Between Nation and Empire: The Post-Habsburg Adriatic Question and the Fascist Idea of Europe 1919-1922

Marco Bresciani

The prevailing accounts of the 'origins' of Italian fascism from 1919 to 1922 position themselves within a long history of Italy, which begins at least in the 1860s with the formation of the new Kingdom of Italy and which is articulated by military defeats, political failures, and social upheavals. In this interpretative paradigm, the First World War constitutes an event of crucial but conflicting significance. On the one hand, the enormous war effort, which concluded with victory in 1918, accelerated and crowned the process of national construction that was moulded by the first great collective experience of a united Italy; on the other, the dissatisfaction with the territory gained and with the new international arrangement of the post-war period fed a state of crisis which substantiated the possibility of a turn to revolutionary socialism and ultimately opened the way to fascism and the collapse of Italy's liberal institutions. In this post-war

Fig. 1: The nationalist poet and politician Gabriele D'Annunzio, Fiume/Rijeka, 12 September 1919.

Fig. 2: The British economist John Maynard Keynes.

Italian crisis, scholars have long attributed a central function to the 'myth of the mutilated victory', a term coined by poet and politician Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938), which they deem to have catalysed the darkest and most disturbed elements of national public opinion. Nevertheless, the pure and simple adoption of the 'myth of mutilated victory', an explanation that is completely internal to the nation, to interpret the collective psychology and the political conflict in post-war Italy appears to ascribe an excessive weight to the question of territorial acquisition *as such*.[1]

A recent collection of essays, edited by Mark Cornwall and John Paul Newman, has raised the issue of the legacy of a defeated and collapsed state such as the Habsburg Empire in the processing of the experience of the First World War within the successor states.[2] This approach, though focused in another direction, can contribute to a repositioning of the question of the origins of fascism within a European perspective, shifting, at least in part, the trajectory of the Kingdom of Italy after 1918 nearer to that of the states which succeeded Austria-Hungary. In a passage of *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, published in late 1919, John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) – the former British Treasury bureaucrat involved in the Versailles Peace Conference – stated with acuteness: "If the European Civil War is to end with France and Italy abusing their momentary victorious power to destroy Germany and Austria-Hungary now prostrate, they invite their own destruction also, being so deeply and inextricably intertwined with their victims by hidden psychic and economic bonds".[3]

Applying Keynes' remark to post-1918 Italy, this chapter argues that the 'myth of the mutilated victory' crystallised the more profound and basic reality of a quite different 'mutilation' or 'destruction'. The disintegration of its historic enemy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, transformed the geopolitical and economic structure of post-war Italy and had a destabilising effect on national public opinion. The Adriatic Question, or rather the problem of the political, economic and symbolic definition of the space onto which the history of Italy and of Central and Eastern Europe was superimposed and counterposed, constituted a crucial aspect of the post-war crisis.[4]

Fascism Against the Habsburg Legacy

The Italian army occupied the Upper Adriatic immediately after the signing of the armistice in Padua, in November 1918. However, the region was destabilised by the uncertainty of the long negotiations

Fig. 3: Advertising poster of *Avanti*, the newspaper of Italy's Socialist Party, 1919.

and the ensuing animosities over the new border between the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which was finally defined by the Treaty of Rapallo, signed in November 1920. In the summer of 1920, the fascist movement, founded by Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) in March 1919, organised itself into armed squadrons and went on the offensive, beginning from the plurinational area of the Upper Adriatic that Italy had gained at the end of the First World War.[5]

In fact, the socio-political conflicts in this border territory, fed by tensions between different nationalist groups (Italian, Slovenian, Croatian), were among the most violent, and the local section of the *Partito Socialista Italiano* (PSI; Italian Socialist Party) adopted a decidedly internationalist and revolutionary position and soon transferred en masse to the Communist Party. As a consequence, Mussolini's polemic towards the socialist press and especially towards *Il Lavoratore* [*The Worker*], the socialist daily newspaper of Trieste, was particularly harsh. His article on 6 August 1920, 'Bolscevismo imperiale' ['Imperial Bolshevism'], constituted a direct response against the direction of *Il Lavoratore*, which on 1 August, in the face of Soviet advances in Polish territory, had hastily concluded: 'Russia is no longer an Asiatic myth lost between two continents and dreamily between two eras, but is a European reality that has all the energy of an armed and uncontrollable phalanx.'[6] The defeat of the Red Army at the Battle of Warsaw, in the middle of August, quickly dissolved the hopes of exporting the Soviet revolution to Germany and from there to the rest of Europe. In those same weeks between July and September, Trieste and the new border territories on the Upper Adriatic became a real laboratory for the violent practices of the fascist squads, where aggression towards the socialists intertwined and often mixed with that towards the 'Slavs', and anti-socialism developed alongside anti-Slavism, a radically new version of nationalism. In a speech at Pola on 21 September 1920, Mussolini explained the imperial mission of fascism, rooted in the special position of the Upper

