, Hitler’s trip did not seem to generate the results that the National Socialist leader had expected. Nonetheless, it produced a series of initiatives that, as Renzo De Felice argued, ‘although they were neither decisive nor irreversible, [they] heavily influenced the reality and the image of the regime in Italy and abroad, as well as Mussolini’s choices’\(^{92}\). In particular, it triggered a reaction in the international press, which began to question the solidity of Axis. Mussolini had been hesitant and, in fact, did not accept the Führer’s proposal. This was partly because he was still impressed by the unexpected annexation of Austria, and partly because he did not want

\(^{89}\) Ibidem.

\(^{90}\) Hitler’s words are reproduced in a footnote to *Brindisi al cancelliere del Reich*, in *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, vol. XXIX, pp. 96-97.

\(^{91}\) *Brindisi al cancelliere del Reich*, reproduced in *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, vol. XXIX, pp. 94-96.

\(^{92}\) R. De Felice, *Mussolini il duce. II. Lo Stato totalitario*, p. 483.
to compromise Italy’s relations with England or undermine a possible rapprochement with France. However, the Duce could not allow Axis to be discredited and, worse, let the fragility of Axis be attributed to Italians’ lack of goodwill for Germany, because this would have raised doubts about his leadership in global public opinion.\footnote{As Renzo de Felice correctly notes, although Mussolini did not accept to formalize the military alliance with the Germans, the Führer’s proposal represented to him ‘an element of strength and a big temptation’. First of all, because Germany offered to Italy the chance to escape the isolation in which it plunged after the Ethiopian campaign. Secondly, because it provided to the Fascist regime the support of Germany, until then uncertain and intermittent, in order to achieve a series of expansionist goals. Cf. R. De Felice, \textit{Mussolini il duce. II. Lo Stato totalitario}, pp. 483-484.}

Surely, the clear hostility of the Catholic areas towards National Socialism did not play in favour of the head of the Pnf. The pope showed his opposition with the publication in March 1937 of the encyclical \textit{Mit brennender Sorge}, and reiterated it when Hitler arrived in the capital, since he left Rome and went to Castelgandolfo as a sign of protest. The king, for his part, did not hold the Führer in high regard. And Mussolini’s strategy of closer ties with the Germans caused no less perplexity among the Fascist leadership. Openly pro-Nazi leaders were few. Most leaders were convinced that relations with Germany should serve only to restore relations with other powers, or to escape the isolation in which Italy found itself after the Ethiopian campaign and its participation in the Spanish Civil War in support of the \textit{Alzamiento}.\footnote{Renzo De Felice points out that, although this was the majority orientation, there were hierarchs who used the ties, alleged or real, with the high representatives of National Socialism to move up. As Giuseppe Bottai wrote, ‘Nazi Germany seems to have become the land of comparison of our faith. A trip to Germany is a good card in the hands of the hierarchs and subhierarchs seeking fortune’. Cf. G. Bottai, \textit{Diario 1935-1944}, pp. 123-124, reproduced in R. De Felice, \textit{Mussolini il duce. II. Lo Stato totalitario}, pp. 485-486.}

Mussolini could not tolerate such a situation. It was unacceptable to him that anyone objected to his choices, or had the courage to oppose them. He therefore ordered the Pnf to attack the Church, the
monarchy and the bourgeoisie, in order to silence any dissent, and to persuade the people of the ‘historic necessity’ of Axis. For the Duce, the ‘confluence of the Fascist Revolution and the National Socialist Revolution’ had become inevitable, as well as the anti-Semitic turn, especially at that point in Italian-German relations.

This was a key change in the history of the regime. Fascism and National Socialism had never been so close. And the direct and indirect effects of Hitler’s visit culminated in Mussolini dropping his hesitation and embracing total alignment with his German ally. From that moment, Jews became ‘irreducible enemies’ of the black shirts. Hit by racist measures mostly adopted between September and November 1938, Jews were accused of betraying their own nation, and persecuted by a party and regime that, in many cases, they had enthusiastically supported. Reasons of State prevailed over any...
previous belief and good sense\textsuperscript{99}. At that point, the priority for the Duce was to cement Italy’s relationship with Germany, which began with the proclamation of the Rome-Berlin Axis in October 1936, and was strengthened militarily with the Pact of Steel signed in May 1939\textsuperscript{100}. In the eyes of Mussolini and other leaders of the regime, the consequences of that criminal decision were not so important. So sacrificing the Jews on the altar of reasons of State was seen as a price to pay to consolidate relations between Fascist Italy and the Third Reich politically and ideologically.

Duce did not hesitate to indicate the true political line followed by the party and the regime, declaring: ‘The Jews, in Italy, in the Metropolitan territory are 44,000 [...] the proportion would be a Jew on a thousand inhabitants. It is clear that from now on the participation of Jews in the global life of the State will have to be and will be appropriate to this ratio [...] Therefore there is no doubt that the time is ripe for Italian racism and it is also undoubted that it will become the spiritual patrimony of our people, the fundamental basis of our State, an element of security for our empire’. The text of the Diplomatic Information no. 18 is reproduced in \textit{Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini}, vol. XXIX, pp. 497-498.

\textsuperscript{99} The proof of what has been said is provided by Giuseppe Bottai’s testimony. Although he was opposed to the alliance with Germany and he did not have any resentment towards the Jews, he was one of those who pledged most to enforce anti-Semitic laws, justifying them in the light of ‘high reasons of foreign policy’. He stated that the Jewish problem in Italy existed ‘in small proportions’ and that it could be solved ‘with administrative acts’, whereas the government was ‘shoot[ing] with a cannon to kill a bird’. Yet, in the Fascist regime, ‘leader’s directives have to be accepted or rejected’, and in order to reject them, ‘reasons of irresistible moral resistance’ were needed. But his reservations on the ‘method’ of the anti-Semitic fight did not get that far. G. Bottai, \textit{Diario 1935-1944}, pp. 130, 133. About Giuseppe Bottai’s position towards the Italian anti-Semitic turn see M. Michaelis, \textit{Giuseppe Bottai, la pretesa totalitaria e la svolta razziale}. \textit{Riflessioni sui diari di un gerarca fascista}, in \textit{Rivista storica italiana}, CXIII, 2001, pp. 457-496; L. Di Nucci, \textit{Nel cantiere dello Stato fascista}, Roma, Carocci, 2008, pp. 148-152; Id., \textit{Bottai, in Dizionario del fascismo}, Torino, Einaudi, 2003, pp. 194-198; G.B. Guerri, \textit{Giuseppe Bottai, fascista}, Milano, Mondadori, 1996, pp. 146-150; R. Vivarelli, \textit{Le leggi razziali nella storia del fascismo italiano}, pp. 767-768.

\textsuperscript{100} As proof of this thesis, Vivarelli indicated a passage of a letter sent by Mussolini to his sister Edvige in September 1938, in which, with all his unscrupulousness and opportunism, he wrote: ‘The presence of racism and anti-Semitism in Italy is so important in its political appearance as it lacks weight in its real substance. […] If the circumstances had led me to a Rome-Moscow axis rather than to a Rome-Berlin axis, maybe I would have fed the Italian workers […] with the equivalent tall story of the Stakhanovite ethics and the happiness it subsumes’. In R. Vivarelli, \textit{Le leggi razziali nella storia del fascismo italiano}, pp. 758-759. On the circumstances that led from the Axis proclamation to the conclusion of the Pact of Steel, see R. De Felice, \textit{Mussolini il duce. II. Lo Stato totalitario}, pp. 589-626.
If that was the case, Angelo Ventura’s thesis - that racism and hatred against Jews were ‘in nuce in the genetic code of Fascism’ - does not seem convincing\textsuperscript{101}. In the historian’s interpretation, racism and hatred constituted an arrival point of Pnf ideology, representing its ‘not necessary but logical’ development\textsuperscript{102}.

There seems to be little doubt about their ‘non-necessity’. After all, Hitler did not pressurize Mussolini in this regard. So the Duce could have avoided making anti-Semitism a state policy if he had wanted to. This was a ‘totally free’ choice, as Vivarelli argued, since ‘if circumstances in 1938 suggested that decision, they certainly did not impose it’\textsuperscript{103}.

On the contrary, there are some doubts about the presumed ‘logicality’ and therefore the intrinsic nature of racism and anti-Semitism in Italian Fascism since, before the mid-1930s, there were no concrete elements that prefigured such a turn\textsuperscript{104}. As shown earlier, the only references to race were in generic measures of demographic policy, aimed largely at increasing the population and preventing disease.

The tragic season of Italian racism, in fact, was inaugurated with the law against madamato in 1937, and continued with the measures against the Jews the following year. But it is essential to note that, between these two normatives, there was no ‘logical and conceptual connection absolutely indissociable’, as Enzo Collotti has affirmed\textsuperscript{105}.

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\textsuperscript{101} A. Ventura, \textit{Il fascismo e gli ebrei. Il razzismo antisemita nell’ideologia e nella politica del regime}, Roma, Donzelli, 2013, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibidem, p. 67.
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In both cases, there were provisions dictated not by deep-rooted ideological beliefs but by the need to adapt the action of the Fascist regime to the new political scenario, characterized by the appearance of new problems, such as the issue of half-castes breeding in the empire and the need to complete the alignment with Berlin.

Since it is impossible to determine the intrinsic nature of racism and anti-Semitism in Italian Fascism, it is even more difficult to accept Ventura’s interpretation, according to which these two elements constitute ‘common denominators’, confirming the ‘scientific validity of the general concept of Fascism’ as a ‘hermeneutical category that defines a European and international phenomenon’. But if it is true that racism and anti-Semitism were present in most countries that had a Fascist experience between the World Wars, it is also true that these sentiments arose and manifested themselves for different reasons and in different ways that make creating a general category difficult. Indeed, there is then the risk of lumping very different situations together, ignoring the peculiarities of individual national experience.

In this regard, if Italian and German anti-Judaism are equally execrable from a moral point of view, a distinction must be made between the two cases on the basis of the degree of violence and the methodology employed in carrying out the persecution measures. It was a cold-bloodedness that had devastating effects in Germany. In contrast, this was absent in Italy, where anti-Jewish legislation as well as colonial law were not systematically implemented, and always

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remained confusing at various points. Moreover, if one wanted to apply the methodological approach proposed by Ventura to Spanish
National syndicalism, one would come to the wrong conclusion and be forced to exclude the Falangist experience from the category of Fascist experiences simply because, in this case, racism and anti-Semitism were present in a very marginal way.

As indicated in the previous paragraph, the word ‘raza’, indeed, appeared frequently in the literature and speeches of Falangist leaders. But it was used in a generic sense, as a synonym for the Hispanic community. After all, it is important to underline again that the same concept of unidad de destino en el universal - so dear to the camisas azules - made it impossible to differentiate individuals on the basis of a biological criterion, since it meant the union of all the peoples of Spanish language and culture who once formed the great empire of the Catholic Kings: a multi-ethnic empire in which religion was deemed more important than purity of blood in order to play a unifying function\(^\text{109}\). To the theoreticians of the party, therefore, it seemed unnecessary to talk about phenotypic differences and the illicitness of racial mixes since, as Antonio Tovar rhetorically asked himself: ‘What value could the concept of “purity of race” have for us [the Spaniards] since we counted all inside the Hispanic world?’\(^\text{110}\).

As race - biologically interpreted - was not a central element in defining the national Falangist identity, because there were no objective premises allowing the National syndicalist ideology to
evolve this way, something similar happened with anti-Semitism, since there was no trace of it in Spain from the end of the 15th Century. The ‘Jewish problem’ was resolutely faced in March 1492 with the edict of Granada, by which Isabel of Castille and Ferdinand of Aragon forced all Sephardic Jews to convert to Catholicism, and expelled from the Spanish territories those who refused to follow the order\textsuperscript{111}. Therefore, as Tovar wrote, ‘in Spanish sensitivity, in which race is not so important’, over the centuries - and especially after the abolition of the Holy Inquisition in 1834 - the question of the Israelites died away\textsuperscript{112}. The ‘Semitic problem’ lost its ‘virulence’ and did not seem ‘something fatal’ since

El judío era peligroso como representante de una religión - de una cultura - radicalmente distinta, antieuropea, antinacional, anticristiana. Bastaba con que el judío abandonase esta base religiosa para que en unos años o en unos siglos - la cosa era sólo cuestión de generaciones y de tiempo - quedase similitud y confundido\textsuperscript{113}.