Fig. 4: Benito Mussolini on a seaplane in the Adriatic Sea, 1920s.

Adriatic region in the Mediterranean Sea and in Italy in Europe:

> The future of Italy is on the Mediterranean Sea. [...] Italy must be a bridge between East and West. The demographic factor pushes Italy towards expansion into the Mediterranean and towards the East. Nevertheless, it is necessary that the Adriatic Sea, one of our gulfs, should be in our hands in order to realise this Mediterranean dream. In the face of a race such as the Slavs, inferior and barbaric, we must not pursue a politics of the carrot but a politics of the stick.[7]

Fig. 5: Book cover of Pietro Gorgolini`s *La Rivoluzione fascista*, edited in Torino 1922.

In this context, marked by extreme international instability and by a rapidly shifting redefinition of sovereignty and of the national borders of post-Habsburg Central Europe, the projects and aspirations of the Italian nationalists took on more concrete form with the hope of coming to fruition in the near future. At the same time the new order, which had emerged from the First World War and was centred on the ascending power of the United States, confronted the Italian nationalists with new problems, opportunities, and obstacles. It was Mussolini who brought together these contradictory aspects of the post-war period in an important public speech given at the Rossetti Theatre in Trieste on 6 February 1921:

> In the shift of the axis of civilisation from London to New York (which already has seven million inhabitants and which will soon be the largest human agglomeration on Earth) and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, there are those who foresee a gradual economic and spiritual decline of our old Europe, of our small and marvellous continent which has up to only yesterday been a guide and light for all peoples. Will we be party to this darkening and eclipsing of the 'role' of Europe in the history of the world? To this disturbing and troubling question we reply: it is possible. The 'life' of Europe, especially in the area of Central Europe, is at the mercy of the Americans. Moreover, Europe presents us with a tormented political and economic landscape, a thorny tangle of national questions and of social questions, and at times it happens that communism is the mask of nationalism and vice versa. A 'united' Europe does not seem a very close reality.[8]

These ideas were anything but exclusive to Mussolini and they circulated with particular frequency in the environment of early fascism. The same positioning emerged in a speech given by the fascist journalist Pietro Gorgolini (1891-1973), entitled 'Cos'è il bolscevismo?' ('What is Bolshevism?') and delivered at the University of Camerino in April 1919, but probably also given at other conferences. He recalled the anarchic character of Bolshevism, the 'extreme formulation of a socialist utopia': a generalised sense of 'ruin' and 'anarchy' offered the essential key for understanding Russian events. The revolutionary

process had brought to light from 'under the previously solid and now miserably shattered skin of Europeanism, the barbarous and oriental foundation of a people who had remained enslaved and primitive'. The cycle of war and revolution had halted 'its process of Europeanisation', provoking 'a return to barbarism' which made 'the neighbouring peoples tremble at the idea of an invasion by the Trotskyist hordes'. According to Gorgolini, the link between the events in the post-war Upper Adriatic and the Bolshevik threat was evident and immediate:

> Whoever has been on the eastern Adriatic coast and has had contact with the Slavs at the beginning of our occupation, if they have good eyesight, has seen flash the grim spectre of the true and greatest enemy of the Latin people, Slavism; but behind Slavism is Bolshevik Russia. [...] Russian Bolshevism or Slavo-Balkan Bolshevism, which is the same thing with different expressions and different fortunes, is barbaric expansionist unrest that strives to free that gigantic populace from the chains of an old oriental recklessness, of a degenerate aristocracy and a vice-ridden bourgeoisie, in order to direct it, without scruples, towards the intellectual, social and perhaps even political invasion of the West, with the same ravenous appetites of old invasions but now without the restraint and without the respect which the great memory of the Roman Empire commanded.[9]