Things carried on this way. In the early 20th Century, the Jewish community in Spain was very small. In a population of about 17 million people, there were about twenty thousand Jews, most of them living in the cities of Seville, Madrid and Barcelona, perfectly


\textsuperscript{113} A. Tovar,\textit{ El imperio de España}, p. 55. [Author’s translation: ‘The Jew is dangerous as representative of a radically distinct, anti-European, antinational, anti-Christian religion and culture. It was sufficient that the Jew abandoned this religious base - it was only a matter of generation and time - in order to be assimilated in few years or few centuries’.]
integrated into the nation’s social fabric. The new century began in a climate of general detente towards the Sephardis. This led, firstly, to the founding of the Hispano-Jewish Union in 1910, under the patronage of King Alfonso XIII and Senator Pulido; and, secondly, thanks to the Royal Decree of December 20, 1924, to the granting of citizenship to Jews of Spanish origin and their descendants who had been marginalized or forced to leave the country in the past.

The Israeli position improved further with the approval in 1931 of the new republican constitution, which accorded full freedom of worship to followers of all religious persuasions, allowing them to profess their beliefs openly. The decree of April 29, 1931, promoted by the Minister of Justice Fernando de los Ríos, completed the picture, facilitating the acquisition of citizenship by Jews living in the Moroccan Protectorate as well as their inclusion in the social life of the State.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that, when José Antonio Primo de Rivera founded the Spanish Falange in October 1933, the party had no anti-Semitic character. He did not give the issue any particular importance, merely referring to it when he praised the National Socialist regime; so did the leader of the Jons, Ramiro Ledesma Ramos. In fact, even though racist theories from Germany

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were then circulating in Europe, there was no anti-Jewish trend in the Spanish Fascist community, as an article published in the journal *F.E.* in January 1934 stated:

Por el “antisemitismo” el fascio alemán se distingue y separa del fascio italiano. Y de todos los otros fascios en germén. Por ejemplo el nuestro: el español. […] Italia, como España, no tiene “cuestión judía” aun cuando haya algunas corrientes falsas, débiles y pedantes, sobre una “pretendida raza latina”. Es lo que sucede en España con nuestra paradójica “Fiesta de la Raza”, que significa, en realidad, todo lo contrario. O sea, que España se mezcló con todas las razas, sin tener sentido racista y unitario, sin prejuicio alguno.

In José Antonio Primo de Rivera’s opinion, ‘for Spain, the Jewish problem was not, and would never have been, a problem of Race but an article of Faith’\(^{119}\). The discriminating element, therefore, was not an ethnic-biological factor, but a religious one. It is no coincidence that the only sector of Falangism in which anti-Semitic theories took root was the clerical one. And its foremost exponent was the co-founder of Jons, Onésimo Redondo Ortega\(^ {120} \).

\(^{118}\) Alemania: Nazis y Judios, in *F.E.*, no. 2, January 11, 1934, p. 8. [Author’s translation: ‘Regarding the “anti-Semitic” phenomenon, the German fascio distinguishes itself from the Italian fascio and from all the others as, for example, from our fascio, the Spanish one. Italy, as well as Spain, does not have a “Jewish problem” even if there are some false, weak and fastidious trends about a “presumed Latin race”. This is what happens in Spain with our paradoxical “Fiesta de la Raza”, which means actually the opposite; that is, that Spain is mixed with all the races, without having a racist and unitary intention, without any prejudice.’]

\(^{119}\) J.A. Primo de Rivera’s words are reproduced in *Alemania: Nazis y Judios*, p. 8.

\(^{120}\) Among the Spanish Fascist theorists who supported the anti-Semitic theories in the early 1930s, there was Ernesto Giménez Caballero who inveigled violently against the Jews in his work *Genio de España* published in 1932. In E. Gimenez Caballero, *Genio de España. Exaltaciones a una resurrección nacional. Y del mundo*, p. 111. Unlike Redondo Ortega, however, Caballero looked at anti-Semitism
As an integralist Catholic particularly attached to Germany - where he lived from 1927 to 1928 working as a Spanish language teaching assistant at the University of Mannheim - Redondo Ortega, since the creation of the Juntas Castillanas de Actuación Hispánica in 1931, made anti-Semitism one of the leitmotifs of his political propaganda. Embracing the charge of deicide made against the Jews that came from Christian circles as well as the conspiracy theories linking Jews to Freemasonry and Communism, he blamed the Israelites for conspiring to overturn the traditional order, causing the collapse of the Spanish monarchy, and promoting the birth of the Second republic\textsuperscript{121}.

As editor of the first Spanish edition of \textit{The Protocols of the Elders of Zion}, Redondo Ortega wrote a series of articles that were published in the journal \textit{Libertad} from February 22, 1932 and declared that he wanted to unmask the ‘Jewish plan, conceived and […] developed by international capital in alliance with secret societies and international revolutionaries in order to humiliate and impoverish the Country’\textsuperscript{122}. Signing with the black mark of authentic ‘enemies of Hispanic society’, the National syndicalist leader accused the Jews of disturbing the equilibrium of the State with their ‘campaign of extreme political hatred’, aimed at provoking the breakdown of the

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\item O. Redondo Ortega, \textit{Los Protocolos de los Sabios de Sión}, in Libertad, no. 37, February 22, 1932, p. 6. On the diffusion of the Protocols in Spain see G. Álvarez Chillida, \textit{El antisemitismo en España. La imagen del judío (1812-2002)}, pp. 301-308; J. Domínguez Arribas, \textit{El enemigo judeo-masónico en la propaganda franquista (1936-1945)}, pp. 69-80; J.A. Lisbona, \textit{Retorno a Sefarad}, pp. 81-92. It is important to note that, as in the Italian case, even in the Spanish Fascism the Protocols did not succeed and were never included among the fundamental texts of the movement and the party.
\end{itemize}
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Christian pax ruling the country for centuries, to facilitate the ‘clandestine sale and barter of Spain to foreign speculators’.123

These anti-Semitic theories, justified exclusively in the light of religious-cultural and political-economic factors, slowly began to spread within the party after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.124 As has already been seen, this was due to the national and international Israeli community’s support for the republican government and its anti-Franco stance, as well as to the growing influence of German propaganda within the front led by the caudillo, as a result of the technical-military support provided by Hitler to the nationalist cause.125

It is certain that, as Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida has pointed out, it was an ‘anti-Semitism without Jews’.126 In fact, excluding the cities of Ceuta and Melilla and the areas of the Moroccan Protectorate, there

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124 It is appropriate to remember that in 1935 there was an unfortunate episode: a group of camisas azules assaulted the department stores Sepúlveda in Madrid, opened by some Jewish German refugees. Often this event is used as a proof of the supposed anti-Semitic nature of the Falange. However, as Álvarez Chillida has argued, it was an isolated case, largely due to the will to defend the Spanish sector of small commerce rather than to a real intent of persecution of the Jews as such. In G. Álvarez Chillida, La eclosión del antisemitismo español: de la II República al holocausto, p. 183; Id., Franco y los judíos en la segunda guerra mundial, pp. 271-273.

125 Álvarez Chillida emphasizes that the Falagist press, together with the Catholic one, welcomed the news about the persecution policies against the Jews in Germany. It did the same with those coming from Italy in the autumn of 1938. Cf. G. Álvarez Chillida, La eclosión del antisemitismo español: de la II República al holocausto, pp. 185-186, 191; Id., El antisemitismo en España. La imagen del judío (1812-2002), Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2002, pp. 353, 366, 381-384.

were few Jews in the metropolitan area, against whom the population at large had no prejudice. The campaign launched against them by the Falange - together with other sectors of the anti-liberal Spanish Right - had essentially an ideological function, since, by demonising the Israelites who had taken a stand in favour of the legitimate government of Madrid, the National syndicalists intended to hit the entire opposing political group. The anti-Semitic propaganda was not aimed at pushing the masses to a ‘Sephardi hunt’, but to fight those with whom the Jews were allied: namely the Socialists, the Communists, the Anarchists, the Masons, the Republicans, and the supporters of peripheral nationalisms\textsuperscript{127}. Reclaiming the mythical past of the end of the 15th Century, the Spanish Fascists recalled the expulsion of Jews from the peninsular territory which took place according to the Catholic Kings’ will with the edict of 1492, with the clear intention of legitimizing their struggle against the new interior enemy of Spain, represented by the Bolshevik and Masonic anti-national component, which included the Jews.

Actually, the Francoist State never put into practice a systematic persecution of the Israelites; not only because, as we have seen, it was a very small and well-integrated community, but also because the caudillo himself had never shown any open hostility towards it. This can be explained by two factors: firstly, the good relations between him and the members of the Jewish colony in the Moroccan protectorate, where the dictator had spent the most significant years of his military career; secondly, the debt of gratitude that the \textit{generalísimo} felt towards those subjects who, precisely because of the relationship of respect and fairness that bound them to Franco, had

supported the Spanish troops in the Rif war of 1921-1926 and had provided financial support to the Alzamiento in July 1936\textsuperscript{128}.

It is nonetheless true that the anti-Jewish propaganda conducted during the Civil War by the Falangian press and, more generally, by the nationalist front had inevitable repercussions on the Sephardis. Franco’s victory in April 1939 resulted in the cancellation of many of the rights they had enjoyed till then. In the aftermath of the conflict, Jews were deprived of their freedom of worship, which was abolished once again in favour of the reappearance of the Catholic confessional State\textsuperscript{129}. They were also denied international protection, as they were prevented from settling in Spain to escape the Shoah\textsuperscript{130}. Besides that, the entire Jewish community was subject to special vigilance by the regime’s security services. This vigilance was already active from January 1938 when, with the formation of Franco’s first government, a ‘Ministry of Public Order’ was established with a department of ‘Judaism’ in it. This latter was in charge of controlling the activities of the Israeli community, and was included, together with the Freemasonry department, in the ‘anti-Marxism’ section\textsuperscript{131}.

\textsuperscript{128} In the northern territories of the Moroccan Protectorate, there was a large Israeli colony of about 14,000 people, with whom the Spanish army had a very good relationship. The Jewish settlement played an important role in mediating between occupying forces and the local population. This was due to the fact that the Spanish soldiers provided protection to the Moroccan Jews, and to the cultural proximity that existed between them (it was a Semitic educated community that speaks Castilian language). On this topic see G. Álvarez Chillida, \textit{La eclosión del antisemitismo español: de la II República al holocausto}, p. 191; Id., \textit{El antisemitismo en España. La imagen del judío (1812-2002)}, p. 367; J.A. Lisboa, \textit{Retorno a Sefarad}, pp. 68-70; J. Domínguez Arribas, \textit{El enemigo judeo-masónico en la propaganda franquista (1936-1945)}, pp. 84-93.

\textsuperscript{129} Religious rituals other than Catholic were forbidden, Catholic teaching in schools was imposed, and at least until 1941 only Catholic weddings were allowed. In G. Álvarez Chillida, \textit{Franco y los judíos en la segunda guerra mundial}, p. 176.

\textsuperscript{130} G. Álvarez Chillida, \textit{La eclosión del antisemitismo español: de la II República al holocausto}, p. 201.

\textsuperscript{131} In December 1938 the Ministry of Public Order was incorporated into the Ministry of the Interior, headed starting from January by the pro-Falangist and sympathizer of the Axis, Serrano Suñer. Under his ministry, a register was created in
In all the three cases, these measures were not aimed at hitting the Jews as a community, but as political enemies. This is evident, firstly, from the fact that the abolition of the freedom of worship did not concern only the Israelites, but all religious persuasions other than Catholicism; and, secondly, from the fact that the prohibition of residing in the territories of the State did not imply a prohibition of transit, which means that Jews were allowed to stop in Spain, in order to leave for other countries\textsuperscript{132}. Moreover, the special vigilance the Sephardis were subjected to did not imply arbitrary detention, since the only ones to be imprisoned were those who had fought on the republican front and were therefore punished as anti-national enemies\textsuperscript{133}.