In this respect, the disrupting social, political, and cultural backlash of the Russian and Bolshevik Revolutions indirectly influenced early fascism and Mussolini, contributing to a radical widening of their political culture and imagery compared to those of the pre-1914 nationalists. In the fascist perceptions, what Adam Tooze has recently called the 'Eurasian crisis' involved Europe as a whole and threatened it from without, but its political consequences and implications were ambivalent.[10] On the one hand, this representation was based on the perception of the weakness, disintegration, and anarchic self-destruction of the 'Slavic world', summarised by the Russian Revolution; on the other hand, this representation was complemented by the sense of unity and strength of the 'Slavic world', embodied by the expansionist project of 'Pan-Slavism'. The fascists identified the 'Slavic world' with the 'Russian world', alternately understood as a European or as an un-European, Asiatic world. In Mussolini's vision, the Upper Adriatic region played a crucial role as an extreme offshoot of the 'Slavic world' and, through this, of 'Russian' influence. Therefore, whether the 'Reds' or the 'Whites' prevailed in the Russian civil war was entirely irrelevant. Both seemed to share 'an immense dream of imperialism', that is, 'the great empire from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, from the cold sea to the warm sea': this pan-Slavic project directly assailed Italy's borders insofar as it included 'pressing towards the Adriatic sea, the extreme and ravenous descendants of the Slavic world'.[11] It is not by chance, therefore, that Trieste became the venue for Mussolini's key speeches outlining European and global political vision, which were increasing imbued with anti-Slavism; it constituted a sort of outpost of an imaginary geopolitical space, which simultaneously defined both the enemy of fascism and its national and imperial mission.[12]

This vision was in fact largely indebted to the writings and speeches of the radical nationalists and fascists of the Upper Adriatic, such as Attilio Tamaro (1884-1956), amateur historian, Trieste journalist, and author of many historical works on the region, a nationalist who converted to fascism. Tamaro focused his writings on the political and economic crisis that had shattered post-1918 Trieste: he argued that the collapse of the former Austro-Hungarian hinterland, in spite of its political annexation to the Kingdom of Italy, had led to a sort of 'economic disannexation' of the entire northern Adriatic region.[13] As a solution to this crisis, Trieste and the Adriatic were to serve as a starting point for political, economic, and eventually military expansion in both directions. On the one hand, he argued that strategic control of the Adriatic sea, with the aim of eliminating the 'Slavic' threat in the region, represented the only way in which Italy could construct a new dominion over the Mediterranean and guarantee its liberty and independence in world politics. On the other hand, Tamaro reaffirmed the urgency of challenging (and changing) the post-war economic order in Central Europe, which was considered to be against Italian interests.[14]

Even before the war, some of the most brilliant and aggressive voices from the Italian nationalists

Fig. 6: The Italian nationalist and journalist Attilio Tamaro.

under the Habsburg Monarchy, such as Ruggero Fauro (1892-1915) alias Timeus and Tamaro himself, had advocated positions of expansion and annexation eastwards, by claiming the need for a greater Italy extending its control over Central Europe, the Balkans, and the Near East. Nevertheless, none of them hoped, or even believed, that the annexation of Trieste and the whole Upper Adriatic would eventually imply the collapse of the Habsburg Empire; they did not even deem that possible.[15]

In consequence, Tamaro's criticism of the post-war European order changed rapidly into a claim for an active, revisionist position that offered a strong justification for fascism. Italy had to prepare its plans for the economic reconstruction of Central Europe after the fall of the Habsburg Empire, which had fragmented into a plurality of plurinational spaces. Tamaro toyed with the idea of a fascist alliance with Austria and Hungary against the 'Slavs', with the aim of confronting the post-imperial power vacuum and reorganising the European order. In his article 'Cinque anni dopo il crollo dell'Impero absburgico' ('Five Years after the Collapse of the Habsburg Empire'), published in *Il Secolo* (*The Age*) on 21 November 1923, Tamaro explained the background to his political position. Italy's complete lack of plans for the reconstruction of Central Europe after the unexpected disintegration of the Habsburg Empire was rooted in a profound misunderstanding of that empire itself. Tamaro developed a harsh criticism of the politics of nationality, which he believed to severely undervalue the unity of the imperial connections within the Habsburg territories. With the notable exception of the Italians, the peoples oppressed by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in fact oppressed each other through nationalist conflicts much more than they were oppressed by the central government in Vienna: they fought 'not to destroy the State or the