Actually, the Falange, as well as the entire Francoist team, adopted a cautious attitude towards anti-Semitism. The Nazi thesis concerning the alleged biological inferiority and danger of the Israelites did not appeal much to the National syndicalists, except in words and to a limited extent. If this is true, then it is also true that when Hitler began to provide substantial aid to the Alzamiento, it became difficult, if not impossible, to criticize such theories when the one who promoted them was one of the main allies of nationalist Spain. And it was even more difficult after the launch of the racial laws in Italy and during the early years of the Second World War, when Axis successes seemed to

\textsuperscript{132}The transit was allowed to small groups upon presentation of very detailed documentation and in a contingent manner, since a group of Jews could enter Spain only if another one had come out first. In such circumstances, many entered the country illegally through the Pyrenees, thus succeeding in saving themselves. In J.A. Lisboa, \textit{Retorno a Sefarad}, pp. 115-120; G. Álvarez Chillida, \textit{La eclosión del antisemitismo español: de la II República al holocausto}, pp. 197-202; Id., \textit{Franco y los judíos en la segunda guerra mundial}, pp. 177-178.

\textsuperscript{133}G. Álvarez Chillida, \textit{Franco y los judíos en la segunda guerra mundial}, p. 176.
predict the establishment of a new order and the victory of Fascism at the European level.

Following this determination, it is not enough to recognize that the press of the party on several occasions declared itself in favour of anti-Jewish policies, since it did so for political convenience rather than out of genuine ideological belief, as demonstrated by the testimonies of some members of the ‘División Azul’. The latter will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter, but for now, as an anticipation, it is important to say that it was an army made up largely of Falangist volunteers who went to fight on the Russian front alongside the Wehrmacht in June 1941. Although they were sympathetic to National Socialism and inclined to use insulting expressions against the Israelis, these soldiers were not cruel to Jewish prisoners they met along the way. Actually, in some cases, they even helped them escape Nazi persecution. Dionisio Ridruejo, one of the most distinguished participants in División Azul, in his diary described such an encounter and the great pain he felt seeing those spectral figures. In his own words:

He visto pasar un grupo de judíos, marcados, abatidos, con la mirada vaga. No sé de dónde ni hacia dónde - mientras siento una gran piedad - que una cosa es la comprensión de la teoría y otra la de los hechos. Comprendo la reacción antisemita del Estado Alemán. […] Pero si esto […] se comprende, deja de comprenderse tan pronto como nos encontramos en concreto, cara a cara, con el hecho humano: estos judíos traídos a Polonia o extraídos de ella que sufren, trabajan, probablemente mueren. Si se comprende no se acepta. Ante estos pobres, temblorosos seres concretos, se hunde la razón de toda teoría. A nosostros - no ya a mí - nos sorprende, nos escandaliza, nos ofende en la sensibilidad, esta capacidad para el desarrollo de la crueldad fría, metódica, impersonal, con arreglo a un plan previsto ‘desde fuera del territorio’. El repentino y pasional saco, a sangre y fuego; la
liquidación brutal, instantánea, explosiva; el ajuste de cuentas, nos parecen más explicables, más aceptables. Llega hasta donde la sangre llega. Allí - en la sonrisa desvalida de un niño, en la hermosura o decrepitud de una mujer, en el temblor de un anciano - rompe y se disuelve. […] entre nosotros estas columnas de judíos levantan tempestades de conmiseración en la que, por otra parte, no se incluye simpatía alguna. Acaso, en conjunto, nos repugnan los judíos. Pero no podemos por menos de sentirnos solidarios con los hombres. Sólo tengo vagos datos sobre los métodos de la persecución, pero por lo que vemos es excesiva. […] Ningun Estado, ninguna Idea, ningun Sueño de porvenir, por nobles, afortunados o hermosos que sean - y yo creo en los sueños alemanes hasta donde puedo creer - puede tener este poder de indiferencia ante el delicado e inmenso negocio de las vidas humanas sin perjudicarse gravísimamente.\footnote{D. Ridruejo, \textit{Los cuadernos de Rusia: Diario}, Barcelona, Planeta, 1978, pp. 80-81. On this topic see X. M. Núñez Seixas, \textit{El Tercer Reich, la Wehrmacht y la División Azul, 1941-1945: Memorias e imágenes contrapuestas}, in Ayer, no. 69, 2008, p. 50; Id., \textit{Camarada invierno. Experiencia y memoria de la División Azul (1941-1945),} Madrid, Crítica, 2016, pp. 295-319. [Author’s translation: ‘I have seen a group of Jews passing by, marked, dejected, with a blank look. I do not know where they come from or where they are going - while I feel great compassion - because one thing is to figure out the theory and another thing is to figure out the facts. I understand the anti-Semitic reaction of the German State. […] But if this […] can be understood, it is no longer understandable when we are concretely, face to face, with the human fact: these Jews from Poland suffer, work, probably die. If we understand it, we do not accept it. In front of these poor, trembling human beings, the theory falls down. It is surprising, scandalous and offensive to our sensitivity this ability to develop a cold, methodical, impersonal cruelty […] The sudden and passionate sack, to blood and fire; the brutal, instantaneous, explosive liquidation; the settling of scores, seem to us more explicable, more acceptable […] Between us, these columns of Jews raise storms of commiseration even if we do not have any sort of fondness towards them. On the whole, the Jews disgust us. But we are sympathetic with men. I only have vague information about the methods of persecution but, from what we see, this perscution is excessive. […] No State, no idea, no dream of the future, as nobles, fortunate or beautiful as it can be - and I believe in German dreams - can have this power of indifference to the delicate and immense business of lives without seriously prejudicing itself.’]}

Chapter IV

The black shirts and the blue shirts in the New European Order project

1. The totalitarian face of Europe

After Pnf and Falange leaders had crushed the internal oppositions and proclaimed themselves saviors of the nation, convinced that they belong to an ‘imperial race’ with a civilizing mission to accomplish, at the dawn of World War II, they celebrated the advent of a new era and began to dream of a prestigious role for their countries in Europe. Yet it was not the old Europe they were looking at, but rather a new one that - in the light of the successes of the Fascist and National Socialist revolution - was profoundly changed and seemed to be heading towards a complete and irreversible transformation, in an anti-democratic, anti-Bolshevik and totalitarian sense. After all, the expression ‘New European Order’, that was recurrent then, indicated precisely this: the total twisting by Fascisms of the system of States that had arisen from the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, and the radical modification of continental geography to the exclusive advantage of the Axis\(^1\).

Based on a rigid hierarchy, the new international community would have been guided effectively by Nazi Germany, in the light of

of its presumed cultural, economic and military superiority. This was, at least, what Hitler imagined when - in Mein Kampf of 1925 and in his ‘second book’ of 1928 - he clearly indicated the main objectives of his political action: the gathering of all the communities of Germanic origin; the racial purification of the whole continent; and the conquest of ‘living space’, namely the extension of German hegemony to the East².

Borrowing an expression used by Enzo Collotti, National Socialist expansion plans were a sort of ‘one-way integration of Europe’, based on the primacy of the Aryan race ‘with respect to a constellation of States and populations placed in order of decreasing importance, from the condition of satellites to the condition of candidates for the pure and simple physical disappearance’³. In fact, the Führer was unwilling to grant pro-German governments even a secondary role, since his exclusive interest was ‘German domination of the continent in order to exploit its resources for his great projects in the East, and not a kind of friendly collaboration’⁴.

For the Nazis, ultimately, the main goal was to ‘germanize’ all of Europe, and they tried to realize this in different ways. Firstly, they imposed their economic dominance by establishing advantageous exchange rates and clearing arrangements that ensured the control of

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⁴ M. Burleigh, Il terzo Reich. Una nuova storia, p. 479.
trade with the other countries in the continent\(^5\). Secondly, they massively exploited food, mining and industrial resources of the occupied States, and intimidated local manpower into forced labour\(^6\). They also hypothesized the creation of a large continental autarchic and monopolistic organization to snatch Europe from Soviet and US hegemony by increasing its competitiveness in the global market\(^7\). Finally, they envisaged the birth of a centralized monetary system based on the German mark that, once the war ended, would have replaced the gold standard\(^8\).

Besides these economic measures, there were others such as the eradication of national cultures considered inferior, to be achieved through a massive pouring of people into occupied areas and the annihilation of all elements considered ‘non-germanizable’, that is, not assimilable and therefore strangers to the Volk\(^9\). Such was the status given to political opponents, slave populations, gypsies, homosexuals, the disabled and, with a particular cruelty, the Jews, whose fate was irrevocably decided on July 31, 1941, when Reich

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vice-chancellor Hermann Göring instructed security office director Reinhard Heydrich to make arrangements for the ‘final solution’\textsuperscript{10}.

The New European Order was to be built on these assumptions although, when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, the Old Continent’s totalitarian reconstruction projects were not yet so defined. But this does not mean that the Reich had not already taken the first steps in that direction. It is in this regard that the following must be contemplated: the annexation of Austria in March 1938; the takeover of the Sudetes the following September-October; the establishment of the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939; and the consequent dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. These were clear signals of the re-emergence of German power, interpreted by everyone who considered the National Socialist regime a lighthouse of civilization as unmistakable clues of the dawn of a new totalitarian era that would have shortly revolutionised the face of the whole of Europe.

Nazi military achievements, starting from the fall of 1939, confirmed that conviction. In just over a month, Germany gained control of Western Poland, as stipulated in the secret agreements with the Soviet Union on August 23 of the same year. On April 9, 1940, the troops led by generals von Falkenhorst and Kaupisch in the Weserübung operation occupied Denmark very quickly and at the same time invaded Norway, which capitulated on June 8. On May 10, the Wehrmacht launched the \textit{Fall Gelb} (‘case yellow’) operation. It

soon led to the occupation of Holland and Belgium, the annexation of Luxembourg, and the campaign in France, which concluded on June 22 with the signing of the armistice by Marshal Philippe Petain - head of the Vichy collaborationist government - and with German occupation of the northern part of the country.\(^{11}\)

Germany expanded aggressively on the eastern front as well. In October 1940, some German troops settled in Romania. In March 1941, other contingents were installed in Bulgaria. In April, the Reich army intervened in Yugoslavia to suppress a coup attempt supported by the Britons. And the same month, the Wehrmacht took action in Greece with its Italian allies, who failed to occupy the Hellenic territories using Mussolini’s ‘lightning war’ plan.

The ascending parabola of National Socialism reached its summit with the ‘ideological war’ of the Third Reich when Hitler, with the full consent of the other leaders of the National-sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers’ Party or Nsdap), decided to attack Russia on June 22, 1941. In the summer, the German armies occupied the Baltic States, Belarus and Ukraine, arriving in October at the gates of Moscow and today’s St. Petersburg (called Leningrad then), where they were repelled, for the first time, by the Red Army. The attack on the USSR was launched again in June 1942 with the implementation of the so-called Fall Blau (‘case blue’). The Führer’s troops succeeded in penetrating the southern part of the country, reaching the rich Caucasus oil fields, Don and Volga, and then proceeding to Stalingrad, a city of great symbolic importance as well as a vital centre of Soviet industry. This was the peak of the territorial expansion of Nazi Germany, whose advance appeared unstoppable to the world.

But the ensuing war events gave the lie to that impression. The long and bloody Battle of Stalingrad from July 1942 to early 1943 ended in a stinging defeat for General Paulus’s German troops. The Soviet army and the civilian population, exhorted by Stalin to resist the attackers indefinitely, succeeded in overcoming the siege and counterattacking. On February 2, 1943, the last German units in the city were forced to surrender, while the Reich began its retreat from the eastern front in the rear.