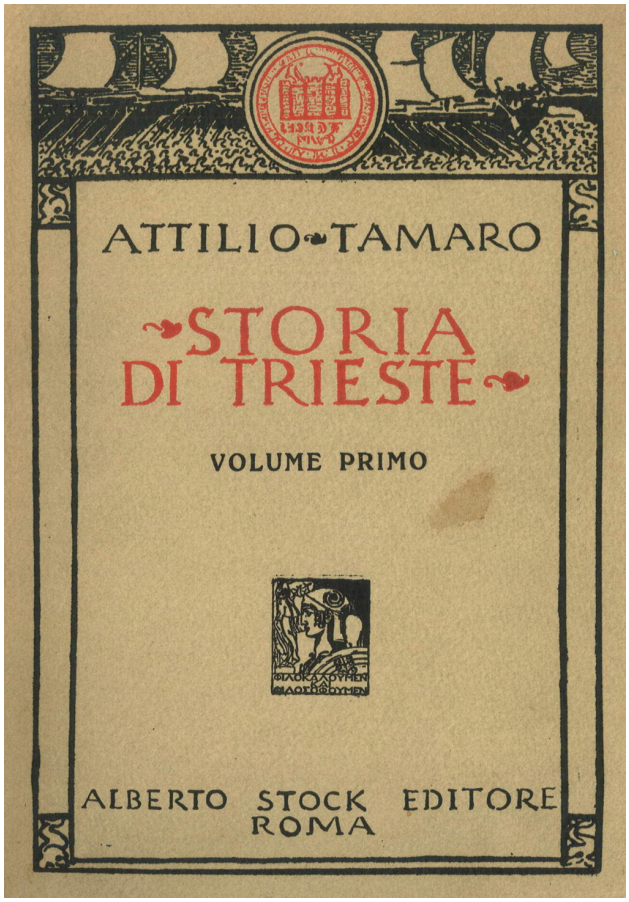

Fig. 7: Book cover of Attilio Tamaro`s Storia di Trieste, edited in Rome 1924.

Throne but to take over the government of the State itself'.[16] The 'oppressed peoples' shared a visceral hatred of the Italians; when the empire collapsed, the Italians were therefore, paradoxically, only able to form stable relationships with those condemned as 'oppressors': the Austrians and the Hungarians. Nevertheless, the reorganisation of the political and economic order of Central Europe, in which Italy could play an important role, was still to come. According to Tamaro, it was a widely held opinion in pre-1914 Italy that the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was 'an artificial state dominated and held together against the will of the people by a tyrannical dynasty, by German bureaucracy, by a barbaric police force'. Tamaro maintained that 'the particular condition of the Italian territories that were subject to Austria' was projected onto the Habsburg Empire in its entirety; the empire was then interpreted as 'a plurinational, unnatural monstrosity'. However, the disintegration of Austria-Hungary brought to light 'the powerful economic and political ties that united its members to the centre and to each other'. He then explained:

> Now the character of the relationships that passed between government and peoples can be understood: the conflicts that agitate the successor states, as well as the systems adopted by the 'liberated' nations, demonstrate that the struggles which first battered the state were not between dominated populace and dominating government, but between peoples, each hoping to dominate their adversary within a specific border.

With penetrating analysis, which however led to a fascist revisionist position, Tamaro concluded: 'The self-same varied plurinationality of all the successor states is a posthumous justification of the plurinationality for which Austria-Hungary has been so violently blamed.'[17]

Not incidentally, Tamaro, like the other fascists, had internalised one of the major lessons of the First World War concerning the possibility of the disintegration of the modern states: since some states (notably the continental empires such as the Habsburg Empire) *did* fall apart, the successor states in East-Central Europe *might* fall apart again. This fascist conviction marked a deep difference from the pre-1914 nationalists, who did not consider the possibility of the disruption or destruction of the successor states; the fascists built their project of political power on that possibility.

The Destruction and Reconstruction of States

Fascism was born in 1919 as a movement avowedly aimed at overcoming the traditional political dichotomy between Right and Left; from 1920 onwards, however, Mussolini with increasing insistency claimed the political 'reactionary' space available on the 'Right'. He offered a justification for this turn in an article in February 1920, in which he described Lenin 'as the greatest amongst the living and the most alive amongst the greatest reactionaries of Europe' – 'the only one who had the courage to be reactionary in both the old-fashioned and the modern sense (in reaction, that is, to all the economic, political and moral disintegrations of social life)'.[18]

Mussolini was attracted by 'the vast, terrible experience of corpore vili' in revolutionary Russia in so far as it was an example of the destruction and reconstruction of a new state, an example through which fascism could be defined. The comparison with what was happening under the Bolshevik regime helped Mussolini to construct a model that could inspire the construction of his own regime, which faced up to and resolved the question of the 'crisis of authority' in post-war Italy. Post-war Italy was in fact struck by the 'western political chaos' that had turned the state into an 'elastic and intangible' notion: everywhere 'a continual collision between old and new authority', 'an interference or coexistence of contradictory powers' characterised the political landscape of post-war Europe. In the upside-down mirror of Lenin's Russia, a solution emerged: 'A state that has overcome the crisis of authority. A state in the most concrete expression of the word. A state, that is, a government, made up of men who exercise power, imposing iron discipline on individuals or groups, "repressing" when necessary.'[19]

Mussolini closely tied this reflection on the concept of "reaction" to the transformation of the fascist movement and to the definition of its violent project of the conquest of power in the course of the early 1920s. This was not so much inspired by an abstract or theoretical concept of the state but rather by the

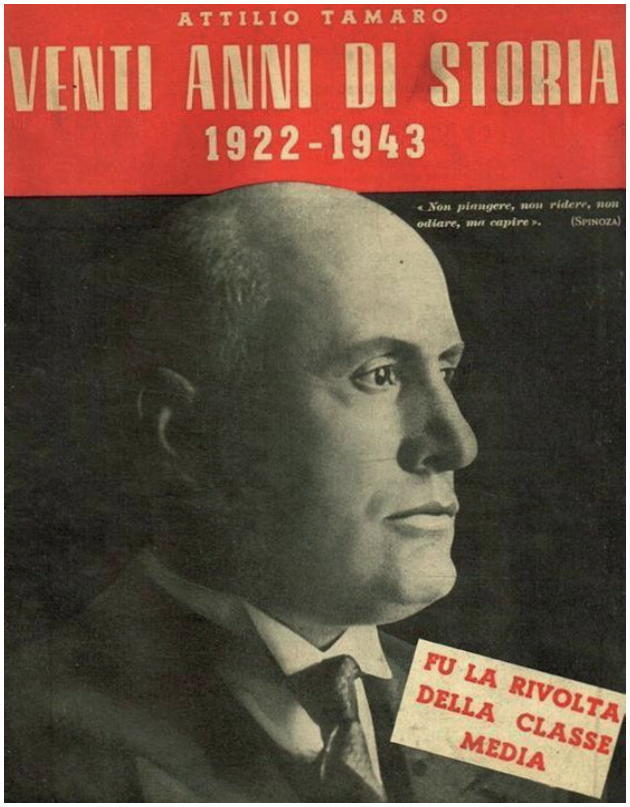

Fig. 8: Book cover with Benito Mussolini of Attilio Tamaro's publication *Venti Anni di Storia*, published in Rome, 1952.

real and changeable relationship between chaos and the state, between the destruction and reconstruction of the state's authority, between the disintegration and reintegration of the post-war political and social order. If the Russian Revolution had demonstrated that 'failed' states could be dissolved, the experience of the Bolshevik regime revealed that states could re-emerge from anarchy. From Mussolini's point of view, the new Soviet State represented not so much a static model – he harboured doubts concerning its extreme statism – as a generator of energy to feed anti-state subversion in Italy and to work to grasp power for the fascists. More than the definition of a true and individual theory of state sovereignty, in fact, the fascists and their *duce* were interested in the comparison between the contingent European situation – 'western' – and that of Soviet Russia: from this they derived their demand for a new power, identified with the end of the rule of law, and their conception of the 'fascist state' as an oxymoron that revealed the activism and the dynamism intrinsic to fascism. Instead of designating a political position, 'reaction' in Mussolini's discourse came to define a momentous turning point not only in the post-war period but in European history, with respect to which the 'reactionary' forces demonstrated a greater capacity for political adaptability.[20]