While the Battle of Stalingrad marked the beginning of Germany’s downfall, up to a few months earlier, nothing suggested such a denouement. Hitler’s army, which had embarked on its continental blitzkrieg in the fall of 1939, proved its superior strength by decisively overcoming any resistance. Certainly, the setback at the gates of Moscow and Leningrad was a heavy blow to the Führer. But after the freezing Russian winter ended, the Wehrmacht resumed its offensive, succeeding in penetrating the southern part of the country. Generalplan Ost - the project of extending German living space to the East - was still in effect, especially because Hitler was strongly determined to complete it. After all, eastward expansion was a central element in the Reich’s great domination plan, since it was in the East that the National Socialists ‘imagined they had a tabula rasa on which to engrave as they pleased’.

The West ‘did not stimulate Nazi fantasy as much as the East’. There, Hitler was forced to proceed with caution ‘because of collaborationist systems and ethnic affinities’, and also in view of the

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13 M. Burleigh, Il terzo Reich. Una nuova storia, p. 481.
14 Ibidem.
fact that ‘the West, with its advanced bureaucracies and skills, could be exploited more thoroughly by maintaining a relative status quo’\footnote{Ibidem.}

It is nonetheless true that, with the exception of Britain and the countries that had declared their neutrality, on the eve of ‘Operation Barbarossa’, the other countries of continental Europe were all gathered under the flag of the swastika. In some cases, they were ‘satellites’, namely formally independent and sovereign States that, in fact, were in the orbit of Nazi Germany, such as Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Finland. In other cases, they were territories directly under German civilian or military administration, like Poland, Ukraine, Norway and the Netherlands on the one hand, and Belgium and Northern France on the other. There were numerous annexations, such as the instances already mentioned - Austria, Sudetenland and Luxembourg - but also Gdansk, Western Prussia, Posen, Polish Silesia, Northern Slovenia, Alsace, Moselle, Eupen and Malmédy. In addition, there were local governments under German protection, like the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Slovakia, Denmark, Vichy France, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece\footnote{Y. Durand, \textit{Il nuovo ordine europeo. La collaborazione nell’Europa tedesca (1938-1945)}, pp. 52-72.}.

Given the European situation, it is not surprising that many began to believe in the imminent realization of a new totalitarian continental framework. Among them were Pnf and Falange leaders that, in the post-war order established by National Socialism, were determined to play more than just a secondary role.
2. The founders of a ‘totalitarian era’. The role of Spain and Italy in the New European Order

At the end of the 1930s, Fascists and Falangists began reflecting on the proper place their respective States should have occupied in the new European reality, as envisaged by the National Socialists. But they conducted this exercise from quite different perspectives.

After the Civil War ended, Spain was a country that had to be completely rebuilt. Bombing had disfigured the face of many cities, the social fabric was severely torn, the population was reduced to misery, and the economy - characterized by an atavistic backwardness - was left reeling from all the military effort expended. So, when the Second World War broke out, it was inconceivable for the country to take part in the fighting, and the new government led by Francisco Franco could do nothing but declare Spain’s neutrality.

Undoubtedly, it was a benevolent neutrality. The generalísimo, though not engaging in war operations, never hid his sympathy for those who had helped him defeat the republican troops of Frente Popular. The close relationship between Madrid, Rome and Berlin was in the public eye. And this was even more so when - in the light of the Wehrmacht’s victories on the western front and Italy’s entry in the war - Franco decided on June 12, 1940 to shift to a stand of ‘non-belligerence’ and provide, albeit indirectly, technical and logistical support to the Axis.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{17}\) For example, Franco authorised the German submarines to take refuge in the Spanish ports; he allowed the Reich reconnaissance aircrafts to fly safely using the Spanish marks; and he permitted the Luftwaffe to use a radio station in La Coruña. P. Preston, Franco, London, Fontana Press, 1995, pp. 360-361. It is also important to note that the adoption of non-belligerent status should have been the first step towards the full alignment of Madrid with Berlin and Rome, as well as towards its official entry into war. The Spanish occupation of the international area of Tangier, just two days after the declaration of non-belligerence in June 12, seems to be a clue. However, when the fate of the war turned against the Axis, Franco categorically
Despite this, the lack of a clear position on Spanish participation in the conflict deeply disgruntled the Falangists that—motivated by a genuine revolutionary spirit and determined to recover for their country a prominent role on the world stage—were unwilling to tolerate such a state of inertia and passivity. On the battlefield, the power relations between the various States were at stake. And so was the very destiny of Europe; a Europe that, according to party historian José Antonio Maravall, was heavily weakened at the end of the 1930s by the ‘agnostic liberalism’, ‘destructive classism’ and ‘immoral capitalism’ of the English and French matrix. The Old Continent was undergoing an unprecedented ‘crisis of soul’, and the National syndicalists refused to simply stand by and witness the show of ‘decomposition’ and ‘ruin’, unable to intervene.

With this perspective, Falange theorists began to put pressure on the caudillo for Spain to assume its ‘historical responsibilities of an international character’. It was necessary to participate actively to resolve what, to them, was a ‘national problem of first magnitude and denied everything, declaring that he had only expressed sympathy for Hitler and Mussolini, and that this fact did not change the terms of Spanish neutrality. See S.G. Payne, The Franco Regime 1936-1975, pp. 267-278; R. De Felice, Mussolini l’alleato. I. L’Italia in guerra 1940-1943. I. Dalla guerra ‘breve’ alla guerra lunga, Torino, Einaudi, 1990, p. 178.

18 Lo que no es nuestra neutralidad, in Arriba, no. 374, June 12, 1940, p. 1; Nosotros ante la guerra, in Escorial, no. 8, June 1941, pp. 325-331. On the topic, see I. Saz Campos, Las caras del franquismo, pp. 51-67.

19 J.A. Maravall, Europa o antieruropa. II. La cuestión europea de España, in Arriba, August 2, 1939, p. 3; La lucha de Europa, in Arriba, no. 301, March 16, 1940, p. 1.

20 The quotes are in I. Saz Campos, Las caras del franquismo, p. 61; R. Ledesma Ramos, ¿Fascismo en España?, p. 160.

21 Ramiro Ledesma Ramos went as far as to say that ‘only a strong Spain can decide the next disputes of Europe, in a progressive and fruitful sense. Italy is a too little vigorous people for such a mission, and if it undertook this mission alone, it would quickly get into the German jaws. Mussolini knows this well. The secret of a New European Order, which has ample historical possibilities, can be summarized in this slogan that concerns us: Spanish Resuscitation’. R. Ledesma Ramos, ¿Fascismo en España?, p. 161.
maximum urgency.22 And the only way to do this was to align Spain with the Axis powers, to which the Francoist nation was united by an ‘everlasting friendship’, by virtue of ‘the blood shed in common’ and the ‘community of renovating ideologies’23.

The collaboration between Franco, Mussolini and Hitler, after all, had already proven fruitful in the Spanish Civil War, when troops sent by Rome and Berlin were decisive in allowing the generalísimo to get the better of his republican enemies. Born as a domestic conflict between two adversaries, the Civil War soon assumed international significance and became a struggle between Fascism and anti-Fascism, portending what was to come in the Second World War.

‘The first battle of Europe, the first victory of the new order, was won in Spain,’ an editorial in the Falangist newspaper Pueblo proclaimed on September 16, 194024. So, once the Civil War was over, it appeared logical and necessary to the National syndicalists to face - alongside the Führer and the Duce - the second great battle for the salvation of the continent: a battle that now seemed to be not a ‘war between nationalities or antagonistic economies, but between fighting political and social ideas’25.

Certainly, there were domestic political factors influencing Falangist support for war mobilization. Specifically, an alignment with Hitler and Mussolini would let the camisas azules impose themselves on the national scene as a hegemonic force, and reduce the

22 J.A. Maravall, Europa o antieruropa. I. La política exterior, como necesidad interna, in Arriba, August 1, 1939, p. 3.
23 A. Asensio, Hacia la nueva Europa, in Pueblo, no. 84, September 21, 1940, p. 1.
24 Presencia de España, in Pueblo, no. 79, September 16, 1940, p. 1.
scope of action of other components of the authoritarian compromise with whom they were constantly constrained to compete for power\textsuperscript{26}.

Nevertheless, what mainly enticed the National syndicalists was capitalizing on the foreign policy opportunities for their country. Sure of an Axis victory, Falange leaders believed that participating in military operations would have automatically conferred on Madrid the role of arbiter after the war. Spain of the yoke and arrows would have been called, together with National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy, to ‘forge the future of the continent’\textsuperscript{27}. And it would have done so by making its personal contribution, namely by playing an important mediation role between Europe and the former Hispanic colonies, and by acting as a link between Nazism and Catholicism for the continent’s spiritual reconstruction.

Drawing on the thought of Ernesto Giménez Caballero, who reconciled Fascism with Catholicism’s militant exaltation, some Falangist exponents indeed argued that ‘Christianity [was the] only way to recover the unity of the continent, [which, in these case, was] compatible with a German victory’\textsuperscript{28}. However, this view was never central in the Falange’s New Order discourse, since to the party, what was most important were Fascist issues related to the need for a totalitarian revolution led by Germany, Italy and Spain\textsuperscript{29}.

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\textsuperscript{27}\textit{Importante discurso del jefe de Prensa del Reich}, in \textit{Pueblo}, no. 48, August 10, 1940, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{29}The idea of the ‘re-christianizing’ Spain became recurring starting from the summer of 1942 when, with the progressive political downsizing of the most radical National syndicalist component within the government, it was the Catholic and most
According to National syndicalist theorists, the three ‘creative peoples’ would take over Europe and create a sort of ‘tripartite imperium’, based on a ‘superior total order’ that ‘[would have blocked] the way to decadence’ and ‘restore justice’ and ‘peace’ to the world\(^{30}\). As José Antonio Maravall wrote in *Arriba* in September 1940:

> El totalitarismo quiere llevar a cabo este orden moral que hará otra vez posible Europa. El totalitarismo es la razón de Europa. Y por eso ahora los tres pueblos que para ello han realizado una aportación esencial volverán a regir a los demás pueblos del mundo\(^{31}\).

To the Falangists, the imperial revival of their nation appeared closer than ever. ‘The most European of all peoples’ would have finally regained the guiding function that Spain deserved ‘for its history and importance\(^{32}\). In this regard, it is important to meditate on

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\(^{31}\) J.A. Maravall, *De nuevo, Europa*, p. 3. Cf. also *Los fundadores de una era europea*, in *Arriba*, no. 477, October 10, 1940, p. 1; *España en su hora*, in *Arriba*, no. 424, August 9, 1940, p. 1; *Ante la guerra*, in *Escorial*, no. 4, February 1941, pp. 159-164; *Importante discurso del jefe de Prensa del Reich*, p. 1; X. De Echarri, *Presencia en el mundo*, in *Vértice*, no. 39, December 1940. On the topic see S. Juliá, *Historias de las dos Españas*, pp. 354-359, 372-373; W.H. Bowen, *Spaniards and nazi Germany*, University of Missouri Press, 2000, pp. 1-12, 77-156; I. Saz Campos, *España contra España*. *Los nacionalismo franquistas*, pp. 282-290; Id., *Las caras del franquismo*, pp. 61-63. [Author’s translation: ‘Totalitarianism wants to carry out this moral order that will make Europe possible again. Totalitarianism is the reason for Europe. And for that reason, the three peoples who have made an essential contribution to it will now return to govern the other peoples of the world.’]

\(^{32}\) J.A. Maravall, *Europa o antieruropa. II. El sentido español de lo europeo*, in *Arriba*, August 3, 1939, p. 3; G. Diaz, *El puesto de España*, in *Pueblo*, no. 84,
Antonio Tovar’s words in a speech he made in September 1939 in front of the party’s Sección Femenina in Barcelona:

Aparece definiéndose ya un nuevo orden que [...] se funda en el principio de que hay pueblos hechos para mandar y pueblos hechos para obedecer. Los españoles tenemos la fortuna de pertenecer a un pueblo hecho para mandar. Quien nos enseña esto es nuestra historia. Y nuestro deber es, entonces, potenciar en lo actual toda nuestra historia, actualizarla, movilizarla agresivamente, con estilo ofensivo y de acción directa. Sólo de esa manera España llegará a ser una de las [...] grandes unidades que - José Antonio presintió esto - están llamadas a gobernar el mundo en este siglo, en el que toda la ficción de libertad para estadillos “nacionales” y románticos va a desaparecer33.