Mussolini disseminated this interpretation of post-war Europe in a key text, 'Dove va il mondo?' ('Where is the world going?'), published in *Gerarchia*, and in an abridged form in *Il Popolo d'Italia* in February 1922. The duce sketched a brief account of the post-war crisis and of its dominant political forces:

> The day after the armistice, the pendulum swung violently to the Left in both the political and social fields. Two empires collapsed: the Hohenzollern and the Habsburg, while another, that of the Romanovs, had preceded them. [...] In 1919-20, all of Central and Eastern Europe was afflicted by the political crisis of stabilising the new regimes, aggravated and complicated by the crisis that we call socialist, that is, by the attempts to realise some of the postulates of socialist doctrine. [...] There is no doubt that the end of 1920 signalled the culmination of the social crisis of the Left in all of Europe. But in the fifteen months between then and now, the situation has changed. The pendulum has swung back to the Right. After the wave of revolution, we now have the wave of reaction; after the red period (the red hour), we now have the white hour. As always happens, the nation which swerved most violently to the Left is that which, for some time, has been walking more quickly to the Right: Russia. The Russian 'myth' has now faded.

Mussolini recognised a common historical destiny between the 'three nations' – Russia, Germany, and Italy – impelled by a 'social and spiritual movement' directed to the Right, which was attempting not so much the quashing of the 'extremist exaggerations of the immediate post-war' but 'a much more vast and radical revision of values'. He believed that, beyond the history of the post-war era, it was European history in its entirety from the French Revolution to the First World War that evidenced a radical and enduring change, which defined itself through the new 'leaning to the Right'. The two years 1919 and 1920 had represented the culmination of a long demo-

Fig. 9: Fascist propaganda poster concerning a congress of the Italian Fascists Living Abroad (Avanguardisti dei Fascie all' Estero).

cratic evolution and the starting point of its reversion, legitimising the transition to an era dominated by 'new aristocracies' in which the masses could not be 'protagonists', but were rather 'the instrument of history'. The year 1921 had marked the end of the nineteenth century – 'the century of revolutions' – and the beginning of the twentieth century – 'the century of restorations': 'Revolution is within this reaction. A revolution of salvation to spare Europe from the miserable end that awaited it if democracy had continued to rage unchecked.'[21]

Not by chance, Mussolini's reflection on the fascist state became increasingly intense with the deepening of the political crisis during the course of 1922 and with the fascists' consequent growing willingness to assume direct power. In particular, Mussolini addressed again the crucial question of whether fascism was 'a movement for the restoration of state authority or a subversion of that authority', clarifying it as a false dilemma: the true problem was *which* state in the context of the current political crisis. The state was defined as a 'system of hierarchies', but the vitality of these hierarchies was nourished by the 'spirit' of the 'most chosen parts' of society. To the extent to which the 'decline of hierarchies' was equivalent to the 'decline of states', only a revolution could substitute or renovate 'the declining or inadequate hierarchies'. 'Fascism does not deny the state; it affirms that a national or imperial civic society cannot be conceived except under the form of the state; it therefore does not go against the idea of the state, but it reserves the right to act freely with regard to that particular state which is the state of Italy.' Fascism, which considered itself 'the state in potential and to come', contrasted and subverted 'the state in act', that is to say, the liberal state. The fascist hostility towards the liberal state was motivated not only by the huge expansion of the state's economic role, which made it 'semi-socialist' and 'monopolist', but also and above all by the 'crisis of hierarchies' which were 'without spirit' and which provoked the 'crisis of the state'.[22]

Conclusion

To better grasp the links between the fascist search for a new political order and the crisis in the post-Habsburg Upper Adriatic, it is useful to return to the *Origins of Totalitarianism* and to the distinction that Hannah Arendt makes between 'continental imperialism' and 'overseas imperialism':

> While overseas imperialism, its antinational tendencies notwithstanding, succeeded in giving a new lease of life to the antiquated institutions of the nation-state, continental imperialism was and remained unequivocally hostile to all existing political bodies. Its general mood, therefore, was far more rebellious and its leaders far more adept at revolutionary rhetoric. While overseas imperialism had offered real enough panaceas for the residues of all classes, continental imperialism had nothing to offer except an ideology and a movement. Yet this was quite enough in a time which preferred a key to history to political action, when men in the midst of communal disintegration and social atomisation wanted to belong at any price. Similarly, the visible distinction of a white skin, whose advantages in a black or brown environment are easily understood, could be matched successfully by a purely imaginary distinction between an Eastern and a Western, or an Aryan and a non-Aryan soul. The point is that a rather complicated ideology and an organisation which furthered no immediate interest proved to be more attractive than tangible advantages and commonplace convictions.[23]

While Arendt identified 'continental imperialism' with the fundamental prerequisite of totalitarian movements like those of the Nazis or Communists, which aspired to expansion in Central and Eastern Europe (therefore excluding fascism), Italian fascism can be considered as a movement that combined elements from both 'continental imperialism' and 'overseas imperialism': on the one hand, contempt for the rule of law, rejection of the nineteenth-century model of the liberal nation-state and the modern capacity for mobilisation through ideology and organisation; on the other hand, the pursuit of a maritime empire following the collapse of the continen-

tal empires. In the post-1918 European context, Italian fascism was a radical project of nation-building and empire-building, whereas its revisionism of the Versailles order potentially implied the disruption if not the destruction of East-Central Europe's existing states.

A prevalent historiographical interpretation has connected fascist imperialism to later stages of the history of fascism, that is, to the mid-1930s, with the outbreak of the war against Ethiopia, or even to the early 1940s, with the Italian participation in the Second World War.[24] As I have attempted to demonstrate, however, a careful re-reading of Mussolini's texts enables us to closely link fascism, from its very origins, to the changing but crucial perceptions and interpretations of the European and global crisis of 1914-1922. Mussolini and early fascism defined a model that aspired to contain the Europe of Lenin and to destabilise that of Wilson in the name of a new national and imperial order in which Italy constituted the centre and example. Notably, fascism's own idea of Europe was grounded in hierarchies of nations and empires, in which fascist Italy had to play a leading role. Accordingly, the post-Habsburg Upper Adriatic was the historical seedbed of this imperial project, which contributed to the transnational circulation of the fascist model among far Right movements and authoritarian regimes in East-Central Europe. It was no accident that this model would be sidelined by the political demands of European reconstruction and stabilisation in the 1920s, but would re-emerge with all its capacity to attract in the context of the continental crisis of the 1930s.[25]