The reference to Primo de Rivera is extremely significant because it was the Falange founder who, since February 1934, had proclaimed the role that Spain would have assumed soon on the world stage. ‘The democratic idea offered by the League of Nations is already decaying internationally,’ he declared in an interview with the newspaper Ahora, adding that the world was tending ‘again to be directed by three or four racial entities. Spain [could have been] one of these three or four’34. Bearing this in mind, party leaders claimed for their country

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33 A. Tovar, Cuatro conferencias sobre historia de España, reproduced in Id., El imperio de España, pp. 106-107. [Author’s translation: ‘It appears that a new order is taking shape [...] based on the principle that there are people made to rule and people made to obey. We, the Spaniards, are people made to rule; our history teaches us this. And our duty, thus, is to now enhance our history, update it and mobilize it aggressively, with offensive style and direct action. It is only in this way that Spain will become one of the […] great units - as José Antonio sensed - called to govern the world in this century, when all fiction of freedom […] will disappear.’]

a prominent place in the future continental ‘Fascist asset’; a place that they felt they fully deserved, thanks to their ‘fundamental contribution to a victory that began to take shape in Europe on the same day that Spain’s victory became a reality in Spanish fields.35.

It is of some interest for the purpose of this work to note that Falangist Europeanism - far from being the ‘result of an unexpected parenthesis’ or a mere copy of the German and Italian varieties - was rooted in autochthonous cultural tradition.36 Once again, Falange theorists drew from Regenerationist thought and, in particular, the work of José Ortega y Gasset, who was considered ‘the most European and Europeist’ Spanish intellectual and the one who ‘better outlined the idea of Europe and the problem of Spain related to it’.37

As already seen in the first chapter, the philosopher of Madrid felt that his country was going through a deep phase of decline, and that, to emerge from it, Spain had to again fulfill its destino el lo universal. Specifically, he was convinced that the ‘disease’ with which the country was afflicted was the consequence of its ‘distancing from Europe’; a Europe that for centuries had shown its civilizing capacity and imposed its material and spiritual imperium on the whole world.38

35 Presencia de España, p. 1.
36 I. Saz Campos, Las caras del franquismo, p. 69.
37 Ibidem, p. 53.
38 J. Ortega y Gasset, Competencia, reproduced in Id., Obras Completas, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1969, vol. X, p. 228. Ortega’s Europe was not based on democratic values, since it was eminently linked to the concept of ‘mando’, as to say ‘command’. In La Rebelión de las masas, the philosopher argued that the Old Continent had lost its leading role and its moral unity because of the ‘domination of the mass-man’. ‘Europe does not command anymore’, declared the regenerationist intellectual, and ‘this would not matter if there was someone capable of replacing it. But there is nobody’. Therefore, it was Ortega y Gasset’s conviction that the Old Continent should have resumed its leading position, because otherwise it would have delivered all humanity into the hands of the United States of America, considered a ‘primitive people camouflaged by the latest inventions’, or, even worse, in the hands of Communist Russia. J. Ortega y Gasset, La rebelión de las masas, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1961, pp. 109-119. Cf. I. Saz, Las caras del franquismo, pp. 56-57; J.J. Sebastian Lorente, La idea de Europa en el pensamiento
Therefore, if the absence of a European vision in Spain was the cause of the Fatherland’s crisis, the country’s recovery required it to rejoin the Old Continent. There was no doubt for Ortega y Gasset that ‘Spain was the problem and Europe the solution’\textsuperscript{39}. So he declared that the ‘regeneration’ of the nation had to proceed in parallel with its ‘europeization’ since, if the former constituted ‘the desire’, the latter represented ‘the means of satisfying it’\textsuperscript{40}.

Those words must have sounded prophetic to Falange theorists who, already in the party programme of 1934, had clearly claimed for Spain ‘a pre-eminent place in Europe’\textsuperscript{41}. After all, as Ismael Saz has pointed out, the \textit{camisas azules} ‘not only wanted to be in Europe, but also wanted to be there to command’\textsuperscript{42}. In their eyes, the Old Continent represented ‘the international field of the new action’ of the nation\textsuperscript{43}. So, with these convictions, party leaders sought to strengthen diplomatic relations with the Axis at the end of the 1930s, waiting for Franco to remove all apprehensions and proclaim a state of war\textsuperscript{44}.


\textsuperscript{40} J. Ortega y Gasset, \textit{La pedagogía social como programa político}, in Id., \textit{Discursos políticos}, p. 62.


\textsuperscript{42} I. Saz Campos, \textit{Las caras del franquismo}, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{43} J.A. Maravall, \textit{Europa o antieruropa. II. La cuestión europea de España}, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{44} The strengthening of diplomatic relations between Spain, on the one hand, and Germany and Italy, on the other, also led to the increase of cultural exchanges between the three countries. Two interesting examples are the creation of the Italian-Spanish school in Madrid in June 1940, and the Hispanic-German Association in 1941, which collaborated with the Department of Culture of the German Embassy. In that period, cultural interchanges of professors, researchers and students took place. The Italian and German press and cinematography spread through Spain and viceversa. Hispanic-German musical events were created, and Italian concert companies played in Spanish theaters. It should also be noted that, starting from 1937, exchange programs between the youth and female associations of the Falange became rather frequent with the homologous associations of National Socialist and Fascist parties. See L. Delgado Gomez-Escalonilla, \textit{Imperio de papel. Acción
A significant first step in this direction was taken on March 27, 1939, when the nationalist executive signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, officially joining Germany, Japan and Italy in the struggle against international Communism. It was, as British historian Paul Preston argued, an ‘act of solidarity with the Axis’ that Nicolas Franco, the caudillo’s brother and ambassador in Lisbon, greeted as a ‘political confession of faith and a clear statement of future policy’\textsuperscript{45}. Nonetheless, the generalísimo - in line with Spain’s ‘cautious opportunism and diplomatic zigzagging’ strategy, which always characterized its actions - was more wary\textsuperscript{46}. It was certainly not his intention to spoil relations with the United Kingdom. So he first ordered Foreign Minister Francisco Gómez-Jordana Sousa to downplay the scope of that deal in the eyes of the British Ambassador to Madrid. Secondly, he emphasized the non-binding nature of the pact uniting Spain with the Axis. But these reassurances were of little value since, on March 31, the government of Burgos signed the Hispanic-German Friendship Treaty, in which it pledged not to hurt Berlin and to avoid any action that might favour the opponents of the Reich\textsuperscript{47}.

On the other hand, for the caudillo, Germany’s wooing was very tempting. This was not so much because he ideologically cared about the totalitarian National Socialist projects, but because Hitler’s expansionist policy, in a way, fed his immoderate ambition\textsuperscript{48}.

\textsuperscript{45}P. Preston, \textit{Franco}, p. 325.
\textsuperscript{46}S.G. Payne, \textit{The Franco regime 1936-1975}, p. 266.
\textsuperscript{47}P. Preston, \textit{Franco}, pp. 325-326.
\textsuperscript{48}Between the caudillo and Hitler there was no full ideological affinity. Franco belonged to the military conservative world and not to the Fascist revolutionary one. This is the reason why the plans for the New European Order proposed by National Socialism had to generate little enthusiasm in the Spanish dictator, except insofar as
Celebrated by the regime’s propaganda as ‘a worthy contemporary of the Duce and the Führer and a fitting heir to the great warrior-kings of Spain’s glorious past’, Franco was keen to carve out on the international stage a space fitting his political stature. Consequently, establishing strong ties with Berlin - and jointly with Rome - appeared to him to be the right way to go to attain his goal.

The *generalísimo*, however, quickly saw a harsh reality staring him in the face: conditions in Spain did not allow him to indulge in risky adventures abroad. He had urgent domestic problems to solve, not least the reorganization of the State and the consolidation of his power throughout the country. He knew that, to profit from the post-war European setup led by the Axis, it was necessary for Spain to go to war soon. But he was aware that he could not do so without concrete guarantees from Germany.

The management of negotiations to this effect was entrusted to Ramón Serrano Suñer. President of the Falange’s *Junta Política* since August 1939, and a Reich and Italian Fascism sympathizer, he was in charge of the Foreign Ministry from October 1940. Considered the ‘spokesman of Spanish incorporation in the Axis military device’, the *cuñadísimo* pledged to consolidate relations with Germany and Italy, which he did even before he was appointed Minister of *Asuntos Exteriores*.


He was still Interior head on September 16, 1940, when he travelled to Berlin to meet Ribbentrop and Hitler, to discuss a possible Spanish contribution to the effort to defeat Great Britain. Serrano Suñer, as delegation head, stated Spain’s willingness to enter the war if two conditions were met: first, Germany had to give the Spanish Army military and technical support in terms of equipment and refuelling; and second, the recognition of Madrid’s claims on Gibraltar and North Africa, specifically French Morocco. On the one hand, this was among the main imperial objectives of the Falange; and on the other hand, it represented in Franco’s eyes what Stanley Payne described as ‘the golden illusions and fulfilment of his youth’.

The German foreign minister’s reaction was not as condescending as the cuñadísimo would have expected. But Ribbentrop, while agreeing to the military material assistance Madrid demanded, was not amenable to the other conditions. In response, he made proposals substantially inadmissible. First, he asked for one of the Canary Islands, to use as a base to defend against an English attack in retaliation to an offensive on Gibraltar. Second, he wanted other

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54 S.G. Payne, *The Franco regime 1936-1975*, p. 273. It should be noted that, during the conversation with Ribbentropp, Serrano Suñer, in order to prove that Spain was able to equal Germany and Italy in force and power, advanced territorial claims also on Portugal, stating that ‘from a geographical point of view, Portugal [had] no right to exist’. As has already been noted in the second chapter, the claims on the Lusitanian State were not new to Falange, since in the early 1930s Ramiro Ledema Ramos and José Antonio Primo de Rivera had already mentioned them. Cf. R. Serrano Suñer, *Entre Hendaya y Gibraltar*, pp. 169-170; *España, Africa y Sureste europeo, tema dominante*, in Pueblo, no. 84, September 21, 1940, p. 1. On the topic see P. Preston, *Franco*, pp. 377, 393-395; S.G. Payne, *The Franco regime 1936-1975*, pp. 270-273; G. Nerin and A. Bosch, *El imperio que nunca existió. La aventura colonial discutida en Hendaya*, pp. 26-38, 66-72 e 135-146. On the Spanish claims in Morocco, cf. also the above-mentioned report of the meeting in Naples between Serrano Suñer and Galeazzo Ciano of June 1939 in G. Ciano, *Diario 1937-1943*, p. 307.
garrisons in Agadir and Essaouira, as well as in the interior of the Moroccan protectorate. Finally, he demanded economic concessions to cover Civil War debts, and participation in Moroccan mining ventures.

Serrano Suñer was very annoyed after the meeting. However, the tension was eased the following day by Hitler, who, without dwelling on the details of the matter, suggested discussing the terms of an agreement in the presence of the caudillo on the French-Spanish border.

The meeting between the two dictators and their foreign ministers took place on October 23, 1940 in the town of Hendaye. The generalísimo kept the appointment, convinced that he could have got the Führer to agree to his conditions by emphasizing his country’s strengths. Spain was an important outpost in the western Mediterranean for checking England. It was also the closest base to launch a direct attack on North African colonies. In addition, the involvement of the Francoist nation in the conflict would have brought great advantages to the Axis in propaganda terms, not only ‘for the continuity of the anti-Bolshevik crusade’, but also ‘for the

56 Although there was no Italian participation, Mussolini and Ciano were previously informed by Hitler and Ribbentrop about the issue of Spain’s entry into war and the demands of Madrid. The Führer, on the occasion of the meeting in Berlin with the Fascist foreign minister on September 28, and during the interviews with the Duce at the Brenner on October 4, expressed his doubts about the Spanish possible intervention, which it was likely to create more problems than advantages. Moreover, on October 8, 1940, Ciano and Mussolini spoke about the entry of Spain into the conflict directly with Serrano Suñer, who went to Rome on an official visit, without however examining the practical aspects of the matter. Cf. P. Preston, Franco, pp. 386-387. On the topic see also Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, vol. XXX, p. 19; G. Ciano, Diario 1937-1943, p. 467.
memory of the Civil War and the possibility of boosting the continuing solidarity of the [Hispanic-German-Italian] armies\(^57\).