Endnotes

1. As a sample of this narrative, see Roberto Vivarelli, *Storia delle origini del fascismo: dalla Grande guerra alla marcia su Roma* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012). For criticism of the excessive emphasis on the myth of 'mutilated victory', see Marco Mondini, *La guerra italiana. Partire, raccontare, tornare, 1914-1918* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014), 361.
2. Cfr. *Sacrifice and Rebirth. The Legacy of the Last Habsburg War*, eds. Marc Cornwall and John Paul Newman (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016). More generally, on the long-lasting legacies of the Habsburg Monarchy in the post-1918 successor states, see Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2016) and Steven Beller, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1815-1918* (Cambridge: UP, Cambridge 2018).
3. John Maynard Keynes, *Essays In Persuasion* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 4.
4. For a classic account of the Adriatic question from the diplomatic point of view, see Paolo Alati, *Nitti, D'Annunzio e la questione adriatica* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1959) and, more recently, James H. Burgwyn, *The Legend of the Mutilated Victory: Italy, the Great War, and the Paris Peace Conference (1915-1919)* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993); *L'Italia e la questione adriatica: dibattiti parlamentari e panorama internazionale,* ed. Marina Cattaruzza (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014). For a pioneering analysis of the Habsburg legacies in post-1918 Italy and in the successor states see Dennison Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1969), and then, more generally, Dennison Rusinow's *Ethnic Politics in the Habsburg Monarchy and Successor States: Three Answers to the National Question, in Nationalism and Empire: the Habsburg Empire and the Soviet Union*, eds. Richard Rudolph and David Good (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 243-267.
5. For more detailed reconstructions, see Marina Cattaruzza, *L'Italia e il confine orientale, 1866-2004* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007) and Anna Vinci, *Sentinelle della patria. Il fascismo al confine orientale, 1918-1941* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2011).
6 See *Il nostro dovere*, "Il Lavoratore", August 1st 1920 and Mussolini's reply, [Benito] Mussolini, *Bolscevismo imperiale*, "Il Popolo d'Italia", 6 August 1920.
7. 'Il discorso di Mussolini al "Ciscutti" entusiasma al delirio l'imponentissima folla,' *L'Azione* 22 (September 1920), 214.
8. Benito Mussolini, 'Della politica estera italiana,' *Il Popolo d'Italia* (8 February 1921), 1.
9. Pietro Gorgolini, 'Cos'è il bolscevismo?' in an appendix to Angelo d'Orsi, *La rivoluzione antibolscevica: fascismo, classi, ideologie, 1917-1922* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1985), 344-356.
10. Adam Tooze, *The Deluge. The Great War, America and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (New York: Viking Adult, 2014). For a more detailed analysis of the representations of the Russian and Bolshevik revolutions in the early fascist milieus, see Marco Bresciani, 'Tra "guerra civile europea" e "crisi eurasiatica": Benito Mussolini, la Rivoluzione russa e il bolscevismo (1917-1922),' in *La Rivoluzione bolscevica e l'Italia (1917-1921)*, ed. Giorgio Petracchi, Annali della Fondazione U. La Malfa', XXXI (2016), 217-241.
11. Benito Mussolini, 'Tra Occidente e Oriente,' in *Il Popolo d'Italia* (17 December 1919).
12. Cfr. Marco Bresciani, 'The Upper Adriatic Space and the Post-War Ascent of Fascism,' in *Vergangene Räume - Neue Ordnungen. Das Erbe der multinationalen Reiche und die Staatsbildung im östlichen Europa 1917-1923*, eds. Tim Buchen and Frank Grelka (Frankfurt Oder: Viadrina Universität, 2017), 47-64.
13. Attilio Tamaro, 'La crisi di Trieste', *Rassegna Italiana* 50 (1922), 3-4, 6.
14. See Attilio Tamaro, 'La Dalmazia, l'Adriatico e il Mediterraneo,' *La battaglia* (11 December 1919) and 'Rinnovare la politica estera,' *La Patria* (9 July 1922).
15. See R. A. Webster's still insightful, albeit somewhat outdated, considerations on the entanglements between economic interests and Italian imperialism in *L'imperialismo industriale italiano. Studio sul prefascismo, 1908-1915* (Torino:

Einaudi, 1974), especially 357-583. For an analysis of the long-term representations of the Adriatic space, see Borut Klabjan, '"Scramble for Adria: Discourses of Appropriation of the Adriatic Space Before and After World War I,' *Austrian History Yearbook*, 42 (2011), 16-32; for a critical reconsideration of the pre-1914 Italian nationalism, see Fabio Capano, 'From a Cosmopolitan to a Fascist Land: Irredentism in Motion,' *Nationalities Papers* (2017), published online (accessed 2 August 2018).

16. Attilio Tamaro, 'Cinque anni dopo il crollo dell'Impro absburgico,' *Il Secolo di Milano* (21 November 1923).
17. Attilio Tamaro, *La lotta delle razze nell'Europa danubiana* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1923).
18. Benito Mussolini, 'Crepuscoli. I templi e gli idoli,' *Il Popolo d'Italia* (25 February 1920).
19. Benito Mussolini, 'L'artefice e la materia',, *Il Popolo d'Italia* (14 July 1920).
20. Benito Mussolini, 'C'è una reazione...,' *Il Popolo d'Italia* (19 March 1922).
21. Benito Mussolini, 'Dove va il mondo?,' *Gerarchia* (25 February 1922).
22. Benito Mussolini, 'Stato, anti-Stato e fascismo,' *Gerarchia* (25 June 1922), 1.
23. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1979), 225.
24. See Davide Rodogno, *Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation During the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).
25. For a development of the (East) European perspective to the Italian Fascism and for new contributions on the interwar period see Marco Bresciani, *Conservatives and Right Radicals in Interwar Europe* (London: Routledge, 2021).