Convinced that he had strong contractual power with these cards in his hand, Franco stood ready to go to war if Berlin formally agreed to meet these desiderata of Madrid. But Hitler showed little interest in Spanish demands. The caudillo’s requests appeared excessive to him, compared with the actual support that Spanish troops could have provided the Axis. In particular, Spain’s expansionist claims conflicted with Germany’s interests since they would have created tensions with Vichy France on Morocco. Also, those territorial claims would have angered Rome because Mussolini certainly would have not tolerated Spanish interference in North Africa\(^58\).

The Hendaye meeting ended with the signing of a secret protocol, providing for Spain’s future inclusion in the Axis and its entry in the war, but with no fixed date. Ultimately, it was just a simple statement of intent that, if it shattered Franco’s dreams of glory, it dashed National syndicalist ambitions even more. Yet, as evidenced by the reports of the Fet National Council at the end of November, most Falange members remained determined to make their own contribution to the cause of the New European Order\(^59\). And they did so the day after Germany launched its attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941.


The Reich’s offensive against the homeland of international Communism triggered in the *camisas azules* what Stanley G. Payne called ‘a strong emotional response’\(^60\). On June 24, Falangists paraded through the streets of Madrid, urgently calling for troops on the eastern front. The same day, Serrano Suñer spoke to the crowd, pointing out the importance of Spanish military intervention as a continuation of the Civil War *cruzada* against the Bolshevik enemy; something that was more necessary than ever before.

The foreign minister’s inspired speech failed to persuade Franco, however, who again showed reluctance. So National syndicalist leaders, who refused to wait any longer, decided to organize a body of volunteers to fight alongside the Germans in Soviet territory. Thus was the aforementioned *División Azul* born at the end of June 1941. Many of the roughly 46,000 Spaniards who joined it were enthusiastic Falangists, but there were also Spanish Army commanders and senior government officials, including six members of the National Council and seven civil governors\(^61\). Formally dependent on the government of Madrid but actually under Germany’s command, the unit became operational as the Wehrmacht’s Infantry Division 250 in October the same year, when it was sent to fight first on the Volchov-Novgorod River and then south of Leningrad\(^62\).

As Lorenzo Delgado Gómez Escalonilla argued, the party’s decision to create the *División Azul* if, on the one hand, responded to

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\(^{60}\) *Ibidem*, p. 281.

\(^{61}\) The numeric data is in X. M. Núñez Seixas, *El Tercer Reich, la Wehrmacht y la División Azul, 1941-1945: Memorias e imágenes contrapuestas*, p. 48.

the need to boost the ‘anti-Communist imprint of the Spanish State’, on the other hand, helped ‘mitigate tensions with Germany generated as a result of Spanish delays to join the conflict’\textsuperscript{63}. But what is even more interesting for the purpose of this research is that it was the ‘symbolic means to unload Falangist deception for the Spanish withdrawal to decisively join the World War’\textsuperscript{64}. By creating \textit{División Azul}, party leaders showed the world the ‘close affinity’ linking them to the Axis, with the clear intent of ‘remaining in a good disposition in front of the New Order progressively adopted in almost all the continent’\textsuperscript{65}. As an anonymous article in the journal \textit{Escorial} said in August 1941:

\begin{quote}
La presencia de nuestros camaradas en los frentes de batalla es señal bien elocuente de que no perseguimos al comunismo solamente por ser nuestro enemigo moral; también es señal de que nos incorporamos por fin a las empresas del mundo, que piden la entrega generosa de pueblos [...] y de hombres\textsuperscript{66}.
\end{quote}

Despite Franco’s indecisiveness, the \textit{camisas azules} continued to believe strongly in the need for an alignment with Rome and Berlin, as well as in the revolutionary project of a completely fascistized Europe\textsuperscript{67}. This was a Europe that would have either been totalitarian

\textsuperscript{63}L. Delgado Gomez-Escalonilla, \textit{Imperio de papel. Acci\'on cultural y pol\'itica exterior durante el primer franquismo}, p. 166.
\textsuperscript{64}Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{65}Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{66}Hechos de la Falange, in \textit{Escorial}, no. 10, August 1941, p. 281. [Author’s translation: ‘The presence of our comrades on the battle front is a very eloquent sign that we do not persecute Communism just because it is our moral enemy; it is also a sign that we are finally joining the endeavours of the world, which ask for the generous delivery of peoples [...] and men.’]
\textsuperscript{67}After the continuous postponements of German landing in England, the failure of Italian intervention in Greece and the British counterattack in northern Africa, it was highly unlikely that the caudillo would have decided to enter the conflict, as he had suggested to Mussolini in February 1941 during their meeting in
or not exist at all; something the Falange wanted so enthusiastically, to the point of being willing to pay for it with their own blood. As it turned out, the leader who abandoned initial hesitation and broke the delay instead was Benito Mussolini that, after more than nine months of non-belligerence, entered the war alongside his German ally with absolute unscrupulousness. This was, to a certain extent, a binding decision, to which several factors contributed. Among them, of course, was the ‘conception of the “honour”’ of the Duce, who told Ciano in April 1940 of his frustration, saying it was ‘humiliating to sit on my hands while others [were writing] history’. ‘To make a people great,’ he said, ‘it is necessary to take it into combat’. This was precisely what the head of the black shirts did, fulfilling the commitments he had made to the Reich since Italy had to ‘be alongside Germany’ then.

According to Dino Grandi’s testimony, however, Mussolini chose to intervene in the conflict on June 10, 1940 not because he was ‘driven by his duty of solidarity with Germany, but by a calculation’. In that sense, ‘Dunkirk was not the defeat of England. Dunkirk was the defeat of Italy’ since, as Grandi wrote, ‘without the British defeat at Dunkirk, Mussolini would not have gone to war’.

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68 Hechos de la Falange en tierra de Rusia, in Escorial, no. 12, October 1941, pp. 113-115. See also I. Saz Campos, Las caras del fascismo, p. 62.
72 Ibidem.
73 Dino Grandi’s quote is in R. De Felice, Mussolini l’alleato. I. L’Italia in guerra 1940-1943. I. Dalla guerra ‘breve’ alla guerra lunga, p. 94.
74 Ibidem.
After the defeat of France, even though he was aware of the inefficiency of his army and the general lack of preparation in the country, the Duce became convinced that he had no other choice but a ‘short and as independent as possible war from Germany’\(^{75}\). In May 1940, he told General Soddu in a critical tone that they could not make war when they were ready, but when they had to. Attacking the military summits, Mussolini underlined the ‘state of necessity’ that pushed him to enter the conflict, but it is true that such a choice fell within the logic of agreement with the Reich\(^ {76}\). And, in this connection, one cannot ignore the fact that ‘the suggestion of the “new civilization”’ contributed its part in leading Mussolini to the ‘path of the alliance’\(^ {77}\). As Renzo De Felice wrote:

Se molte e talvolta irriducibili erano le differenze e le incompatibilità tra il fascismo […] et il nationalsocialismo, una cosa e importante i due movimenti avevano in comune: l’ostilità ideologica, e ancor prima, psicologica e morale per la “vecchia” civiltà e per il “vecchio” ordine internazionale e per le sue manifestazioni più caratteristiche, la democrazia borghese e il bolscevismo e con essa il mito di una “nuova civiltà” della quale essi dovevano essere i portatori\(^ {78}\).

\(^{75}\) Ibidem.

\(^{76}\) Mussolini’s words to Soddu are reproduced in R. De Felice, Mussolini l’alleato. I. L’Italia in guerra 1940-1943. 1. Dalla guerra ‘brevi’ alla guerra lunga, p. 95.

\(^{77}\) R. De Felice, Mussolini il duce. II. Lo Stato totalitario (1936-1940), p. 309. [Author’s translation: ‘If the differences and incompatibilities between Fascism […] and National Socialism were many and sometimes irreducible, the two movements had an important thing in common: the ideological, and even earlier, psychological and moral hostility for “old” civilization and the “old” international order and for its characteristic manifestations, namely bourgeois democracy and Bolshevism, and, together with it, the myth of a “new civilization” of which they had to be the bearers.’]
In this regard, a speech that Mussolini gave in the spring of 1939 is revealing. Addressing the Fascist squadristi of the ‘old guard’, he stated:


Italian Fascism contributed to the development of an alternative political system compared to those prevailing in contemporary civilization since, as Berto Ricci wrote, it was an ‘Italian revolution that became universal’80.

The same conviction is found in the reflections of Giuseppe Bottai, who wrote in Civiltà fascista:

La disposizione degl’Italiani a pensare, costruire e agire su di una base d’universalità, già eccelsa nell’epoca romana, quando l’Urbe attuò il jus gentium, è tornata a fruttificare rigogliosamente con il Fascismo. Se voi ponete mente alla concezione fascista dello Stato e alla sua attuazione, al programma economico e sociale del Fascismo, ai suoi istituti corporativi, all’evoluzione fascista del diritto, alla concezione fascista dell’educazione della gioventù, insomma alla concezione fascista della vita e all’esperienza di questi ultimi venti anni, non solo dovrete constatare il rinnovamento

79 Alla vecchia guardia, in Il Popolo d’Italia, no. 86, March 27, 1939, reproduced in Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, vol. XXIX, p. 251. [Author’s translation: ‘The Axis [was] not only a relationship between two States: it [was] a meeting of two revolutions, which proclaimed themselves in a clear antithesis with all the other concepts of contemporary civilization. Here [was] the strength of the Axis and here [were] the conditions of its duration.’]

dell’Italia e il suo enorme progresso sulla via dell’incivilimento, ma dovete riconoscere che, a grado a grado, questi principii, questi istituti, questi obiettivi, questi fatti reali hanno informato […] il rinnovamento […] di molte nazioni d’Europa e non d’Europa soltanto81.

The theme of the relationship between the Fascist nation and Europe was clearly brought into focus by Mussolini himself, who was convinced that, soon, ‘every nation [would have had] “its” Fascism’, namely ‘a Fascism adapted to the peculiar situation of that particular people’82. But, of course, there would have never been:


81 G. Bottai, Contributo dell’Italia fascista al “Nuovo Ordine”, in Civiltà fascista, no. 1-2, November-December 1941, p. 15. [Author’s translation: ‘The disposition of the Italians to think, build and act on a basis of universality, already exalted in Roman times, when the Urbe implemented the jus gentium, came back to be fruitful with Fascism. If you keep in mind the Fascist concept of the State and its implementation, the economic and social programme of Fascism, its corporate institutes, the Fascist evolution of law, the Fascist concept of youth education - in short, the Fascist concept of life and the experience of the last twenty years - you will see not only the renewal of Italy and its enormous progress on the path of civilization, but you will have to acknowledge that these principles, the institutes, these goals, these real facts have determined […] the renewal […] of many nations of Europe, and not only of Europe.’]

82 B. Mussolini, Europa e fascismo, p. 1.
83 Ibidem. Cf. Fascismo, in Enciclopedia italiana di scienze, lettere ed arti, p. 878; G Bottai, Domani una realtà europea, in Critica fascista, no. 7, April 1, 1933, pp. 121-122; G. Selvi, Fermentazione fascista nel mondo, in Gerarchia, no. 7, July 1935, pp. 569-570; Quirita, Sostanza e forme, in Gerarchia, no. 8, August 1934, pp. 635-636; V. Buonassisi, Il Partito e l’internazionale fascista, in Critica fascista, no. 9, March 1, 1938, pp. 140-142; M. Romano, La funzione dell’Italia nell’equilibrio europeo, in Civiltà fascista, no. 7, July 1936, p. 428. On the topic see R. De Felice, Mussolini il duce. II. Lo Stato totalitario (1936-1940), pp. 299-300. [Author’s translation: ‘a Fascism to be exported in standardized forms, but a complex of doctrines, methods, experiences, achievements - especially achievements - which
In summary, as Bottai emphasized, ‘the universality of Fascism had set itself beyond [the Italian] boundary’\textsuperscript{84}. The Pnf nation had made its history ‘an essential moment in European history’ and in the history of all humanity\textsuperscript{85}. As a consequence, the Europe of tomorrow would have inevitably been Fascist ‘in the logical development of events’, since the Old Continent would have survived the crisis it experienced only by taking inspiration from Italy of the Littorio, which would have assumed ‘the new social sense, the tone of life, [and] the moral secret of discipline and harmony’\textsuperscript{86}.

To realize this ‘process of reconstruction of humanity’, Fascist Italy should have provided its ‘typical racial contribution’, working side by side with Nazi Germany, to which it was linked by an ‘active and living solidarity’\textsuperscript{87}. It was a ‘very high mission’ that only two

\textsuperscript{84} G. Bottai, \textit{Contributo dell’Italia fascista al “Nuovo Ordine”}, p. 15.
‘spiritually rich people’ could have realized\(^{88}\). These were, according to party ideologues, the Italian and German peoples, ‘recreated by the purifying wave of their respective national revolutions’ and ‘strengthened in the awareness of the maturity achieved and in a common destiny of imperial grandeur’\(^{89}\).

Together, Rome and Berlin would have reaffirmed the ‘insuppressible destiny of vital ethnic organisms to expand, to dominate, to influence all around the minors, by eliminating [...] those instigating pretensions and ambitions of small nationalities’, which, since the post-war period, had been the cause of abuses of power and disorder\(^{90}\). It was necessary to create a ‘system of international coexistence that [would have established] equally for all more effective guarantees of justice, security and peace’\(^{91}\). And for this purpose, the two nations, bearers of ‘civilization and progress’, declared themselves ‘ready to cooperate with all other peoples of goodwill’, provided the latter showed respect for ‘their needs’, ‘their necessities’, and ‘their legitimate needs’\(^{92}\).

Fascist and Nazi ‘legitimate needs’ concealed, not even discreetly, the imperialist ambitions of the two countries, which were intent on extending their political and economic supremacy across the continent. Concretely, as far as Italy was concerned, the strategists of the new geopolitical order were confident that the conquest of Ethiopia and the annexation of Albania were only the ‘beginnings’ of

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\(^{89}\) *Idee di costruzione*, in *Critica fascista*, no. 4, December 15, 1941, pp. 53-54.

\(^{90}\) P. Orano, *Verso un nuovo ordine mondiale*, p. 22.

\(^{91}\) *Brindisi al cancelliere del Reich*, reproduced in *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, vol. XXIX, p. 95.

\(^{92}\) *Brindisi al cancelliere del Reich*, reproduced in *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, vol. XXVIII, pp. 246-247.
the ‘transposition’ and the ‘ideal and territorial dilatation’ of the homeland. They were sure of their ability to realize, in the short run, international arrangements radically different from those of the past. So they began to sketch out boundaries to separate the future Italian sphere of influence from the German one that coincided respectively with the Mediterranean basin and the Mitteleuropean area.

The living space of each power would have comprised a ‘small space’, including the territory where the imperial people lived, and a ‘large space’ composed of the territories subject to the direct dominion of the civilizing race. The single States would have disappeared, substantially incorporated into the two large powers, which would have exercised their unquestionable leading roles, brooking no interference.

The regions subject to the control of Rome - organized harmoniously in an hierarchy taking into account the degree of social evolution and the productive capacity of each people - would be based on the values of the system of Fascist Italy, identified by Bottai as follows:

la priorità e superiorità della politica sull’economia; la subordinazione degli interessi individuali a quelli collettivi; il diritto dello Stato alla direzione economica del Paese; il riconoscimento dell’iniziativa privata e la sua elevazione a una funzione di pubblica utilità; la collaborazione delle

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In the end, it was about transmitting the principles of the Pnf revolution, already consolidated in the peninsula, to associated entities within the Fascist imperial community. In Mussolini’s expansion plans, this community would have included, firstly, Nice, Corsica, Malta, the Dalmatian Coast, the Ionian Islands, Slovenia, Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece and Cyprus. Secondly, most of the Eastern Mediterranean countries, and specifically Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Arabia and Yemen, which would link the European, African and Asian continents. And finally, the colonies of the Maghreb and Aoi, with a second-tier political status due to the racial inferiority of those territories’ natives.

Once the configuration of the future European order was sketched out, Fascist leaders awaited its concrete realization, trusting not only that the Axis would have won the war swiftly but also that, after the

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96 G. Bottai, *Contributo dell’Italia fascista al “Nuovo Ordine”*, p. 9. Cf. *Ordine nuovo*, in *Libro e moschette*, no. 4, November 13, 1941, p. 1; G. Selvi, *Uno il nemico, una la guerra, una la pace*, in *Gerarchia*, no. 11, November 1940, pp. 563-568; S. Villari, *Principi giuridici per il nuovo ordine*, pp. 52-53; *Economia e unità europea*, in *Critica fascista*, no. 2, November 15, 1941, pp. 17-18. [Author’s translation: ‘The priority and superiority of politics over the economy; the subordination of individual interests to collective ones; the right of the State to decide the economic direction of the country; the recognition of private initiative and its elevation to a function of public utility; the collaboration of classes for social order, welfare and a higher productive level.’]

97 In this regard, the Duce’s words during the Grand national meeting of the *squadristi* that took place at the Olympic stadium of Foro Mussolini on March 26, 1939, are emblematic: ‘geographically, historically, politically, militarily, the Mediterranean basin is a living space for Italy, and when we say Mediterranean basin, we naturally include the gulf called Adriatico, in which the interests of Italy are preeminent, but not exclusive, toward the Slavs’. *Alla vecchia guardia*, p. 252.


hostilities ended, Germany would have willingly agreed to divide the spoils with Italy\textsuperscript{100}. Such a belief was based on the notion that there was a truly equal relationship between the two countries. And, at least until the outbreak of World War II, this indeed seemed to be the case.

Fascist Italy was fully represented as the equal partner of the Reich. The two regimes, signing the Steel Pact, undertook to proceed ‘side by side’ and their understanding, from a formal point of view, was not founded on ‘any subordination’\textsuperscript{101}. Hitler, in fact, on several occasions showed his admiration for the Duce, referring to him as a mentor. Moreover, Mussolini was convinced that he exerted a strong influence on the Führer as he held the reins of that alliance firmly in his hands\textsuperscript{102}.

But the reality turned out very different from the expectations of the leader of the black shirts. The Reich’s quick successes in the first months of the war relegated Rome to second place, after Berlin. Especially after the capitulation of France, it became apparent that ‘Nazi expansion was a project of unlimited and exclusive domination in which Italy would have had, at most, a subordinate role’\textsuperscript{103}. At that point, Mussolini hastened to deliver to the diplomatic representations of Paris and London his declaration of war, to make up for lost time\textsuperscript{104}. But the poor preparation and inadequately equipped army


\textsuperscript{102} R. De Felice, \textit{Mussolini il duce. II. Lo Stato totalitario (1936-1940)}, p. 310.

\textsuperscript{103} D. Rodogno, \textit{Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo. Le politiche di occupazione dell’Italia fascista in Europa (1940-1943)}, p. 78.

highlighted the weakness of the country, which failed to demonstrate its capabilities in terms of autonomy and spirit of initiative.\(^{105}\)

The inconsistency of the Italian forces was evident from the beginning, when Mussolini ordered his troops to attack French contingents deployed to the West Alps border. It was a treasonable and strategically insignificant venture, with the sole purpose of participating in the imminent distribution of the spoils of a country already humiliated and defeated.

What happened three months later in Northern Africa only confirmed the precarious state of the regime’s military divisions. After entering Egypt and occupying the villages of Sollum and Sidi el Barrani, they were unable to advance. Badly organized and lacking supplies, the soldiers of the *Decima Armata* basically remained where they were until December, when they were forced into a ruinous retreat by the British counteroffensive, which in a few days penetrated Libyan territory and occupied Cirenaica.\(^{106}\) Facing the possibility of a rout, Mussolini was obliged to invoke Hitler’s help. In March 1941, the Führer sent the Deutsches Afrika Korps led by General Erwin Rommel to defend the Italian colony. German intervention proved decisive, as the panzer of the Reich managed to get the better of the British troops in just a few weeks, forcing them back to Tobruk harbour. But it certainly did not help the prestige of the Italian Fascist regime, which scarcely proved its much-vaunted tactical and military skills.

If the North African campaign had raised doubts about Rome’s offensive capabilities, the limits of Fascist power were laid bare as Mussolini undertook a ‘parallel war’ against Greece. It was a war that,

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\(^{105}\) M. Knox, *Destino comune. Dittatura, politica estera e guerra nell’Italia fascista e nella Germania nazista*, pp. 170-211.

in the Duce’s assessment, would have been completed quickly and with relative ease, but it turned out a real disaster.

The Italian army crossed the border between Albania and Greece on October 28, 1940. The same day, King George II and Prime Minister Ioannis Metaxas - who had categorically rejected Rome’s territorial demands - urged the people in a radio announcement to defend the integrity of the nation to the end. The Fascist leaders deluded themselves that their army was superior, but soon came up against the determination of the Hellenic contingents which, as early as mid-November, blocked the advance of General Sebastiano Visconti Prasca’s troops and forced them to retreat. By the end of the month, the Greeks broke through enemy lines of defence and entered Albania, making it a desperate situation for the Duce. Italy’s defeat seemed imminent and the potential damage to the Axis image was enormous. So in April Hitler was forced to intervene once again to rescue his ally, eliminating all resistance in a few weeks.

It was a German victory that allowed Mussolini to occupy much of Greek territory but also revealed Italy’s abject failure. The warrior nation had been brought to its knees by an army considered weak, and moreover, after the defeat of Athens, the Duce had to deal with the cumbersome presence of the Reich in the Balkans, which had always been considered an Italian ‘hunting reserve’.

Italy’s disastrous campaign in Greece, as well as its poor offensive in Egypt, showed the world Rome’s weakness and its almost total

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subordination to Berlin. The balance within the Axis changed radically and Fascist exponents fully understood that it was no longer possible for them to influence, even in a limited way, National Socialist choices; they were compelled to simply submit to Nazi decisions\footnote{R. De Felice, \textit{Mussolini l’alleato. I. L’Italia in guerra 1940-1943. I. Dalla guerra ’breve’ alla guerra lunga}, p. 310.}.

Acutely aware of his political marginality, Mussolini spoke these words in July 1941 in one of his ‘germanophobic outbursts’:

Domando se anche noi, ormai, non facciamo parte delle Nazioni vassalle. Ed anche se non lo siamo oggi, lo saremmo il giorno della vittoria totale della Germania […] Per ora non c’è niente da fare: siamo su questo binario e dobbiamo restarci. Ma dobbiamo augurarci due cose: che la guerra sia lunga e spossante per la Germania e che finisca attraverso un compromesso, che salvi la nostra indipendenza\footnote{G. Ciano, \textit{Diario 1937-1943}, p. 535. [Author’s translation: ‘I wonder if even we, at this point, are not part of the vassal nations. And even if we are not today, we will be, on the day of Germany’s total victory […] For now, there is nothing to do; we are on this track and we have to stay. But we must hope for two things: that the war is long and exhausting for Germany, and that it ends through a compromise that saves our independence.’]}

The Duce’s lament took place simultaneously with the beginning of the ‘Operation Barbarossa’, in which the Fascists and Falangists insisted on participating. Hitler had the intention of ‘building a vast racial empire on the ruins of the Soviet Union’, thus widening the project of the New European Order; and the black shirts and blue shirts were determined to contribute to this mission\footnote{T. Snyder, \textit{Terra nera. L’olocausto fra storia e presente}, Milano, Rizzoli, 2015, p. 36, reproduced in M.T. Giusti, \textit{La campagna di Russia 1941-1943}, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2016, p. 57.}. Both the volunteers of \textit{División Azul} and the Italian ground and air forces left for the eastern front to fight alongside the Germans the ‘crusade
against Bolshevism’: an endeavour that would have allowed the Fascists and Falangists to show their loyalty to the Reich, joining it in the most important clash to build a new continental order shown by the National Socialists\textsuperscript{113}.

But Germany’s defeat in the Battle of Stalingrad put paid to the Führer’s grand political plan. It was an unexpected turnaround in the war, with the Allies gaining the upper hand from then on. Soon, it became clear that there would have not been many more chances to see the ambitious Nazi project of European domination realized; a grandiose scheme in which the Reich’s Italian and Spanish comrades had so much invested. And that was the precise moment when Fascist and Falangist discourses about the new civilization were inevitably silenced\textsuperscript{114}.

\textsuperscript{113}The reasons for the Falangist adherence to the Russian campaign have already been mentioned previously. As far as the Fascist reasons are concerned, see M.T. Giusti, \textit{La campagna di Russia 1941-1943}, pp. 50-55. The quote is at p. 57.

\textsuperscript{114}R. De Felice, \textit{Mussolini il duce. II. Lo Stato totalitario (1936-1940)}, p. 306.
In concluding this study, it is useful and to some extent necessary to highlight important issues that field research has unveiled.

The first is the *centrality* of the nation in the ideological universe of Fascism and Falangism. Secondly, the study of primary sources has revealed that - in making the nation a central tenet of their own ideology - Pnf and Falange theorists drew copiously from the reflection of those thinkers that, from the second half of the 19th Century, both in Italy and Spain, forcefully revived the theme of the homeland in the public discourse of their respective countries. It was not, of course, a simple ‘transmit’ but a meticulous ‘sifting’ aimed at identifying concepts that were reinterpreted and elaborated to boost the legitimising and mobilizing charge of the nation: a Fascist nation and a National syndicalist nation that had to be ‘shield and lance’ against those who opposed them. As things stand, it is entirely logical for Fascism and Falangism to engage in a merciless struggle against their various anti-national enemies that first were identified in Socialists and Communists, and then included liberal-democrats and Freemasons.

In both cases, a nation so conceived could only be intrinsically exclusionary. Emilio Gentile is thus certainly correct to exhort reflection on the effects of the ‘ideologization of the national myth’. The inevitable consequence of such a process was to exclude ‘irrevocably the ideal possibility of a different way of feeling and conceiving’ that myth, and to distinguish who was part of the nation
and who was not. The homeland of the Italians and the homeland of
the Spaniards were replaced by the ‘Fascist homeland’ and the
‘Falangist homeland’, which meant that full ‘Italianness’ and
complete ‘Spanishness’ was recognized only in those who identified
themselves as members of what were considered genuine communities of destiny.

This process of ideological appropriation of the nation is of great
importance because it did not remain in the empyrean of ideals and
values, but was translated into political practice. In concrete terms,
this meant an increase in the presence of the Pnf and the Falange in
their respective States; although it must be noted that the results were
more modest in Spain than in Italy, considering the different weight of
Fe de las Jons within the Francoist regime. The fact remains that the
two parties were very active - directly and through dependent
organizations - in the care sector as well as in the economic one, in the
cultural field as well as the educational, ludic, and recreational ones.

Logically, in order for the strategy of ‘irradiation’ of both parties
to reach the expected results, the permanent mobilization of the most
dynamic forces of the two nations was necessary: a mobilization that
was functional, in the first phase, to cement their respective
Fatherlands; and, in the second, was the vehicle of expansion beyond
the geographical boundaries of the two countries. In this sense, the
empire was the natural evolution of the concept of the nation of the
Pnf and the Falange, representing its ultimate ideological expression.

It is therefore understandable that, with such an expansionist
perspective, both black shirts and blue shirts harked back to their
respective historic traditions: namely the greatness of the Roman
Empire on the one hand, and the glorious ultramarine endeavours of
the Catholic kings on the other. Through a clever reinterpretation of
those grand bygone days, the Fascists and the National syndicalists
dreamed of spreading their principles all over the world. But it must be noted that they did not think of their aspired empires as exclusively cultural or spiritual entities of domination. Indeed, Pnf ideologues as well as those of the Falange elaborated plans for effective colonization, aimed at occupying new territories, and restructuring them both politically and administratively under the insignia of the *fascio littorio* and the yoke and arrows. This was a goal each party was determined to pursue, even if only the black shirts succeeded in achieving to a certain extent.

Generally speaking, the theme of the empire was articulated by Italian and Spanish fascism in a very similar way, but comparative analysis has allowed to highlight two significant differences. The first relevant element is that, in the Falangist ideological universe, the theme of the empire was central right from its origins, unlike what happened in Italy. In the dawn of his movement, indeed, Mussolini mentioned imperial aspirations in few situations, and always vaguely. Conversely, José Antonio Primo de Rivera’s *nacionalismo misional*—summed up in his ‘*unidad de destino en lo universal*’—established from the very beginning that the rebirth of the homeland would have gone hand in hand with the realization of a collective endeavour in the world, that is, a great expansion project outward.

A second significant difference is that the black shirts’ discourse on empire lacked the religious element that was present in Falange thought instead. There is no doubt that National syndicalism, like Italian Fascism, was not a confessional movement. But it is also true that it had to deal with the historic Catholic footprint; a footprint that, since the end of the 15th Century, stamped the entire process of Spanish national and imperial identity building. Religion played a fundamental role in the ultramarine feats of the colonizers, who conquered the New World by brandishing the sword in one hand and
holding the cross in the other. It is exactly this awareness that justifies the presence, in the blue shirts’ expansionist claims, of references to Catholic tradition, to which the idea of empire in Spain was historically anchored.

Despite the differences mentioned above, another important aspect that Fascism and Falangism had in common was that, in both cases, the imperial dimension of the homeland invoked the concept of ‘civilizing people’, which the Pnf and the Falange linked with the concept of ‘race’. This term, however, must be used warily since for the blue shirts - and even for the black shirts until the mid-1930s - it did not indicate a biological reality but it was rather used as a synonym for ‘nation’.

The study of primary sources revealed that Falangist theorists resorted to the word ‘race’ for the Hispanic community generically, without attaching any discriminatory connotation on it. In a way, the Castilian essence of the nation was implicit, but the racial plurality that had characterized the national and imperial nation since the days of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel of Castille made any ethnic distinction redundant. Moreover, José Antonio’s concept of ‘unity of destiny in the universal’ - which identified the nation with a historic mission that would have united all Hispanic peoples - excluded any physical or biological element. While keeping this in mind, it is nevertheless necessary to note that the National syndicalist revolution, like all Fascist revolutions, had race regeneration among its aims. But this was interpreted mainly from a spiritual and moral perspective. So it is not possible to talk about eugenic practices in the Spanish case. Only positive eugenic provisions can be discussed, relating to pronatalist demographic measures, improvement of hygiene, childhood and maternity care, and sports education.
Also Anti-Semitism was a marginal element in the ideology of Falange. Indeed, except in limited cases involving some party members close to clerical environments - who held against the Israelites ancient prejudices stemming mainly from doctrinal and moral issues – National syndicalists never regarded Jews as enemies to fight as such. It is true that, during the Spanish Civil War, anti-Semitic theories began to circulate in the Falange, but they referred almost exclusively to the anti-Francoist position of international Judaism, which supported the republican cause. Overall, there is no discriminatory attitude towards Jews in Falangist history. And even when some anti-Semitic sentiments emerge, they derive from political factors, certainly not biological factors, to which the camisas azules always attached little value.

The situation in Italian Fascism, until the turning point of 1935-1936, was essentially similar to the Spanish one. Basically, there was no trace in the Pnf of any particular racial prejudice, and negative eugenics was systematically condemned as contrary to the quantitative and populist approach of the policies of the regime. The latter aimed at increasing the size of the Italian population and, from the beginning, was not interested in qualitative selection. The situation changed with the campaign in Ethiopia. Widespread promiscuity between the colonizers and indigenous peoples - leading to a consequent increase in the number of half-castes - made Fascist ideologues revise their stand in this regard. Until then, race had not been, in a biological sense, a significant factor in determining Fascist national identity; now it became so. For the black shirts, the purity of the Italian lineage was in jeopardy, and it had to be preserved from crossbreeding with populations judged inferior. Laws against meticciato were thus promulgated, and scientists, demographers and jurists attempted to correlate them with demographic measures
adopted in previous years, to legitimize the new racist orientation of the regime. In reality, this new view - despite what party leaders wanted the people to believe - was not based on a strong pre-existing tradition in the ideology of Fascism of the origins, but emerged from the new internal and international political phase.

The racial problem inevitably evokes the Jewish question, which is not present in the affairs of unified Italy except as a historic depot of Catholic anti-Semitism. Israelites living on the peninsula were few, well integrated, and devoted Mussolini followers in several cases, to the extent that they did not deny their support to the regime even after the shameful laws were enacted the 1938-1939 biennium. First the movement and then the party did not have any recognizable anti-Jewish features, which were introduced into the Fascist ideological universe only later. So it can be argued that state anti-Semitism arose from a political calculus and began to take shape in an international context characterized by the Ethiopian campaign, the sanctions against Italy, and the approach to Germany.

That brings this epilogue to a focus on the terminal and grand dimension envisaged by the nation of Fascism and Falangism. Both of them, indeed, looked at Hitler’s New European Order convinced that their status as ascending powers would give them an important position in the new continental setup. The Fascist nation and the Falangist nation – which were imperial nations in nuce - would complete their evolutionary path by supporting the Third Reich in the totalitarian reorganization of Europe, since they were certain that was the key to their future. In the strategic plan of the theorists of the two parties, the three ‘creative peoples’ would have taken the lead in this new order and helped other peoples - morally and politically ‘less enlightened’ - to emerge from the state of spiritual crisis to which liberal-democracy and Socialism had reduced the Old Continent.
As things stood, the National syndicalists and the Fascists would thus achieve a twofold goal. Firstly, they would have allowed Spain and Italy to overcome the international isolation in which they found themselves, respectively, after the Civil War and the Ethiopian campaign. Secondly, by linking their fate to that of Germany - which at least until 1941-1942 seemed unbeatable - these States would have fulfilled the bright destiny that they believed was rightfully theirs.

These aspirations, however, were based on a completely erroneous political assessment: Hitler’s plans did not include any sharing of power, but only the substantial submission of all European peoples to the power of the Third Reich. In the Führer’s domination projects, a second-tier place was reserved for Mussolini’s Italy, which had, in any case, betrayed limited military autonomy and poor offensive capacity since entering World War II. *A fortiori*, the head of Nazism saw no significant role in post-war Europe for Franco’s Spain, that - despite constant Falangist pressure - never took a belligerent position, and whose actual contribution to military operations perplexed National Socialist leaders. But the unexpected denouement of the Russian campaign put paid to any talk of a New European Order and dashed all hope of realizing it. The Axis powers’ very survival was at stake when, starting with the Battle of Stalingrad, the tide began to turn against them. The Allies’ inexorable advance obliged them to first retreat, and then forced them to finally surrender.

In closing this work, two last considerations can be made, respectively related to the Falange and the heuristic categories employed. With regard to the first aspect, the careful examination of primary sources confirms the radically revolutionary and genuinely Fascist nature of the *Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista*. Its project to nationalize the Spaniards, indeed,
is perfectly in line with that implemented by the Pnf in Italy, with
which it exhibited several affinities.

As for the interpretative key employed, there is no doubt that the
idea of nation can well be used for analytical purposes as a tool to
compare different Fascist experiences. The discourse on the nation
effectively constitutes a *common denominator* among the various
manifestations of this phenomenon; that is, it is a kind of ‘heuristic
sieve’ to highlight analogies and dissimilarities between different
national cases. By virtue of such conviction, it is believed that the
four-level interpretative scheme (Nation-Empire-Race-New European
Order) employed in this study is valid and can be used as a model to
compare other Fascisms.
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